

Exploring Multiple Literacy Modes in Intercultural Communicative English Teaching from the Perspective of Language Economics

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Abstract: This paper discusses intercultural communicative English teaching, using certain scientific teaching methods in the context of language economics. The hope is to stimulate students' interest in English learning by means of multiple literacy modes and provide a sound educational foundation for the intercultural communication talents in our society. Multi-literacy scientific and efficient teaching methods are comprehensively presented in this study, with the aim of ensuring bright development in the fields of both teaching and learning.

1. Introduction

With the expansion of communications among different regions and cultures in this new era, interpersonal communication has become increasingly indispensable. Meanwhile, languages, the functions of which have begun to penetrate into politics, economy, science and technology, culture and other domains, are taken as the most basic means of reflecting the importance of communication. Then, with the continuous acceleration of population flow, informationization and intelligence in China, the relationship between language and the economy has become increasingly prominent. Language researches have also been aware of the economic attributes of language (Fu, 2020). Therefore, taking students as the main body in teaching, this paper first manages to implement multiple literacy teaching modes in an intercultural communicative English class. This approach is used for the sake of students' enthusiasm for their improvement of independent learning and learning efficiency. Thus, improving students' intercultural communicative English ability is regarded as being extremely helpful to the students, as well as helping to ensure the practical teaching method's quality and efficiency.

2. Language economics

2.1 The basic connotation of language economics

Language economics, as an interdisciplinary branch of economics, focuses on the study of language variables, language values, economic attributes and related problems with economic theories and methods. This study, by means of economic analysis, takes languages as its research object, in order to study the formation and evolution of languages, speech behavior strategies and languages policies. In 1965, Jacob Marschak, as a professor of economics at the University of California at Los Angeles and a pioneer of information economics and language economics, proposed that languages have the essence of economics: value, utility, cost and benefit. Ever since, great progress was made in this subject. Thanks to researchers' outstanding efforts, especially Grin and Vaillancourt, some theoretical views on the relationship between language and income, language and economic development, the dynamic development of language and language policy have been formed. These views provide useful guidance for the formulation of a macro language policy. And these main theoretical points include the following: first, language itself is a kind of human capital with economic value. While using language as that capital is sufficient to obtain other capital (such as knowledge and skills). Secondly, learning a second language is an economic

investment that requires the consideration of cost and expected benefits (anticipated benefits of investment). In addition, having language skills that enable communication in one or more foreign languages is regarded by more and more people as a sort of high-value “language capital”, due to that capital’s high expected return. Thirdly, language usage reflects economic value, which in turn can be divided into high and low levels. Fourthly, the economic utility of language depends on many factors (Grin, 1996).

It was not until the end of the 20th century that the economic analysis of languages was introduced into China as an academic trend. Now, this subject is enjoying great popularity in researches pertaining to foreign language education based on economic perspectives. The first scholar to explore languages and economics in China was Professor He, whose book “Pragmatics and English Learning” (1997) discusses the relationship between languages and the economy. Professor He pointed out that the economic value of language lies in: engaging in a profession or an activity, in which people can accrue economic benefits through work with the help of languages. In addition, languages meet the needs of society in the labor market for economic benefits. Later, scholars such as Xu Qichao (1999), Zhang Weiguo (2008), Huang Shaoan (2017) and others became some of the representative figures in this field. Some of the relevant research topics include: Xu Qilong (2010) analyzed the key role played by foreign language education in the constituent elements of human capital. The study revealed the significance of the economic analysis of language for current foreign language education planning. Zhang Weiguo (2011) proposed both broad and narrow definitions of language economics, while also defining the scope of language economics in terms of research boundaries and research fields. Wang Lifei (2014) examined the current situation of foreign language economics with empirical research methods. This study pointed out the research direction for language economics in the future. As many former studies have already focused on the macro aspect of language economics, this paper hopes to study intercultural communicative English based on language economics from the micro level.

2.2 Language economics and English education

According to the language economics theory, as long as any language meets the needs of different levels in the labor market, economic benefits with a certain market value can be achieved (Han, 2012). At present, thanks to the rapid growth of international economic and trade exchanges, the demand for human resources who are proficient in English (plus one or two majors) is urgent in China. As English has become one of the necessary media for sustainable economic development, the rise of that language’s market value can inevitably enhance the development of China’s English teaching personnel. Yet, the primary problem for English language teaching now is: how can we make the most of our university resources to effectively promote the formation of human capital and then cultivate the English talents for economic development? Human capital refers to the accumulation of knowledge and skills that have been acquired by workers through their investment in education, training, migration and health care. Language as human capital can be defined as the accumulation of language knowledge, language ability and language skills acquired by workers through their investment in education, training and “learning by using”. All those investments will not only increase individual income and employment opportunities in production activities, but they can also expand individual consumption choices and improve consumers’ utility in their daily consumption activities. Then, the transaction costs in intercultural communication generated by different languages become significantly different. For example, Chinese, as a high context language, can appropriately express meaning, even in a state of vague and distorted information coding. Meanwhile, English, as a low context language, must construct clear information coding in grammar, vocabulary and sentence pattern, in order to accurately express meaning (Zhou, 2020). Due to these language differences, it is appropriate and necessary to use language economics as a theoretical framework to further study intercultural communicative English along with that language’s economic characteristics.

3. Overview of multiple literacy teaching modes

Multiple literacy modes, which are based on the teaching design proposed by the New London Group (1996), are mainly created through the process of “existing design-design-redesign”. The four teaching and learning steps are referred to here as “situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice”. According to the New London Group (1996), the design elements include language design, visual design, auditory design, posture design, space design, multi-mode design and so on. In a sense, the construction of any meaning in languages involves multiple modes. For instance, the text written on paper is not only a language design; it is also a visual design. Meanwhile, oral language is not merely a language design; it is also an auditory design. Based on these premises, the essence of students’ multiple literacy skills is to cultivate them, allowing the students to exert the design elements, in order to make the most of the existing design. Then, the students can develop the ability of redesign through design. These skills can emphasize the multiple interpretations and expressions, both for the textual meaning in different symbol patterns, and in the cultural thinking developed in the process. In addition, as these multiple literacy teaching modes attach importance to the social and cultural context of meaning construction, the four teaching and learning steps are an integral process. While there is no specific implementation sequence, the four steps are of great use for learners in terms of learning by doing (Zhang, 2014). With this design, students should be able to better grasp the relevant learning contents, thus pursuing their passion in the actual learning process as part of the long-term plan.

With the purpose of cultivating an explorative and creative learning atmosphere under such an innovative teaching system, these modes break through the barriers of traditional teaching methods. The new modes achieve the reconstruction of a scientific teaching system that is available for students to learn independently. Unlike traditional teaching concepts, these teaching modes consider the students as the main body of learning. Taking students as the centerpiece of teaching, teachers first build a learning platform, with modes implemented in the process. This method creates teaching situations that address students' actual needs. In addition, teachers design the teaching objectives, select attractive teaching contents, and guide students into the actual learning environment. This approach lays a good foundation for nurturing students' self-perception of their own ability, thereby enhancing students' subjective mobility in autonomous learning.

4. The multiple literacy modes in ic English teaching

Under the context of the language economic theory, this research mainly analyzes and studies the teaching content of intercultural communicative English, based on multiple literacy teaching modes. The expectation is to lay a good foundation for high-quality teaching and to meet the actual needs for intercultural English talents. Based on the theoretical system of language economics, one can find that the training and guidance of talented individuals is an early investment in human resources. This investment can be of great value and significance to the long-term development of the market economy. As a tool for international economic and cultural communication, English can enhance exchanges between countries, thereby helping to meet the actual needs of economic development. To a large extent, these types of exchanges can actually promote language teaching. Therefore, putting forward the scientific guiding concepts of language economics in the field of intercultural English teaching can help students to better master English and improve their practical communication skills in the actual learning process. This approach can provide the comprehensive talents necessary for social economic development. Therefore, carrying out multiple literacy teaching modes is definitely one of the most important tasks in the context of language economics.

4.1 Basic requirements for multiple literacy teaching modes

To conduct multiple literacy modes in intercultural communicative English, teachers should first master relevant theories and concepts, understand and master the university curriculum content, and assess the demand for talents and training direction. Completing these steps will help determine the

methods that should be used for human resources delivery. Firstly, based on the actual work of intercultural communicative English teaching in China's colleges and universities, teaching materials are selected, and English teaching courses are set up based on actual needs. Then, the multiple literacy teaching modes are applied in the teaching process, so as to meet students' needs. Moreover, the overall teaching design is applied, based on the teaching content of each part of the textbook, as students are placed in groups to sample intercultural communicative English learning. Throughout the whole teaching process, teachers are required to clearly classify students based on their individual differences. Teachers must also provide guidance for students, based on their learning ability, in order to ensure the optimization of students' learning effects.

4.2 Detailed deployment of multiple literacy modes in intercultural communicative English teaching

Intercultural communicative English teaching is inseparable from actual international intercultural communication. To ensure that international trade exchanges are available without any erroneous communication or problems, we should lay a good foundation for students' participation. This means that, in the process of developing intercultural communicative English teaching with multiple literacy modes, we should pay attention to the scientific deployment of detailed work. Adjustments should also be made that consider different teaching characteristics, and courses should be arranged to ensure the quality of actual teaching work.

1) Overview of relevant theories

In the process of conducting research on intercultural communicative teaching, it is first necessary to understand and master the relevant intercultural communicative theories. This will lay a good foundation for the actual teaching of intercultural communicative English. When students understand the basic intercultural communicative English concepts, they will constantly build up their intercultural communicative English knowledge skills in the actual learning process. Thus, the concepts and theories of language economics are enhanced in the English learning and the improvement of students' cognitive ability.

2) Grammar knowledge system

In order to consolidate the basic content of teaching, students should master language skills in intercultural communicative English, thus cultivating the practical ability needed for intercultural communicative English application. Teachers are supposed to conduct scientific researches and analyses of on intercultural communicative English teaching and acquire further training skills, in order to ensure the smooth development of practical teaching work. This will, in turn, cultivate students' practical ability in the usage of intercultural communicative English. Therefore, conditional sentence judgments in the actual English teaching work are needed. In addition, sentences that are frequently used in the application of intercultural communication in English should be used repetitively, in order to ensure the scientificity and integrity of the actual work.

3) Development of group activities with multiple literacy modes

To conduct multiple literacy modes, group learning activities are carried out in class. Different groups are appointed to discuss different topics. Each group then transmits the in-depth interpretation and analysis, respectively, of the relevant learning contents during the learning steps, in order to ensure the accomplishment of the current specific teaching content. Attention is paid both to questions in class and to the repeated training of relevant teaching content, with the aim of improving students' proficiency in the process. In case studies, the teaching plans are designed for the intercultural communicative English students. Scenarios are set up in multiple literacy modes, in order to promote students' intercultural English learning, and the teaching contents are implemented during the actual teaching process. Finally, the establishment of a scientific evaluation system, including the scientific and reasonable evaluation of students' intercultural competence, is set up. Such evaluations better enhance the feedback and ensure the actual test results as part of the teaching design. The whole process is combined with online and offline teaching, with integrated MOOC videos (an online learning format), realistic situations, PowerPoint presentations, and various related resources on the internet, all of which fully reflects the characteristics of multiple

literacy modes. For instance, when conducting group activities that include the analysis of Coca-Cola's and Wang Lao Ji's advertisements, which are displayed differently in China and in the West, teachers first prepare two different styles of Coca-Cola and Wang Lao Ji advertisements. Ample time is allowed for students to make preparations based on the task arrangement. The instructional videos for advertisements are carefully selected and are quite splendid, clearly revealing the sales interests of the different goods in these two regions. Also, the non-verbal expressions reflected in these two videos exert different effects on the understanding of intercultural communication in different countries. After watching the videos, students obtain an awareness of the cultural collision between China and the West. This knowledge will be of great help, guiding students in their analysis and summaries of the intercultural activities in the videos. This will further help them to interpret individualism and collectivism, and to acquire some common intercultural basic knowledge in the intercultural communication process. Through an analysis of the videos, teachers can sum up the core values of China and the West, while students can experience the fun brought about by combining intercultural theoretical knowledge with a specific case, thus further arousing their interest in learning. Afterwards, according to the original arrangement, teachers continue with the assignment, based on the key knowledge imparted to the student, with certain guidance. In this way, the whole teaching process fully integrates language economics as related to human resources investment and the concept of multiple literacy modes. In addition, teaching design and steps are effectively reflected in the whole teaching and learning process for the students' benefit.

5. The significance of multiple literacy modes

Since cultivating students' enthusiasm of active learning can improve students' actual learning abilities, the use of diversified literacy teaching modes is supposed to provide students with a good learning atmosphere, one which nurtures and develops their autonomous learning ability. Meanwhile, scientific teaching researches and comparisons will be carried out, in order to achieve a high quality of specific teaching work. Through the teachers' guidance and assistance, the consolidation of students' knowledge can be acquired in the learning process. Students can also better grasp the application and content of intercultural communicative English. When designing this teaching process, teachers are required to carry out scientific research and creative exploration, selecting contents with good system and function value for scientific explanation. Then, teachers will push students to integrate themselves into the learning atmosphere and embrace the difficulties in the actual intercultural communication that are caused by different cultural backgrounds. Overall, the long-term development of teaching objectives can be achieved, if students involved in the actual learning process can master the advanced learning methods. The importance of guidance in teaching will be emphasized so that students can learn independently and experience the fun of teaching. In this way, students can reasonably avoid the mode of thinking in their mother tongue, and they can actively learn the relevant content of English background culture. These skills will reduce the possibility of the occurrence of intercultural English communicative errors and the semantic understanding problems caused by using the mother tongue.

6. Conclusions

The prominent problems faced by college students in English intercultural communication learning represent an important issue in the development of the English discipline. Although many schools have invested significant manpower and material resources, the actual teaching achievements in this field to date are not ideal. In an attempt to meet the overall environmental needs of language economic development, and to lay a solid foundation for our country's comprehensive strength, this research explores the scientificity and effectiveness of multiple literacy teaching methods in intercultural communicative English teaching with an analysis and observation of language economics. Teachers in the proposed process are required to face up to the problems that currently exist in education, and to carry out positive reform and the deployment of

new strategies for the sake of the upgrading needs of teaching quality. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to take the theory of intercultural English as a practical research object, and create a multiple literacy teaching mode for students. This approach will fully enable students to understand the actual situation in intercultural communicative English. Fortunately, based on the basis and continuity of intercultural learning, the author has integrated the viewpoints of social constructivism in cooperative learning. Also, the application of multiple literacy teaching modes has enabled students to master certain learning skills and to cultivate their own practical learning ability, further helping students positively adjust to society. In spite of the achievements already made, much work remains to be done. Further exploration on empirical studies should be advocated in this field (Xia, 2018).

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