Cross-cultural Methodological View on Construction of CLT Discourse

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Abstract: Cross-cultural competence becomes a focal point in modern foreign language education. And cross-cultural pragmatic competence is the concentrated manifestation of cross-cultural competence for foreign language learners. Hence, it is of great practical significance to explore the construction of classroom discourse in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in order to cultivate the learners' cross-cultural pragmatic competence. The cultivation of cross-cultural pragmatic competence is closely related to the formation of cross-cultural awareness.

Keywords: Cross-cultural competence; CLT discourse; Cross-cultural awareness

1. Introduction

With the development of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become increasingly extensive and frequent, which has also raised new issues for communicative language teaching(CLT). The mode of communicative language teaching is to improve the learners' communicative competence of the target language through communicative language activities, that is, to teach in a communicative language environment, and to transform knowledge into language skills and develop this skill into communicative competence through substantial language practices. Therefore, communicative language teaching fully embodies the concept of learning to use language by language use, and its core teaching goal is to improve the learners' pragmatic competence and to train the learners to use language appropriately in different contexts and on specific occasions. Take communicative English teaching in Chinese universities as an example. The training of pragmatic competence in different communicative situations and interpersonal relationships can be achieved indirectly through scene simulation and role-playing in classroom, but how can the cross-cultural communication be adequately practiced, and how can the competence of language use in cross-cultural contexts and situations be fully cultivated since the communicative activities usually only take place among local Chinese learners in the local contexts?

Cross-cultural pragmatic competence is the pragmatic competence in cross-cultural communications, which is closely related to a significant target for contemporary foreign language education: the cultivation of cross-cultural competence. In fact, the curriculum in the new era puts forward higher requirements for the ability of critical thinking and pragmatic competence, as well as the ability to tell Chinese culture in foreign languages (He, 2020; Wen, Chang, 2021). Therefore, cross-cultural pragmatic competence is also an important component of cross-cultural competence. It focuses on the competence of language use in cross-cultural contexts, which also brings more thinking and ideas for the reform and development of communicative language teaching.

Classroom discourse acts as the essential component and the major support of communicative language teaching. The major operational mode of communicative language teaching is to improve learners' communicative

competence of the target language through classroom discourse. Hence, the mode of classroom discourse designed in the teaching reflects the training mode of pragmatic competence (Johnson,1995). And the core mechanism of communicative language teaching is that the learners' communicative pragmatic competence is cultivated by the formation and the development of the classroom discourse. Therefore, the discourse in communicative language classroom should be considered in an ontological sense. This classroom discourse is supposed to be constructed as both the teaching goal and the method to achieve it. It embodies the teaching philosophy of the course and gives reflection of the language, belief, cognitive structure and empirical knowledge of teachers and students through their interactions in the classroom environment. This classroom discourse not only depicts the interaction in classroom teaching and learners' language learning process, but also guides and determines the results of the course learning. Communicative language learning is the process for achieving the acquisition of certain discourse in classroom discourse. Hence, this classroom discourse acts not only as the carrier of subject knowledge itself, but also functions to shape identity and construct cultural values. At the same time, this discourse is different from the social discourse that occurs outside the classroom. Although it includes the simulation of different social scenes, it is not completely spontaneous and random but takes communicative language classroom as its specific context and works for specific teaching motives and intentions. Therefore, what we want to discuss here is how to construct this classroom discourse so that the cross-cultural pragmatic competence of the learners can be fully cultivated.

2. Current Research Status

The inadequacy of cross-cultural pragmatic competence among learners has become a prominent issue in current foreign language teaching in universities (Xu, Tian, Huang,2020; Chen, Liang,2021; Bardis, Silman, Mohammadzadeh,2021). Taking Chinese universities as an example, the overall level of cross-cultural pragmatic competence among college students is relatively low, and the learners are lacking of self-awareness in improving cross-cultural pragmatic competence. The main reason for this is that there are limitations in imparting pragmatic and cultural knowledge in foreign language teaching, and the classroom does not place enough importance on cultivating the learners' cross-cultural pragmatic competence. Due to various reasons such as insufficient pragmatic and cultural knowledge contained in textbooks and tests, and extremely limited opportunities for the learners to engage in cross-cultural communication and practice.

Meanwhile, scholars have also proposed different solutions and strategies to address the above issues. For example, it is suggested that the classroom teaching should optimize traditional teaching methods by deeply analyzing the thinking patterns of Chinese and Western cultures and creating cross-cultural contexts so that to effectively guide the learners to correctly understand the commonalities and differences between different cultures, enhance international understanding and cross-cultural pragmatic competence, and reduce pragmatic errors (Han,2023). Meanwhile, some scholars have also proposed that teachers should strengthen the input of pragmatic and cultural knowledge in foreign language teaching, increase the proportion of cultural and cross-cultural pragmatic knowledge in textbooks and tests, and provide the learners with more opportunities for cross-cultural communication to enhance their ability to use language appropriately in the concerned contexts (Xu, Tian, Huang,2020). These studies have explored the issue of enhancing learners' cross-cultural pragmatic competence from a broad and comprehensive perspective, involving multiple aspects related to foreign language teaching. However, there are still issues with insufficient depth. More pitifully, these studies have not been able to explore this issue in conjunction with the construction of classroom discourse, which acts as the core component in foreign language teaching.

Since the application and development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in colleges and universities around the world, the academic circles have been discussing and studying it continuously. However, the literature on classroom discourse in CLT is also inadequate. While the concerned research is basically focused on the teacher's

part (Sinclair,1982; Walsh, 2001; Sun, Wang, 2009; Hu, 2015; Wu, 2016; Jiang, 2020), the relevance and interaction in classroom discourse are not considered as an important part to be highlighted in the overall discussion. The article "Micro-analysis of Classroom Discourse: Theory, Method and Practice" mainly discusses the present situation and development prospect of classroom discourse research by three major ways of micro-analysis: ethnographic communication analysis, conversational analysis and systemic functional language analysis (Huang, 2006). However, this study only gives implications for foreign language teaching, without focusing on communicative language teaching. Meanwhile, the study mainly involves the micro level of classroom discourse but fails to explore it from a macro perspective.

At the same time, the literature on the cultivation of pragmatic competence in cross-cultural communication in foreign language teaching is also very limited. Among them, the article "Cultivation of Pragmatic Competence from the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication" mainly analyzes the causes and solutions of pragmatic failures in cross-cultural communication, and thus puts forward suggestions on the cultivation of pragmatic competence in foreign language teaching (Mo, 2016). This study combines the goal of cultivating pragmatic competence in foreign language teaching with the analysis of cross-cultural pragmatic failure, which has the advantage of closely linking the classroom with reality. However, the research does not highlight the cultivation of cross-cultural awareness in pragmatic competence, and the suggestions on the cultivation of classroom pragmatic competence fail to give systematic and holistic enlightenment.

So far, there is very limited literature on the cultivation of cross-cultural pragmatic competence in communicative language classroom. Hence, combined with the context of the current development of foreign language education and the current situation of relevant academic research, this paper will take communicative English teaching in Chinese universities as an example to explore how to construct a discourse model of communicative language classroom motivated by cultivating cross-cultural pragmatic competence.

3. Methodological View on Construction of CLT Classroom Discourse

(1) Classroom discourse and cross-cultural awareness

Classroom discourse plays the central role in CLT practice. Classroom discourse reflects the overall picture of speech activities in classroom. Discourse is implemented through language use, and the process of language use includes such factors as language users, situations, context and language, etc. At the same time, cross-cultural pragmatic competence is the ability to use language appropriately in cross-cultural communication, and the cultivation of cross-cultural pragmatic competence is based on the cultivation of cross-cultural awareness and pragmatic competence. Therefore, for the communicative language classroom, how to combine these two aspects closely and build up a cross-cultural awareness throughout the process of language use will be the essential task of the classroom discourse construction (McCarthy, Michael and Ronald,1994; Walsh,2006,2011).

In order to better understand the principles and the mechanism of the formation of cross-cultural awareness, and integrate the steps and systems contained in the formation of cross-cultural awareness into the operation of classroom discourse construction, this study will adopt a cross-cultural philosophical perspective to explore the steps and links of cross-cultural awareness formation based on the meaning of the concept of cross culture. On this basis, the formation of cross-cultural awareness will serve as the main framework for the discussion of the classroom discourse construction, ensuring the integration of classroom discourse construction and cross-cultural awareness cultivation.

Within the framework of the formation of cross-cultural awareness, the construction of CLT classroom discourse will be explored and analyzed at different stages. Meanwhile, the discussions on classroom discourse construction will be conducted from both macro and micro perspectives. The macro-design of the classroom discourse

determines the way of meaning construction, while the micro-level layout and analysis affect the result of meaning construction (Roschelle, 1994; Tsui, 2008). On this basis, from a macro perspective, classroom discourse should be built into a holistic culture with shaping power and internal relevance. From the microscopic point of view, the contribution made by local factors to the overall construction should be given close attention. Therefore, the discussion at macro level will mainly focus on subjectivity, conceptual selections, overall organizational structure and so on. At the micro level, the analysis will focus on the pragmatic utility and contribution of the local discourses.

(2) Three links in constructing CLT classroom discourse

Wolfgang Welsch, the German cultural philosopher, put forward the concept of "cross culture" in the 1990s, aiming to clarify the transcendence of "cross culture" over the classical ideas of "multi-culture" and "interculturality", and portray "the form of life after the disintegration of culture itself" (2004). The original meaning of "cross culture" is mainly to show "a certain structure of the complex modern world" (Fang, 2015), by which only a static and consequential picture is portrayed. With more profound understanding of the concept, the connotation of "cross culture" is also constantly enriched, showing the transition from a static understanding to a dynamic interpretation, and from a result evaluation to a process analysis. Combined with the requirements of talent cultivation in colleges in the new era, the concept of cross culture should be understood not only as a description of the forms and results of cross-cultural communication, but also a reflection and presentation of the process of cross-cultural communication. In the discussion of this paper, "cross culture" is being understood as an action with a sense of subjectivity, and its meaning is mainly shown through the word "cross", which includes two layers of meanings: "step out" and "step in". Stepping out means walking out of an isolated, closed and stagnant subjectivity, while stepping in means walking into a diversified, open and developing world of self. Therefore, the concept of "cross culture" can be interpreted as a process in which a subject constantly meets, collides and blends with the local culture and foreign cultures, and is also a round-trip in which a subject constantly deconstructs and constructs in the cross-cultural dialogues. What it deconstructs is isolation, stagnation and opposition between cultures, and what is constructed is the connections between cultures and the universalizability of culture (Shen, 2014, p.11).

A philosophical understanding of the concept of "cross culture" suggests the principle and mechanism of the formation of cross-cultural awareness, which essentially reflects a continuous process of cross-cultural communication. It contains several coherent links such as coexistence of cultures, exchange and mutual understanding between cultures, and the generation of meaning (Scollon and Suzanne, 2001). Therefore, to cultivate the cross-cultural pragmatic competence of the learners, the major task of the discourse construction in communicative language classroom is to operate the classroom discourse in these links. First, the premise of cultural coexistence is that the subject should see and recognize culture itself, whether local or foreign. Hence, the introduction and full presentation of multiculturalism in discourse has become the primary condition for cross-cultural action; Next, the "step out" action requires a cultural subject to consciously detach himself from his own culture, and meet and communicate with other different cultures. This is the process of seeking mutual recognition and understanding between cultural subjects. Hence, adequate opportunities for dialogues and interactions provided by the discourse, which is supposed to go through the whole process, will be the only means to achieve this target; Finally, a more profound meaning of cross-cultural communication is that cultural subjects can reflect on themselves and update themselves in the dialogue. Meanwhile, a new state of mutual openness and integration between the cultural subjects can be achieved. This requires that the dialogue between cultures should go deep into reflection, criticism and ultimate care of each other, and thus can give introspection and help to bring about development of both the local culture and heterogeneous cultures at the same time. Therefore, only by promoting reflection, criticism, integration, and reorganization through the discourse can cultural subjects enrich each other and achieve common progress in dialogues.

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