Construction of CLT Discourse from A Cross-cultural Pragmatic Perspective

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Abstract: By investigating the philosophical meanings of the concept of cross culture, this paper probes into the construction of classroom discourse by closely following the important links as cultural coexistence, communication and mutual understanding, and meaning generation in the formation of cross-cultural awareness. From the macro perspective, classroom discourse should be built into a holistic culture with shaping power and internal connections. At the micro level, the contribution of the local factors to the construction of the discourse as a whole should also be given attention. On this basis, the macro-planning of the discourse determines the way of meaning construction, while the micro-analysis affects the result of meaning construction.

Keywords: Cross-cultural pragmatic competence; Cross-cultural awareness; Macro; Micro

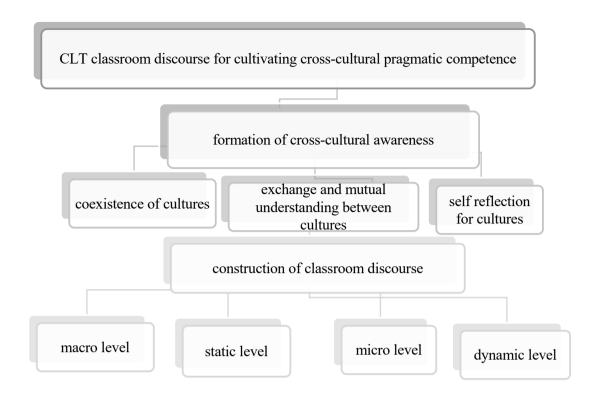
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Based on the philosophical meaning of "cross culture", the construction of classroom discourse in CLT (communicative language teaching) with the goal of cultivating cross-cultural pragmatic competence will be closely related to the important links of the coexistence of cultures, exchange and mutual understanding between cultures, and meaning generation in the formation of cross-cultural awareness. And the following discussion will be focused on: Who acts as the cultural subject in the classroom discourse of communicative language teaching? How is the cultural diversity reflected in classroom discourse? How is classroom discourse integrated into cultural dialogues and reflections? Meanwhile, the construction of the discourse will be discussed in a macro and micro way, combined with both the static and dynamic aspects of discourse construction, which is to describe the discourse structure at the macro and static levels and to analyze the detailed arrangements that need to be paid attention to both the overall motivation and the dynamic characteristics of the discourse at the same time. Hence, such a discourse construction will not only focus on the connection between the surface form, structural mode and discursive meaning of language, but more importantly, it can penetrate into the deep cultural connotations of language, pay attention to the cultural differences, cultural contexts and pragmatic strategies in dynamic language use, thus reflecting the theoretical and systematic aspects of classroom discourse construction.

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1. Cultural Subjectivity in Classroom Discourse

The goal of modern foreign language education should be that the learners are able to skillfully use the target foreign language while maintaining their own cultural identity (Siegal, 1996; Hinkel, 1996; Ellis, 2008), that is, the learners should hold a sense of subjectivity of their own cultural identity when they communicate with a foreign language. Therefore, the first significant link in the cultivation of cross-cultural competence is to make the learners fully aware and recognize their own culture, and make the learners have a knowledge of the values that they use as the basis of their judgment. (Byram, 1997, p.64).

Based on this, on the macro level, there should always be space for the local culture in the overall structure of the classroom discourse in communicative language teaching, and the topic and content with local cultural and social connotations should be appropriately integrated into the classroom discourse. At the same time, the role played and the functions undertaken by the local culture in the discourse should be considered in order to create a classroom discourse with cultural subjectivity and intercultural equality.

Based on the macro consideration of the overall structure arrangement and content selection of classroom discourse in the above discussion, on the micro level, the construction of classroom discourse in communicative language teaching should be focused on the concrete local pragmatic aspects. The local pragmatic aspects are related to all aspects of language use and it's necessary to make contributions to the overall way of discourse construction through the specific aspects of language use. Take Communicative English Teaching in China as an example. First, Chinese ways of speaking should be appropriately introduced into the classroom discourse, such as the style, discourse, expression, speech act, address words, grammar and vocabulary, phonetic features and paralinguistic features with Chinese cultural characteristics, and even some Chinese dialects can also be introduced. Furthermore, the concepts, categories and expressions with Chinese cultural characteristics should be introduced into the discourse, so as to provide an opportunity to investigate and explain the logic of different discourses. The thinking mode and discursive logic of different cultures possess their own uniqueness. For example, the concept of

"a community with a shared future for mankind", which is the most representative Chinese discourse in the new era, contains the cultural logic of China's unique ecological ethics, the concept of civilization and social ideals. Hence, a thorough interpretation of the cultural logic of discourse will help to clarify the profound causes of specific language and behavior in cross-cultural communication, so that the classroom discourse can be converted into different discourses, and a discourse that is easy to be misunderstood due to cultural differences can be converted into a clear and an accurate one, which will help to integrate different expressions from China and the foreign countries in the discourse. In addition, the classroom discourse should also be combined with rich and diverse Chinese cultural and social contexts. Only through the connection with the learners and social reality, and through the contrast and link between contexts, can the discourse system with Chinese cultural characteristics be integrated into the classroom discourse.

At the same time, based on the principle of cultural equality in cross-cultural communication, we should constantly create opportunities for equal dialogues between different cultures in the process of language use in the communicative language classroom. To learn foreign languages, especially international languages such as English, is to better carry out cross-cultural communication, rather than fully identify with and accept it as we do when we learn our native language. Therefore, the pragmatic competence of English should contain a broader vision and more diverse cultural knowledge, rather than just be limited to the content and standards of English language and culture. Specifically, pragmatic adaptation (Verschueren 1987, 1998, 2000) and pragmatic transfer (Terence 1989; Kasper 1992; Ellis 1997) in communication should be focused on in the construction of classroom discourse. In the context of cross-cultural communication, these two phenomena can best reflect language variability, negotiability and adaptability in the process of language use, thus vividly portraying the relevance and interaction between cultures. Pragmatic adaptation gives a reflection of a dynamic process of language choice and language use. Thus, the design of classroom discourse should pay close attention to the role played by cultural elements of both the target language and the mother tongue in this process. Through the design of crosscultural scenarios for communication, contextual correlates with cross-cultural characteristics should be constantly established, and language structures and pragmatic rules with cultural characteristics of native language should be properly introduced into classroom discourse to promote learners to think more deeply about language choice and use language flexibly, dynamically in communication. And it will not only ensure the joint participation of different cultural elements but also highlight cultural equality and language equality as the principle of crosscultural communication. At the same time, pragmatic transfer should be regarded as a communicative strategy to be integrated into the construction of classroom discourse. Through the design of the situations, learners can successfully achieve the communicative purpose by virtue of the rules or habits of their mother tongue, and thus the phenomena of positive pragmatic transfer will be introduced into the classroom discourse, which enables learners to consciously spread the local cultural tradition and construct the subjectivity of their cultural identity. This will be more conducive to embedding an equal communicative status and communicative psychology in the classroom discourse. Meanwhile, classroom discourse should also create a space for giving adequate evaluation on the phenomena of negative pragmatic transfer generated in communication according to specific and dynamic communicative situations.

In addition, the discourse in a communicative language classroom should also assume the function of paving the way, awakening and inspiring learner's sense of subjectivity in his cultural identity. Speech is an explicit form of the speaker's deep consciousness, with cultural and social characteristics (Searle, 1998). And it should be considered as a kind of opinion, even a worldview (Bakhtin, 2009). Therefore, while introducing the content with local cultural and social connotations, the classroom discourse should also be designed to be closely related to learner's individual identity and experience of his culture and society, constantly promoting the occurrence of learner's internal expression and self-recognition in the process of language use, thereby awakening and inspiring learners' cultural subjectivity consciousness.

2. Classroom Discourse with Cultural Diversity and Dialogicity

At the same time, cross-cultural communication requires the subject to consciously step out of their own cultural limitations, meet and communicate with different cultures. This is a process of establishing cross-cultural dialogues, which helps the subject move from the unfamiliar to the familiar, from superficial cognition to deep understanding, and from partial to comprehensive knowledge of different cultures. It is also a process that cultures move from the static to a dynamic development. Therefore, it would be a significant question to be considered in the cultivation of cross-cultural competence that how to keep promoting the depth of cross-cultural dialogues in the pragmatic process for the construction of classroom discourse, and to reveal "the relationship between different texts and contexts, stereotypes and traditions in different cultural contexts and traditions, and clarify the more complex interaction between them" (Yao Jiehou, 2011), so as to present a more comprehensive and dynamic context in cultures.

For example, the content selection for traditional Chinese communicative English teaching is mostly confined to the shallow recognition or classification of typical British or American cultural phenomena. After several years of study, the learners may only have accumulated a lot of facts and information about British and American culture. However, due to the lack of in-depth and thorough communication and thinking, the learners would easily form stereotypes or even misunderstandings about foreign cultures in their minds. Such training mode only presents the partial and one-sided picture of culture, and at best it is a popularization of foreign cultural knowledge. In terms of the mode of language use, the design of this classroom discourse is mainly based on information input and output by imitation of native English, and mechanically goes back and forth between the learners' training and the teacher's assessment. Such a discourse model lacks the challenge to thinking. And the space to fully arouse interactions is not built up in the discourse. Hence, the learners do not have adequate opportunity to give a thorough understanding of cultural connotations in the process of language use and are not able to establish a systematic cultural knowledge in their mind. So, their cross-cultural pragmatic competence has not been fully improved.

"Step out" for acquiring cross-cultural awareness must be realized through "cognitive conflict". We can update our brain schema only when the existing cognitive structure in our mind receives constant new conflicts (Piaget, 1983). Thus, from the macro level, the classroom discourse model should be characterized with cultural diversity and dialogic nature. Multiple cultural perspectives and conversational relationships will provide learners with the opportunity to come up against more abundant contextual factors and cope with more complex communicative situations, thereby continuously challenging their prior knowledge and cognition, prompting them to give more thinking of the choice of language forms and pragmatic strategies based on different communicative goals, and to make corresponding pragmatic adjustments and adaptations (Verschueren, 2000, p.55-57). Based on this, a wholeness through relevance in the discourse should be formed from a macro perspective (Gumperz, 1982; Cook, 1989; Gee&Green, 1998, p.33; Chafe, 2015; Hodges, 2015; Martin, 2015) so that a discourse model with internal motivation and cohesion can be established. An effective cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures require that cultures are not only presented as points, but also fully displayed as connected parts and coherent contexts. A careful examination should be given on multiple cultures, the relationship between cultures and among multiple elements in cultures in the construction of classroom discourse. These diverse cultures and cultural elements should "simultaneously take place in the same field of experience, forming a structured whole" as far as possible, so as to give a "structural comparison" between cultures (Shen, 2014, p.7). In this structure, due to its difference, each culture and cultural factor not only has a certain degree of independence but also forms an interdependent relationship because of their relevance and interaction in the discourse. At the same time, multiple cultural aspects are supposed to be presented dialectically both as continuous and broken in their respective historical dimensions, thus revealing the "dynamic tension through differences and complementarities, structure and historicity" between cultures (Shen, 2014, p.7). And the channel of cross-cultural dialogue is to be established from both horizontal and vertical dimensions, so that cultural diversity and dynamics can be more fully displayed in the discourse. Such a classroom discourse model is able to reflect the intertextual connection in the construction of discourse meaning (Gee&Green, 1998, p.33; Chafe, 2015; Hodges, 2015; Martin, 2015) in terms of discursive content and language use, which will contribute to the implementation of the discourse function of the internal organic connection and a dynamic development. Thus, it will help learners make pragmatic choices in cross-cultural communication with a more comprehensive cultural cognition.

Based on the above discussion, from the micro point of view, first of all, building classroom discourse with the characteristics of cultural diversity and dialogic nature requires us to fully explore and shape cultural diversity in the discourse by making use of the multi-modal factors in the process of language use such as context, situation, language user and communicative relationship (Brumfit, 2003; Crawford, 2006; Nunn, 2007; Bakhtin, 2009; Urszula,2022). Secondly and more importantly, communicative language classroom should focus on exploring modes of discourse which can reflect cultural differences. There has long been an intellectual tradition that treats language as varying in form and function from culture to culture and see discourse as a set of culturally infiltrated and competitive 'games' (for example, Sapir 1949; von Humboldt 1988; Whorf 1956). Therefore, classroom discourse should be characterized with the pragmatic features that can reflect different cultural modes of thinking, behavior and interpersonal relationships. For example, topics or concepts that can accommodate the interpretation of cultural diversity can be introduced into the discourse. The different interpretations of the same concept in different discourse systems reflect the shaping role of culture in discourse. The differences in understanding of the same concept can best reflect the deep understanding and logic of cultural discourse, and also acts as the key part of the cultural context in discourse. For another example, communicative English classroom should not take the pragmatic rules of British and American English as a single standard and model to construct the discourse, but should include more diverse pragmatic norms of English, treat English as a truly universal language, so that the learners can understand and contact more vivid and widely accepted pragmatic rules (Jenkins, 2007; Fang, 2011; Widdowson, 2012; Baker, 2015; Heath, Jim and Nicola, 2021), which embodies more diverse cultural differences. In addition, the discourse can also incorporate diversified language phenomena of English generated through pragmatic adaptation. These phenomena as language variant are produced when English is used by different groups of people, and the success of language adaptation can reflect the exchange and integration of different cultures. Thus, it will be helpful for the learners to compare and understand the pragmatic features caused by cultural differences in communication. Cross-cultural communication is not only for "searching for new source of information, but also leading to a deeper understanding of self and other" (Si Zhu, 2008). Effective cross-cultural communication is based on encounters and exchanges of cultural differences. With the characteristics of diversity, adaptability and variability in the use of language, classroom discourse can effectively awaken the historical memory of culture, reach the deep structure of culture, and promote the meeting and dialogue between cultures so as to effectively strengthen learner's cross-cultural awareness and pragmatic competence in communication.

Moreover, a dialogic relationship between cultures requires the classroom discourse to be shaped into an organic and dynamic whole. Discourse itself is dialogic in nature because all discourses take place in the social and historical context, and one discourse is always in a dialogic relationship with another discourse prior to it (Gadamer,1977; Kecskes,2017; Bakhtin,2009; Weigand,2009,2021). Therefore, the classroom discourse should focus on constructing and exploring the evocative and dialogic space in the process of language use. and the multi-dimensional relevance, responsiveness and dynamics between utterances, speeches, texts and discourses should be explored in order to contribute to the stimulation and continuity of the dialogues between cultures.

3. Classroom Discourse for Self-Reflection

"Cross culture" is not only a process of comparing cultures and recognizing differences, but also a process for a subject to step out of an isolated closed self and into a new, pluralistic, and open one. This is the stage at which the

subject constantly updates his cognition and understanding of local culture and foreign culture in the dialogue to achieve the "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1999, p.8) of cultural understanding. The fusion of horizons of cultural understanding means to achieve the re-structure of the subjective consciousness and position through dialogues and negotiations between different cultural perspectives and stands. In another word, the premise for achieving the fusion of horizons is that the subject must undergo profound reflection, introspection and criticism on his understanding in cultures. Because only through reflection and criticism can a dynamic and open space be formed inside the subject, which would accommodate multiple perspectives and positions (Baker,2012; Hermans, 2016; Linell,2017), so as to build up cross-cultural awareness with cross-cultural formation. Therefore, to cultivate the learners' cross-cultural competence is ultimately to cultivate their reflective and critical abilities.

However, the traditional Chinese communicative English classroom mainly focuses on providing opportunities for the learners to do activities for practicing language skills. The local learners with the same background of language and culture are intentional and unnatural in their adaptation to English culture when communicating in English. Most of them just indiscriminately imitate the target language in form. This kind of imitation cannot form a real affinity in the psychology and relationship of both parties because there is always a sense of distance between the local speaker and the target-language culture. Hence, the learners have not acquired authentic cross-cultural communicative competence. What happens here is only that the learners imitate the forms and cultures of a foreign language, or even blindly follow it. Therefore, communicative language classroom should not only focus on the input of target language culture and the training of target language in communication. Based on this, the classroom discourse should also include an arrangement for reflection, that is, to provide a discursive space for the classroom to conduct in-depth discussion on the pragmatic aspects at specific communicative scenes. And the discourse for reflection is based on the combination of cross-cultural communication and language use. It is to put dynamic language use into the comparison between cultures.

From a macro perspective, the discourse for reflection in communicative language classroom should be characterized by inquiry, sharing and negotiation, because the formation of cross-cultural awareness is based on the development of the subject's deep consciousness such as the awareness of equal dialogue, of comparison, of self-criticism and of negotiation. This discourse, which is jointly constructed by interactive activities and individual's internal mental activities, provides a good chance for learners to internalize knowledge and to strengthen cultural awareness (Vygotsky, 1978, p.18). The discourse for reflection specializes in discussing and studying specific discourse, and its construction contributes to the heterogeneity of the classroom discourse. In this part of discourse, learners can fully relate their own social, family and psychological experiences to the classroom communication so that the discursive components such as terminology of various subjects, slang of social communication, professional knowledge and individual experience will be combined together to form a heterogeneous culture in the classroom. By respecting and retaining different sources of knowledge, the discourse for reflection makes the classroom teaching truly related to the outside world, and thus can inspire multiple perspectives, multiple ways of speech and communication for establishing multiple dialogues. It also meets the demand of classroom discourse to shape crosscultural awareness. The intention of the discourse is not to lead or control, but to inspire and maintain a dynamic openness. For the consideration of the cultivation of learners' cross-cultural awareness, the content of the classroom discourse should be related to the cultural identity of learners in order to prompt learners to think more carefully of interpersonal and cultural relations in specific contexts when they use language to communicate, and thus closely connect the pragmatic aspects with learners' cultural self-consciousness. Otherwise, language learning will only be mechanically memorizing and imitating but cannot be internalized into communicative competence. Therefore, the classroom should be transformed into a collective activity in mutual assistance. The scaffold that can promote thinking and consulting should be built up in the discourse (Hoogsteder, 1998, p.30). In the traditional classroom, the right of interpretation, assessment and feedback is basically in the hands of teachers. It can be said that teachers dominate classroom discourse. However, only when learners play a leading role in classroom teaching, can classroom provide a good opportunity for language acquisition (Ellis, 2008, p.32; David, 2022). Only by constructing the discourse for reflection, or by constantly introducing reflective and critical perspectives into classroom discourse, making the practice of communicative activities as an object of classroom discussion and as the learning resources shared by the class (Engle, 2002), giving the rights of explaining, interpreting and evaluating to the learners under the teachers' questioning and guidance, making the students' ideas and views run through the classroom discourse, and achieving the combination of practice and reflection, the learners' cognition and competence can be truly improved.

From the micro level of discourse construction, the discourse for reflection is not only composed of the exact memory and description of psychological activities in specific communications, but also the review and reflection of specific pragmatic aspect. For example, although most Chinese students in the communicative English class have a basic understanding of the occasions and interpersonal relationships in communication, and have the knowledge that the choice of language forms should be based on the specific context, they often fail to grasp the cultural and pragmatic connotations of different language forms because they do not understand the deep relevance between language forms and culture, such as confusing the occasions of use for different synonymous structures. Therefore, discourse for reflection should focus on appropriateness of language use and the best effect of communication in different cultural contexts. The discussion should give special attention to the pragmatic-transfer phenomena when the local learners are using the target language. For example, a more comprehensive judgment is required on what pragmatic transfer should be incorporated to further spread the local culture, and in which context should the pragmatic rules of the target language culture be adapted to avoid cultural clash and misunderstandings. Actually, it is a process of constructing a multi-level discourse through specific language use, and meanwhile strengthening cross-cultural awareness through multiple discourses, then guiding language use through the strengthened awareness. Consequently, the discourse is being placed in an endless process of being re-constructed. Therefore, it is a dynamic process of continuous coordination and negotiation, which enables the discourse dynamically responds to old habits of thinking and speaking and promotes the restructuring of cultural awareness. Reflection is the process of internalization, which is far more effective than the cycle of inputting, memorizing and outputting. And the discourse for reflection is to explore the relationship between cultures, and between cultures and language use. In this way, foreign language learning is not only an imitation according to standardized or idiomatic indicators, but also an integration of learners' active thinking and language choice. Therefore, through the interaction in this part of the discourse, students can not only update their knowledge and enhance their cultural awareness, but also complete the purposes of both rhetoric and communication, which will work together on their learning process.

4. Conclusion

It is of both theoretical and practical significance to explore the construction of classroom discourse for cultivating cross-cultural pragmatic competence in CLT. From a theoretical perspective, this study integrates cross-cultural philosophical ideas into the study of CLT classroom discourse construction, which is innovative for the researches in both the cultivation of cross-cultural competence and CLT classroom discourse construction. At the same time, this study combines the macro and micro levels of discourse construction to explore the issue, which also fills the gap in current relevant literature. From a practical perspective, this study provides a comprehensive exploration of the classroom discourse construction from both macro and micro perspectives, which can serve as a reference for the design of relevant foreign language teaching materials and classroom teaching.

However, at the same time, it's also necessary for this study to further improve this theoretical framework proposed here through practices and tests in the future.

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