Presumed knowledge in the discursive construction of socio-political and cultural identity

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ABSTRACT

This article describes and analyses the role of presumed knowledge in constructing a model socio-political and cultural identity for Hong Kong in one newspaper in post-handover Hong Kong politics.

Drawing on aspects of discourse analysis and cultural studies, it looks at how socio-political and cultural identity is presumed by the discourse of one Hong Kong newspaper, Ta Kung Pao.

The paper asks the following questions:

1. What kind of knowledge about socio-political and cultural identity is presumed by the discourse of Ta Kung Pao?
2. What sort of discursive strategies are used in presuming such identities?
3. To what extent do these strategies promote the discursive hegemony to which the discourse of Ta Kung Pao is directed?

The findings and implications of these inquiries will not only provide a better perspective of the role of language and, in particular presumed knowledge, in the construction of the political and cultural identity of Hong Kong Chinese, but also the disjunctures and tensions between the local and the national under the postcolonial cultural climate of Hong Kong. More generally, the findings will further illuminate our understanding of the role presumed knowledge in discourse and in political and cultural identity construction.

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1. Background to the study

Focussing on one local newspaper, Ta Kung Pao, this article describes and analyses the role of presumed knowledge in constructing a model socio-political and cultural identity for Hong Kong, which, since 1997, has been a Special Administrative Region of China. Issues surrounding the notion of socio-political and cultural identity have become...
prevalent in the post-1997 Hong Kong political arena. This may partly be attributed to Hong Kong's colonial past and its having practised capitalism for 150 years, while Mainland China has experienced dramatic political changes and has practised Communism for the most recent part of this period. The idea of ‘one country-two systems’, introduced by Deng Xiaoping in the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, was probably the most explicit attempt on Beijing’s part to acknowledge differences between Hong Kong and China. Recent economic reforms in Mainland China in recent decades and the return of Hong Kong in 1997, coupled with accelerated globalized economic convergence, have helped reduce the distinction between the two entities. Nonetheless, despite economic assimilation, differences between the two Chinese populations still exist. These differences are most observable on the socio-political and cultural level.

Although admittedly now an integral part of China, in spite of sharing many Chinese traditions and the Chinese language, many Hong Kong people still regard themselves as Hong Kong Chinese people rather than being just Chinese (Flowerdew et al., 2002) (although recent opinion polls suggest that more people are now seeing themselves as primarily Chinese). As such, the cultural identity for many Hong Kong people remains fairly ill-defined (Abbas, 1996; Chan, 1997, 1998; Erni, 2001; Fung, 2001; Lau, 1997; Ma and Fung, 1999; Ma, 2000). In the eyes of these Hong Kong people, the emphasis of the concept of ‘one country, two systems’ should be on guarding and protecting the autonomy of Hong Kong both in terms of civil and political liberties as well as cultural identity: the two systems. This appears to be in sharp contrast to the stance of the Beijing government and its supporters, as we shall see in the examples from the corpus of data to be used in this study, which stresses that the interests and sovereignty of the country should come before any consideration of the ‘two systems’. Such fundamentally opposed dependencies in interpreting the ‘two in one’ concept have sparked a series of discursive confrontations between the two parties in question, one of the most prominent examples of such confrontation being a debate about patriotism and the relation of that phenomenon to the socio-political and cultural identity of Hong Kong (Flowerdew and Leong, 2007). One of the underlying reasons for such confrontations is a mismatch of presumed knowledge, which also induces a mismatch of expectations and entailments. Very often, these mismatches are not simply cultural in nature, concerning, for example, face systems and directness (Ting-Toomy, 1988; Scollon and Scollon, 1995; Flowerdew, 1997), but, as they are expressed through language and discourse, are also mixed with ideological manipulation (Van Dijk, 1988; Fairclough, 1995, 2001; Flowerdew, 2004).

A history of public protest underlies the background to the debate on Hong Kong’s cultural and political identity. The first public protest occurred on 1 July 2003, the sixth anniversary of Hong Kong’s reunification with China, when half a million people took to the streets protesting against the Hong Kong government’s intended application of Article 23 of the Basic Law (Hong Kong’s mini-constitution drawn up by China), an article which called for the introduction of an anti-subversion law. The Mainland Chinese government wanted to see the legislation enacted, in accordance with its view of Hong Kong and China as ‘one country’ within the ‘one country, two systems’ framework. But as the protest showed, many Hong Kong people remained wary, feeling that they should not be required to follow Beijing’s dictates.

This demonstration was followed by further demonstrations, such as the march on 1 January 2004, when 100,000 people demonstrated in support of universal suffrage in Hong Kong. The Basic Law recognizes the goal of gradual democratization in Hong Kong, yet it does not specify an exact method or timetable. Nevertheless, the document leaves the way open for direct elections starting as early as 2007, a date which opinion polls at the time showed a vast majority of citizens to be in favour of.

Nonetheless, despite public demands, the Mainland government was reluctant to allow Hong Kong to further democratize. It appeared that the Beijing government had set a agenda of an extremely gradual pace of development and was keen to get its message across to the Hong Kong people directly by leading the debate on political reform. It argued that constitutional development in the city is not just a local issue (two systems), but a national one (one country).

On 10 February 2004, the official Chinese news agency Xinhua stated that the constitutional reforms and governance of Hong Kong must be led by ‘patriots’, insinuating (presuming) that those who campaigned for universal suffrage were unpatriotic and therefore illegitimate. This comment sparked successive waves of heated debates in the Hong Kong media and political circles about defining a ‘patriot’ (Flowerdew and Leong, 2007). The policy of the Beijing government became clearer when on 26 March 2004, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC) declared that it would exercise its right to interpret the relevant clauses in the Basic Law over the issue of universal suffrage in 2007/2008. This appeared in the minds of some to go against the spirit of the Basic Law, which, as already mentioned, paved the way for democratization. Beijing’s position became crystal clear on 26 April 2004, when the Standing Committee of the NPC finally ruled out any possibilities for universal suffrage in 2007/2008.

This sweeping decision led to general discontent among the Hong Kong population and on 1 July 2004, the 7th anniversary of Hong Kong’s return to China, 200,000 citizens again took to the streets of the city, chanting slogans such as “return the power to the people” in protest against the Chinese government’s decision. However, neither Mainland nor local Hong Kong government leaders were prepared to compromise.

As a result of all of the above-mentioned confrontations, the issue of cultural and political identity of Hong Kong remains a thorny subject in post-handover Hong Kong. Given this situation, this paper looks at how political and cultural identity is
presumed by the discourse of one pro-Beijing Hong Kong newspaper, Ta Kung Pao. The status of Ta Kung Pao is fairly significant in the Hong Kong press. Although not as widely circulated as other commercial newspapers such as Apple Daily or Ming Pao, it is often regarded as reflecting the views of the Beijing government and therefore serves as a reference or ‘leak’ for Beijing’s political stances. Consequently, the value of Ta Kung Pao for the purpose of this study lies in its significance as one of the major sources of information for those who wish to delve deeper into the Beijing mind-set and as a primary definer in Beijing’s efforts to influence public opinion.

In this study we ask the following questions:

1. What kind of knowledge about socio-political and cultural identity is presumed by the discourse of Ta Kung Pao?
2. What sort of discursive strategies are used in presuming such identities?
3. To what extent do these strategies promote the discursive hegemony to which the discourse of Ta Kung Pao, as a primary definer, is directed?

2. Theoretical preliminaries (1): presumed knowledge

In order to facilitate efficient communication, interlocutors assume a high degree of mutual knowledge. Such mutual knowledge is evident in the pragmatic phenomenon of presupposition, whereby speakers assume specific prior knowledge on the part of their hearers. In the utterance “This is a nice car”, there is an assertion concerning the quality of the car, but at the same time a presupposition that the car exists. Similarly in the utterance “When did you stop beating your wife” there is an assertion regarding an action on the part of the interlocutor, but also a presupposition that the interlocutor has been performing the action in question. Presuppositions may be ‘triggered’ by a range of linguistic devices, as in the following list from Yule, as cited in Wodak (2007):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Presupposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existential</td>
<td>“The X”</td>
<td>X exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factive</td>
<td>“I regret having done that”</td>
<td>I did it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-factive</td>
<td>“He claimed to be a teacher”</td>
<td>He was not a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal</td>
<td>“She managed to escape”</td>
<td>She attempted to escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>“Who is coming?”</td>
<td>Someone is coming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-factual</td>
<td>“If I were not ill”</td>
<td>I am ill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples such as these are much favoured in more philosophical approaches to presupposition (see Levinson, 1983, for a longer list), although, more recently, presupposition has received attention in (political) discourse analysis focussed on naturally occurring texts (Bekalu, 2006; Mazid, 2007; Rocci, 2005).

This paper is not concerned with presupposition, however (although presupposition may contribute to the phenomenon we are interested in here, as our analysis will show), but with a related phenomenon, referred to by Van Dijk (2005) and Chilton (2004), the only writers to discuss the phenomenon, to our knowledge, as presumption. Whereas presupposition may be studied at the level of the individual proposition, presumption is better considered from the point of view of discourse. Like presupposition, presumption refers to knowledge that the speaker presumes the hearer to have, but rather than being recognized by triggers, as is the case with presupposition, it is better understood in terms of an interaction between shared knowledge on the part of interlocutors and the on-going discourse in which the presumption occurs.

Presumptions are best understood in terms of what are referred to in the literature as mental models, frames, or schemata. Mental models are internal scale-model representations of an external reality built from past experience and perceptions of the world (Johnson-Laird, 1983). Frames are cognitive structures which guide perception and understanding of the world (Goffman, 1974). Schemata are mental frameworks or concepts that assist in organizing and interpreting information (Bartlett, 1932). All of these related theoretical constructs have a very extensive literature, have been tested empirically and have some cognitive reality, although understanding of them is limited.

Van Dijk (2005), based on mental models theory, explains how the mental representations which guide presumption are applied in discourse comprehension and production, in a process which he refers to as knowledge management. Van Dijk posits what he calls a K-device, or knowledge device, that represents the beliefs of speakers and hearers concerning their knowledge of their interlocutors. Three levels of knowledge are posited: knowledge of the world, knowledge about the 

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4 Some of the polls were conducted by the Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong. Relevant poll findings can be found in http://hkupop.hku.hk.
current communicative situations, and mutual knowledge about each others' knowledge. The K-device “adopts knowledge about the structure of talk or text to the dynamically changing common ground of knowledge”. It tells interlocutors in an interaction “which knowledge must be asserted, which knowledge should be reminded, which knowledge can be presumed because it is irrelevant or can be inferred by the recipients themselves”.

Generally speaking, according to Van Dijk (2005), if people belong to the same epistemic community, i.e. they have a lot of shared knowledge concerning the community in general, then there will be a lot of that type of knowledge that does not need to be asserted. On the other hand, there may be a lot of personal knowledge that is not shared and this will need to be asserted. In news discourse, which is the focus of this paper, it can be assumed that writers and readers have a lot in common regarding the background to the activities or opinions that are reported. They will share knowledge of the current socio-political situation and recent events. What journalists will be asserting as new knowledge will be new events and opinions.

Importantly for this paper, though, writers may presume certain beliefs to be shared that may not in fact be held in common or generally accepted. These beliefs will not be asserted, but assumed to be commonly shared by the community at large. It is such presumed beliefs, which are not knowledge, but ideological assumptions (Van Dijk, 2005:82), that are referred to here as presumption. Writers are thus able to try to manipulate readers by taking for granted knowledge which they want their readers to accept as common knowledge, or understanding. As Fairclough (1992:121), who, in taking an “intertextual” view of presupposition, seems to be talking about presumed knowledge in general, not specifically linguistic presupposition, states, “manipulative presuppositions [also] postulate interpreting subjects with particular prior textual experiences and assumptions, and in so doing they contribute to the ideological constitution of subjects”. Similarly such manipulative use may come under the heading of (manipulative) “pragmatic” presupposition (“pragmatic” presupposition being distinguished from “truth conditional” pragmatics, as discussed above), as presented by Stalnaker (1974). According to Stalnaker, “pragmatic presuppositions are propositions whose truth the speaker takes for granted, or seems to take for granted in making his statement” (1974:198) and presupposed propositions can be communicated as new information by a speaker who “tells his auditor something…by pretending that his auditor already knows it” (1974:202).

When confronted with such attempted manipulation, readers have the choice of accepting the presumptions in question as true or rejecting them. The latter, it is worth noting, will require more cognitive processing than the former. A role for the discourse analyst, it follows, in analyzing a news text from an ideological perspective, is to consider what is explicitly asserted, what is reminded and what is presumed, all under the broad heading of presumed knowledge.

This will be the focus of the analysis of this paper, for two reasons. First, because presumption, in our corpus, occurs as a systematic means of manipulating readers in the pursuit of discursive hegemony on the part of the pro-Beijing discourse. And, second, because it is an under-researched pragmatic/discursive phenomenon.

3. Theoretical preliminaries (2): presumed knowledge, primary definers, discursive hegemony, discursive identity, voice, and discourse identity

Presumption, as a discursive strategy, can aid competing discourses to set and frame issues of a particular debate to their own advantage (Goffman, 1974). As already indicated, this phenomenon will be examined in this paper by means of an analysis of one (pro-Beijing) Hong Kong newspaper, Ta Kung Pao, the analysis concerning the debate about democratic development in Hong Kong in the period following its retrocession from Britain to China. After the protests and demonstrations in 2003 and 2004, referred to in the background section, the Beijing government mounted a campaign to encourage Hong Kong people to view the constitutional reform issue in terms which it favoured (and counter to majority popular opinion up to that time). The campaign was manifested in almost ceaseless comments and criticisms regarding Hong Kong’s constitutional reform debate, channelled through expert opinions on public occasions and pro-Beijing news media. In mounting the campaign, the Beijing government aggressively took the lead in setting the agenda and framing the debate in terms of ‘patriotism’ and the presumption that those who participate in the government of Hong Kong should be what this discourse referred to as (Chinese) ‘patriots’ (Flowerdew and Leong, 2007).

The proactive role of the pro-Beijing discourse, as represented by newspapers such as Ta Kung Pao, also established its discourse as what we will refer to as a ‘primary definer’ of the entire patriotism debate about who has the right to participate in the governance of Hong Kong. By the term primary definer, we mean those sources of information that are usually official, that generate control and establish initial definitions of particular events, situations and issues (Chibnall, 1977). For example, Mainland scholars in legal studies were often called upon for their expert opinions on constitutional issues of Hong Kong because of their ‘special’ status and authority regarding the Basic Law (Hong Kong’s mini-constitution, drawn up by China), made possible by Ta Kung Pao. This enabled the pro-Beijing discourse to manipulate social information towards its advantage, thereby marginalizing competing alternative discourse and contributing to Beijing’s goal of discursive hegemony with regard to constitutional issues.

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5 According to Hall (1980) theory of ‘preferred reading’, readers have three alternatives in interpreting a text. They may interpret it in the way that the author intends, sharing with the author his or her point of view. This is the ‘preferred’ reading. They may broadly share the writer’s point of view, but adapt it according to their personal disposition. This is the ‘negotiated’ reading. Or they may understand the author’s intended meaning, but reject it and take a contrasting position. This is the ‘oppositional’ reading.
By discursive hegemony, we mean, as Fairclough (2003:218) defines the term, “the dominance and naturalisation of particular representations”, how certain discourses come to prevail in given socio-political contexts, as a result of a struggle between the relevant political actors. This conceptualisation of discursive hegemony is an extension of Gramsci’s broader notion of hegemony, which conceives of power as being based on acquiescence and consent, not just force, i.e. hegemony consist of both ideology and physical force. The emphasis we are putting on the discursive dimension of hegemony, how the struggle for political dominance is at least partly constituted through discursive means, is derived from Laclau and Mouffe (2001), who see discourse as central to their influential rearticulation of the notion of hegemony. The creation of a hegemonic discourse concerned with national and socio-political identity implies the projection of a common identity onto subjects as belonging to an autonomous community and expressing a single national and political culture (Smith, 2002).

This is what the pro-Beijing discourse of Ta Kung Pao did in its campaign to win over Hong Kong opinion, the ideal Hong Kong person being a Hong Kong ‘patriot’, even though this projected identity, as our analysis will show, and in line with current theories of discourse and identity (e.g. De Fina et al., 2006) as shifting and variable, is adapted to fit the particular situation.

The strategic use of expert advice and comments as primary definers raises the complex issue of ‘voice’, another theoretical construction employed in this study, where the voice of the media (newspaper editors for the current case) as the objective reporter becomes blurred with other voices, dissolving the boundaries between the principal, author and narrator (Goffman, 1974). According to Goffman (1974), a speaker can have three participation statuses in relation to any utterance. They are the ‘the principal’ (the one who is physically making the utterance), the ‘author’ (‘someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded (1981:144)’), and the ‘principal’ (‘someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say (1981:144)’). So in the case of a newspaper, the editors may be the principals, the reporters the authors and the newspaper layout and print staff, the animators. But these three roles are often blurred. Editors often get involved in selecting and editing news items to be published, or paraphrasing and quoting certain statements by primary definers as headlines. In that sense, the editors’ voice of the newspaper is also actively participating in the role of the author in the articulation of certain political voices, albeit under the guise of the objective observer. The voice of the newspaper editor often surfaces through the layout of the newspaper contents, prioritization and treatments of headlines. The reporters, on the other hand, by quoting the primary definers, become the animators of the primary definers’ comments, while at the same time remaining the author of the news article.

Scollon’s (1996) terms – of ‘framers’, ‘players’ and ‘discourse identity’ – may be useful in making sense of this situation. Similar to primary definers, framers ‘have overriding rights to define communicative events’ (1996:6). They may be the owners and editors of the newspaper who sets the parameters of the discourse. Players, on the other hand, put their ‘focal attention upon maintaining the discourse’ (1996:6). These people may be the reporters and the publication staff. Yet both framers and players are social-interactive roles which constitute a particular ‘discourse identity’. Scollon defines the term discourse identity as follows:

‘...the persona along with the degree or range of power a particular person can claim in a specific discourse. It consists of the range of production/reception format roles intersecting with the social-interactive roles over which one has the power, right, or obligation to enact in any particular discourse’ (1996:7).

Given the interactive nature of the relationship between the framers and players, it would be difficult to distinguish between the voices of the newspaper, the primary definers and the principals. Consequently, while a discourse is being framed and formulated by a multitude of different people, all of these discourse participants are often perceived to be sharing the same discursive identity. All framers and players, it follows, play a role in promoting a desired discursive hegemony.

Applying this to our case, while Ta Kung Pao proclaims itself as an impartial newspaper, its involvement in framing the discourse of the Chinese patriot and who has the right to participate in Hong Kong’s governance not only projects the publication as part of the discourse and therefore sharing the same discursive identity as Beijing, but also obligates itself to the upkeep of this pro-Beijing image in order to fulfil its readers’ expectations.

4. Research procedures

As already stated, this paper analyses the role of presumed knowledge in Ta Kung Pao’s discursive construction of who has the right to participate in Hong Kong’s governance under the concept of ‘one country, two systems’. As such, it examines a corpus of 250 reports and articles from Ta Kung Pao, published from 1 October 2003 to 1 October 2004 concerning this issue. The references to this issue in our corpus are primarily the mediated comments of news actors and politicians, and not the comments of the journalists themselves, although the newspaper holds the editorial power to choose who, when and what comments to be included. In addition, a considerable number of references come from editorials and opinion articles and can consequently be perceived to be sharing the same discursive identity as the newspaper, i.e. a mouthpiece for Beijing and its supporters.

6 ‘Discourse identity’ here is distinct from ‘discursive identity’ as discussed earlier.
Our research procedures are as follows:

1. Dates: from 1 October 2003 to 1 October 2004. 1 October being national day of China.
2. Data collected through the search engine of Wisenews, with keywords being Hong Kong, patriotism and constitutional reform.
3. 250 articles were found from Ta Kung Pao.
4. Each article was examined in search of patterns of discursive strategies used to create and presume the identity of the model Hong Kong political participant.
5. Implications were then derived from these patterns findings.

5. Findings

In analyzing our corpus of 250 articles from Ta Kung Pao, we have found 3 inter-related, salient strategies that were used by the pro-Beijing newspaper in attempting to define and presume a socio-political and cultural identity for Hong Kong society. These strategies are othering, non-naming, and the use of metaphors. We are using the term strategy very loosely here as a pre-theoretical term to mean a particular rhetorical/linguistic means of realising a communicative intention (see e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987; Flowerdew et al., 2002; Guendozi, 2004; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Wee, 2005, for other applications of the notion of discourse strategy). These intentions may operate at different levels and overlap with each other. In fact, othering is a more general strategy than the other two, which can themselves be used to realise othering, and which are specific rhetorical devices. To describe the relationship another way, we can say that metaphor and non-naming are rhetorical tropes, while othering is a broader strategy using various discourse patterns, which may include the other two. Nevertheless, these three strategies were distinctive and clearly identifiable, although often combined and therefore mutually supported and reinforcing, instead of used individually, in creating a presumed discursive environment. We believe these strategies are worthy of study because they were the most striking features of our corpus for performing the function we are interested in.

The basis of these strategies in our corpus relies much upon the presumption that only 'patriots' have the right to participate in Hong Kong's governance. However, as we found from our corpus of texts, the definition of patriotism is not one that is stable and universal. Instead, it appears to be relative and contextual. Very often, it is defined more through exclusion than otherwise. This shifting nature of patriotism in our case reflects to a certain extent its origin as a constructed identity to counter popular demand for democracy. As the demands of political environment change, so does its definition.

5.1. Othering

We shall begin with the strategy of othering. As mentioned before, in an effort to counter the demand for universal suffrage, the pro-Beijing discourse embraces the ideal of 'patriots' being the only people suitable to participate in the governance of Hong Kong. In order for such an ideal to be accepted by the Hong Kong society, the pro-Beijing discourse needed to establish a communally shared sense of belonging.

One way of achieving this is by establishing an in/out-group dichotomy, where the pro-democracy camp is often problematised as the out-group (i.e. non 'patriots'), a deviant minority threatening the welfare of the majority of Hong Kong people, and the in-group whose views are represented by the pro-Beijing discourse and who are considered to be 'patriots'. Very often, the 'deviant' nature of this 'other' is described in terms of class and cultural values, against which the 'self' of the patriot is defined. Below (excerpt 1) is an example illustrating this presumed dichotomy between the 'democrats' and the 'patriots'. It is a report related to the comparison between Taiwan and Hong Kong, suggesting that Taiwan’s democracy is dysfunctional and Hong Kong should not follows its example.

Excerpt 1

'激化矛盾衝突對港無好處 港須吸取台灣大選教訓'

香港是一個多元文化的社會，有傳統的愛國和草根階層，也有在英國殖民時期培養並

嚮往歐美西方生活的一代人，後者對國家、民族觀念薄弱。大家矛盾多，難求共識，

就目前而言，要推行一人一票，激發衝突更難控制。

Article 77 大公報, 2004-03-25,港聞, A12.
'Intensifying conflicts will harm Hong Kong. Hong Kong must learn from Taiwan’s election lesson'

Hong Kong is a diverse society. There are those who are traditionally patriotic and grass-roots, and there are those who grew up in colonial times and aspire to a western lifestyle. The latter has a weak sense of national and racial identity.7 There are many conflicts and differences between them, and it is difficult to find common ground. For the current situation, the conflicts will be uncontrollable if universal suffrage is to be put in place.

Ta Kung Pao, 2004-03-25, Local news, A12.

In this excerpt, the author claims that there are two kinds of Hong Kong people. The first type of people is ‘traditionally patriotic and grass-roots’. The second type is those who ‘grew up in colonial times and aspire to a western lifestyle’. The second type of people is valued negatively as lacking a national and racial sense of identity. Through contrasting these two supposed types of people, the author is keen to project a scenario where conflicts are inevitable. However, a close look at the excerpt reveals that, in order to establish his claim, the author has presumed at least three aspects of social information for the reader of the news report, and these aspects include culture, class, and politics.

First, in terms of culture, the author has presumed that being ‘traditionally patriotic’ and ‘growing up in colonial times’ are mutually exclusive. By the same token, he has also presumed that growing up in colonial times automatically equates with aspiring to western lifestyles. This also presumes that aspiring to a western lifestyle is a sign of being unpatriotic. However, this presumption is problematic, as growing up in colonial times was part of Hong Kong’s collective history. Both grass-roots and non-grass-roots people, regardless of their sentiments towards China, were brought up in or experienced colonial times. It was a collective historical experience, not a matter of choice. Secondly, in terms of class, the author presumes that patriotism is a class-based phenomenon in Hong Kong, where only working class people are traditionally patriotic, excluding other classes such as the middle and higher classes, who have ‘a weak sense of national and racial identity’. This brings us to the third aspect of presumed knowledge, the political one. The author presumes that the desire for universal suffrage is a problem for Hong Kong and China, and that a lack of national and racial identity on the part of some people is the cause for this. Those who suffer such a lack are the non-working class brought up in colonial times. In other words, the problem that Hong Kong faces about universal suffrage lies with the so-called unpatriotic middle class people. All of the three aspects of presumed social information listed above are used by the author of the report to represent an ‘unpatriotic other’ in perspective, through which the ‘patriotic self’ can be established by claiming representation of a communally shared sense of belonging.

We now turn to another example of the use of presumed knowledge by a Ta Kung Pao author to single out the Hong Kong Democrats as the unpatriotic other. The excerpt is taken from the lead-in of a report on Mr. Wang Rudeng, assistant director of the Hong Kong – Mainland Liaison Office in Hong Kong, who accuses the Democrats of misleading and confusing young people in Hong Kong.

Excerpt 2

‘盼青年人勿被霧霾所遮蔽 要勒緊對話代替對立’

中聯辦主任助理兼港島工作部部長王如登與一個座談會上呼籲年輕人要履行和
實踐「一國兩制」的歷史使命，要對此方針和基本法有全面深入的認識和理解，
更要提高識別能力，才能夠分清真偽、善惡和是非，才不致被激進的「民主派」

人士提出的言論所迷惑和誤導。


‘Youth should not be confused by sweet words, Wang Rudeng appeals for conversation instead of confrontation’

In a seminar, Mr. Wang Rudeng, assistant director of the Liaison Office in Hong Kong, appeals for the youth of Hong Kong to commit and materialize the historical mission of ‘one country, two systems’. He also says that young people should have comprehensive and deep understandings of ‘one country and two systems’ and the Basic Law, so as to enhance their ability to

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7 In Chinese, there are separate words for what we are translating here as ‘national’ and ‘racial’. Although the issue which is of concern here is ‘patriotism’ and might therefore involve nation rather than race, it is important to recognize that the notion of ‘race’ does enter into the equation.
distinguish between true and false, good and evil, and right and wrong. It is only through this that the young people of Hong Kong will not be confused and misguided by the opinions of the radical ‘Democrats’.


Similar to excerpt 1, the author in this excerpt is also keen to project a negative image of the Democrats to his/her readers. In doing so, s/he has presumed two areas of social knowledge for his/her readers, including aspects of culture and politics.

First, in terms of culture, the author has presumed that it is the duty of young people to assume responsibility for the implementation of the Basic Law, and that ‘one country, two systems’ is a historical mission which requires deeper understanding of the Basic Law. The author also assumes a connection between understanding the Basic Law and one’s moral standing: that a deeper understanding of the Basic Law will enhance one’s ability to discern good from evil (this is, in fact, an example of linguistic presupposition, the “trigger” being “so as to”, i.e. knowledge of ‘one country, two systems’ and the Basic Law will automatically give rise to the ability the ability to distinguish good from evil). In other words, those who have not enough understanding of the Basic Law are those who are evil. However, the author did not provide a specific definition of what he meant by ‘deeper understanding’ of the Basic Law.

This brings us to the second area of presumed knowledge, the political. By linking morality with understanding the Basic Law, the author is effectively presuming a preferred way of understanding the law, which is the pro-Beijing way. Any alternative to this, such as the understanding of the Democrats would, as a result, be deemed to be immoral and negatively perceived. This is evident in the way the author uses pairs of oppositions such as true or false, good and evil, right and wrong, in describing the benefits of a ‘deeper understanding’ of the Basic Law.

Moreover, the use of scare quotes in the excerpt also draws special attention from the reader, marking them as unusual, with a presumption that there is something wrong with them, that they are perhaps not true democrats in the usual sense of the word. While the quotation marks for ‘One country, two systems’ presumes the term’s special status as an unprecedented political phenomenon, the scare quotes for ‘Democrats’ can be seen as a strategy of disapproval that questions the actions and legitimacy of the Democrats. Consequently, the original speaker of these words, made a primary definer by _Ta Kung Pao_, systematically portrays the Democrats as the evil ‘other’ to the youth of Hong Kong because of their misleading opinions.

5.2. Non-naming

Non-naming is another salient (more specific) strategy that _Ta Kung Pao_ used to presume the ideal patriot. Non-naming is a commonly used strategy in political discourse that, to our knowledge, has not been identified in the literature. By ‘non-naming’ in this case, we refer to the deliberate refraining from referring to subjects by name and replacing their names with more ambiguous and generic labels. As a discursive strategy, non-naming is used where one party may criticize another party in harsh terms while avoiding direct confrontation or claiming full responsibility for making these criticisms. Through the strategic use of non-naming, a deliberate and at times calculated ambiguity is created.

The functions of this strategy are multiple. On one hand, it can be a hedging device which prevents direct confrontations while conveying sensitive and critical comments. The writer, or speaker, places themself in a position to be able to deny that any specific given party is being referred to. At the same time it can be an involvement strategy which invites the reader to identify with the author’s position as part of an in-group by crediting him/her, through presumed knowledge, with the ‘insider’ knowledge of the real identity of the non-named subject. Paradoxically, on the other hand, by non-naming, the speaker also draws extra attention to the actor being referred to, forcing the reader to apply extra linguistic processing (mental models) to work out who the referent indirectly referred to actually is, thereby making the referent more salient or marked.

A prime example for such strategically cultivated ambiguity through non-naming can be found in a speech by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the UN General Assembly in New York in 2006:

*By causing war and conflict, some are fast expanding their domination, accumulating greater wealth and usurping all resources, while others endure the resulting poverty, suffering and misery.*

*Some seek to rule the world relying on weapons and threats, while others live in perpetual insecurity and danger.*

Some occupy the homeland of others, thousands of kilometers away from their borders, interfere in their affairs and control their oil and other resources and strategic routes, while others are bombarded daily in their own homes; their children murdered in the streets and alleys of their own country and their homes reduced to rubble.


In the above speech excerpt, the use of the non-named ‘some’ (presumably the United States) at once draws attentions to the United States’s interventions in the Middle East – made more salient by the extra linguistic processing required to establish who the referent actually is – yet at the same time absolves the speaker from accusations that he is directly attacking that country.
In the case of our research, the Democrats in Hong Kong are frequently and deliberately non-named by Ta Kung Pao. However, paradoxically, the non-named subject is also often explicitly described by Ta Kung Pao so as to make sure that the identity of the Democrats is doubly ‘marked’ to the reader. As such, the non-naming of the Democrats is in effect more a strategic arrangement of othering, which draws attention to the otherness of the Democrats, than a genuine effort to disguise their identity. Consequently, Ta Kung Pao’s non-naming of the Democrats not only hedges direct confrontations, but also involves the readers by presuming insider knowledge: that anyone who is patriotic will know that the Democrats are a source of problems for Hong Kong’s stability.

Below is an example illustrating Ta Kung Pao’s non-naming strategy. It is written by Tam Yiu Chung, one of the original drafters of the Basic Law. Given his special status, he becomes a primary definer of the debate over patriotism by Ta Kung Pao. This is evident in the layout and prioritization of the newspaper, as Tam’s article was positioned in A1 front page.

**Excerpt 3**

‘嚴格遵守基本法’

我們都知道，由於基本法是一項史無前例的創舉，在實施過程難免會遇到一些困難。香港社會對條文中的一些規定出現不同的理解，這是正常的。但某些人為了不可告人的政治目的，任意歪曲條文，鼓動對特區政府及中央政府的不信任情緒，製造社會紛爭，這是絕不應該的。

大公報 article 62, 2004-04-05 港聞 A01 譚耀宗

‘Following the Basic Law strictly’

We all know that since the Basic Law is unprecedented in its creation, and its execution can be difficult at times, it is normal to see that opinions may differ on the interpretations of some of the clauses. However, for some secretive political ends some people deliberately misinterpret these clauses, instigating sentiments of distrust against the SAR (Hong Kong) and central government and creating social conflicts. This is most improper.

Ta Kung Pao, 2004-04-05 Local News A01 Tam Yiu Chung

Interestingly, this extract begins with a case of linguistic presupposition, or rather pseudo-presupposition, ‘we all know’. We say this is pseudo-presupposition because it is not clear at all that the readership knows what the writer is about to assert. It is presumed by the author. In this extract the author also claims that there are some people in Hong Kong who instigate distrust against the Hong Kong and Beijing governments. However, he does not specify who these people are. Instead, they are deliberately marked as ‘some people’ who have ‘some secretive political ends’. Examining the text closely, one can see that the author has presumed several pieces of knowledge for the reader. First, the author presumes that different interpretations of the Basic Law are results of its unprecedented creation. Secondly, the author presumes that among these diverse interpretations are sentiments of distrust against the Hong Kong and Beijing governments. These sentiments have resulted in social conflicts. Thirdly, the author presumes that these sentiments have been instigated by some people who have secretive political ends, and that the readers of Ta Kung Pao have the knowledge of this non-named party as well as their goals.

By way of including the reader into the in-group as sharing the same discursive identity, the author obliges the reader to take up the preferred subject position as framed by the report: s/he can either accept or refuse to identify with the political stance of the report. In this sense, the very act of non-naming can be considered as an involvement strategy which is open to manipulation. Working closely in combination with an othering strategy and articulated through the author as a primary definer, the discursive strategy of non-naming in this opinion article helps to further frame and reinforce the (Chinese) ‘patriot’, as presented by Ta Kung Pao.

The following excerpt is another example illustrating Ta Kung Pao’s non-naming strategy. It is taken from an editorial in which the writer comments on the differences in Hong Kong society over the issue of the Basic Law. Again, one can see the significance the editor attached to the subject matter by the layout of the newspaper, as the article was positioned in A2, the second page of the newspaper.
Excerpt 4

‘憲制問題不能搞多元化’

在憲制問題上搞多元化的人，一方面公開反對基本法，或者要求按他們純西方化
的憲制主張修改基本法；另一方面，他們也以隨心所欲的解釋，試圖將基本法這
部莊嚴的憲制性文件變成可以塞進私貨的偽殼。某些以法律權威自居的大律師，

自己不懂基本法，卻經常對基本法妄加解釋，「以其昏昏，使人昭昭」，這些人
試圖讓人相信，對基本法有不同的理解和解釋是正常的現象，而只有他們的理解
和解釋才是正確的。

Article 115. 大公報 2004-03-10, 兩會專版, A02 社評

‘Constitutional issues cannot be diversified’

On one hand, those who want to diversify over constitutional issues openly defy the Basic Law, or appeal for an amendment
of the Basic Law purely according to their westernized understanding of constitutional issues. On the other hand, they try to
turn the respectable and serious Basic Law into an empty shell where they can fill in their own interpretations at will. Some
barristers claimed to be the authority figures in legal matters. They do not know anything about the Basic Law, yet still
frequently impose their own interpretations on it. These people try to make people believe that it is normal to have different
interpretations of the Basic Law, and only their interpretation is correct.

Ta Kung Pao, 2004-03-10, Special feature, A02 Editorial.

In the above extract, the writer claims that there are people in Hong Kong who attempt to impose their own interpretations
of the Basic Law onto Hong Kong society. However, he does not provide for his readers the name or identity of these people
other than describing them as ‘those who want to diversify over constitutional issues’ and later as ‘some barristers’. It is clear
that in making these comments, the writer is confident that his readers will have the necessary knowledge to recognize the
identities of the non-named parties. In particular, in referring to ‘some barristers’, Hong Kong readers are likely to know that
the writer is referring to prominent pro-democracy figures. Through this kind of involvement strategy, a deliberate sense of
communal discursive identity is cultivated by the editorialist for the readers. The result of such cultivation is twofold. On one
hand, by way of non-naming, the editor presumes the reader’s social knowledge of the non-named party. On the other hand,
by strategically marginalizing any difference in opinions as the non-named out-group, it serves to justify the agenda and
framing set by the newspaper over the debate over the Basic Law.

5.3. Use of metaphors

The third salient strategy found in our corpus presuming the ideal of the Chinese patriot is that of the metaphor. By way of
presuming power hierarchy and unequal relationships, metaphors are often used in political discourse to frame debates
(Kitis and Milapides, 1997; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lee, 2005; Wei, 2000; Wilson, 1990) and set agendas by competing
discourses. In the case of our research, metaphors such as the family and the body have been used liberally by Ta Kung Pao
to presume relationships between Hong Kong and China, thereby reiterating the newspaper’s pro-Beijing position.

For instance, the metaphor of parents and children is a recurring theme in many of the texts in our corpus. By comparing
Hong Kong to a son whose father is Mainland China, the metaphor presumes an unbalanced power relationship between the
two through emphasizing the value of filial piety. Articulated through various primary definers, this imbalance is presented
as a given state of reality which does not require interrogation. The excerpt below (excerpt 5) is a typical example featuring
the metaphor of parents and children. It is a feature interview with Mr. Wu Chor-Nam, the vice chairman of the Central and
Western District Council.
Excerpt 5

‘應將基本法融入基礎教育 – 訪中西區區議會副主席胡楚南’

He (Wu Chor-nam) used the following parallel to describe the relationship between the central government and Hong Kong, ‘the children think that they have the right to fall in love with anybody, so they ignore what their parents think. They would not tell their parents who they are going out with. Then one day they say ‘I am going to get married. You have no right to decide who and how I am going to marry, but you have to be responsible for any consequence resulting from this’. How could they expect the parents not to be angry over this?’

Ta Kung Pao, article 83, 2004-03-21, Local news, 07 feature interview.

Being a respected social figure, Wu has been credited by Ta Kung Pao as a primary definer and, as such, is quoted freely by the reporter. However, the use of the parents and children metaphor presumes several pieces of social and political knowledge for the reader of the interview. First of all, by using the parents and children metaphor, the author frames the relationship between Hong Kong and China in a cultural paradigm, where the Chinese traditional and Confucian value of filial piety is presumed to be universal. Secondly, interpreted in terms of Chinese familial traditions, the author also presumes a hierarchical relationship between Hong Kong and China: that Hong Kong being a minor is not in a position to bargain with Beijing over its own future. Thirdly, by presuming the metaphor of parents and children as a valid and appropriate comparison to describe Hong Kong and China's political situation, the author takes the lead in setting the agenda for the whole debate over Hong Kong's constitutional reforms. As a consequence, under such an interpretive framework, the desire of the democrats and their supporters for universal suffrage would appear to be unjustifiable.

In this excerpt, the parents and children metaphor can thus be seen as working in combination with both othering and non-naming. As mentioned earlier, it is rare to find any of the discursive strategies described in our corpus used alone, and this is also the case for metaphors. A more common scenario is that metaphors are combined with and used alongside other discursive strategies such as othering, and non-naming. By framing the debate in terms of parents and children, in this example, the author ridicules and others the Democrats as the undutiful son without pin-pointing and spelling out their names.

Below is another example of the use of metaphor in framing the debate over Hong Kong's constitutional reforms, where how to interpret the Basic Law is at the core.

Excerpt 6

‘回歸立法原意確保正確執行’

基本法不容曲解，更不容斷章取義，將之變成脫離歷史、脫離現實、脫離全局的僵化條文。基本法是活生生的、有血有肉的，她活在十四年的過渡、回歸歷史中，活在今

t
d天六百萬港人的現實、更活在十三億中國人民的現實中。

Article 96, Ta Kung Pao, 2004-03-16, A02, 社評
‘Return to the original motivations behind the Basic Law, so as to ensure correct execution’

It is intolerable to misinterpret the Basic Law, and worse to extrapolate its clauses, removing them from history, reality and totality. The Basic Law is alive, it has blood and flesh. It has lived through fourteen years of transition and return. It is now living not only in the reality of six million Hong Kong people, but also in the reality of 1.3 billion people in China.

Ta Kung Pao, 2004-03-16, Local news, A02, Editorial

In the above excerpt, the author makes use of the body metaphor to simulate the relationships between the Basic Law and the people of Hong Kong and China. Similar to excerpt 5, the author of this excerpt has attempted to presume several areas of knowledge for its reader. First, in terms of politics, the author presumes that the Basic law is under threat by people who try to misinterpret it, and that this is intolerable. Secondly, in terms of culture, the author presumes that the significance of the Basic Law goes beyond the lives of the six million population of Hong Kong to the 1.3 billion people in China. To justify this claim, the author made use of the body metaphor to frame his arguments. By stating that the Basic Law is alive and has flesh and bones, the author attempts to re-contextualize the Basic Law from a technical level to the daily lives of the society. Thirdly, by presuming the metaphor of the body as a legitimate comparison to describe Hong Kong's political situation, the author takes control in setting the interpretive paradigm for the debate over how to interpret the Basic Law. As a result of this, alternative interpretations of the Basic Law would appear to be a threat to Hong Kong society and therefore unreasonable.

6. Conclusion

In the beginning of this paper, we set out three major research questions. They are:

1. What kind of knowledge about socio-political and cultural identity is presumed by the discourse of Ta Kung Pao?
2. What sort of discursive strategies are used in presuming such identities?
3. To what extent do these strategies promote the discursive hegemony to which the discourse of Ta Kung Pao is directed?

In answering the first research question, an ideal identity of the Chinese patriot was presumed by Ta Kung Pao. The contour of this ideal of the Chinese identity can be sketched out in terms of socio-cultural as well as political knowledge.

In terms of socio-cultural knowledge, in many of our texts, being patriotic refers to a love for the Chinese traditional culture. However, what exactly traditional Chinese culture stands for is not often specified. In fact, the love for Chinese traditions is usually defined against aspiration for Western culture and lifestyles. For example, the stress on filial piety is emphasized as a Chinese value to be preferred to the western value of individualist universal suffrage. This identity of the patriot is also at times interpreted in terms of history, where the love for Chinese traditions is seen as a sign for resisting colonialism. This leads to the second area of presumed knowledge, which involves political presumptions. In many of our texts, the notion of social stability is presumed to be of paramount importance, differences in political stance (namely the desire for universal suffrage) are considered a challenge to social harmony and therefore marginalized as dissenting and unpatriotic. The identity of the patriot, as a consequence, is one that is anti – universal suffrage in favor of social stability, an identity that is highly politically charged and goal specific.

The second research question is ‘What sort of discursive strategies are used in presuming such identities?’ In analyzing our corpus of 250 articles from Ta Kung Pao, we have found three salient strategies that were used by the pro-Beijing newspaper in attempting to define and presume a socio-political and cultural identity for Hong Kong society. These strategies are othering, non-naming, and metaphors. However, as mentioned earlier, it is important to note that although these three strategies are distinctive and clearly identifiable, they are often combined, and therefore mutually supportive and reinforcing in creating a presumed discursive environment.

Finally, we asked at the beginning of this paper to what extent the strategies of presumption promote the discursive hegemony to which the discourse of Ta Kung Pao is directed. We found that the definition of patriotism is not one that is stable and universal. Instead, it appears to be relative and contextual. Very often, it is defined more through exclusion than otherwise. This shifting nature of patriotism reflects to a certain extent its origin as a constructed identity to counter popular demand for democracy. As the demands of the political environment change, so do its definition and the strategies of presumption. From this point of view, we can say that these strategies of presumption demonstrate flexibility and are therefore successful in presenting the pro-Beijing discourse, as articulated through Ta Kung Pao and its selected primary definers, such as experts and scholars whose opinions are also channelled through the newspaper. It would also be fair to say that these strategies are successful in providing a vehicle for the pro-Beijing discourse in framing the debate about who should be allowed to participate in Hong Kong governance, or who may be defined as a Hong Kong (Chinese) ‘patriot’, and thus contribute towards promoting its goal of discursive hegemony.
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