

An intercultural trilingual semantic differential (SD) scale for empirical
research in aesthetic appreciation of buildings

蔡宜穎

Architecture and Urban Planning

Architecture

yiyint@chu.edu.tw

Abstract

The aesthetic appreciation of buildings has been recognised as critical guiding attribute both in terms of the long-term aspect of sustainability and as the basic reasoning for the continuous usage and management of the existing built environment. An aesthetic judgement, in Kant's perspective, is a basic dichotomy between two opposed sets of fundamental features, subjectivity and universality (Kant, 1928). According to Kant, judgements of taste are similar to empirical judgements that they have universal validity; but in paradox, they are also made on the basis of an inner subjective response or experience. Generally, the concept of aesthetic appreciation is concerned with the question of whether the qualities that give rise to an aesthetic perception are intrinsically within the object that they appear to qualify, or whether they exist only in the mind of the perceiver. Questions arise as to whether objects are understood through a particular mode of perception, the "aesthetic mode", or whether the objects have in themselves special qualities, the "aesthetic qualities", that are interpreted by the individual who experiences them, i.e. the perceiver? Subsequently, are these qualities universal and are they understood and appreciated through a universal mode of perception? The study presents in this paper proposes a methodological framework to address cross-cultural aesthetic perceptions in three different countries (England, Japan and Taiwan) and in each country's native languages to examine both the universal and cultural-specific aspects of aesthetic judgements. Respondents' aesthetic responses of buildings in the built environment were investigated through the language used in expressing feelings, describing perceptions and judging appreciations. An intercultural comparable but language independent semantic differential

scale was developed through qualitative survey and content analysis to avoid direct language translation bias. The developed trilingual SD scale allows aesthetic responses to be collected in multi-cultural contexts and across different languages. The obtained data could be transferred into numerical data to be analyzed using quantitative analysis methods to formulate findings which would contribute to the understanding and assessment of the aesthetic appreciation of the building environment.

Keyword : Aesthetic appreciation, building environment, cross-language, semantic differential (SD) scale, universal, intercultural.