

Goals, Rights and Obligations, and Moral Order: An Evaluation Approach to Chinese-Kenyan Relating Experience

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Abstract : China's growing and deepening engagement in Africa has attracted numerous controversial debates on Chinese-African social-racial relations both in the media and academia. Most research tends to discuss this issue and the tensions involved at the state level, but limited attention has been given to the individual relating processes of those two racial groups from an intercultural politeness evaluation angle. Thus, taking Kenya as a country focus and putting it under recent perspectives on pragmatics and politeness, this study explores the Chinese-Kenyan workplace relating experience in Chinese-owned companies with the aim to offer new insights on Chinese-African social-racial tensions. The original data were collected through 25 interviews from 29 Chinese and Kenyan participants working in different Chinese companies and industries, some of which had been later on converted into 182 short story data in order to better capture the process and content dimensions of their experiences using Spencer & Kádár's politeness evaluation model. Both interview and story data were analysed in MAXQDA to understand the personal relating process and the criteria they were drawing from when making evaluative judgements of their relations. The result particular draws attention to tensions around goals, rights, and obligations, and social-moral dimensions that had been underrepresented in intercultural and pragmatics literature. The study offers alternative empirical insights into Chinese-Kenyan relations from an intercultural politeness management perspective and the possible mismatches of the evaluative criteria that potentially cause tension in this context.

Keywords : chinese-kenyan, evaluation, relating, workplace

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