Original Paper

Teachers' Classroom Discourse Pattern for Postgraduates Majoring in Foreign Linguistics: A Perspective of Legitimation Code Theory

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Abstract

"Introduction to English Linguistics (IEL)" is a professional knowledge course for postgraduates majoring in Foreign Linguistics. In traditional classrooms, teachers usually use knowledge code in their discourse, emphasizing the inculcation of theoretical knowledge in Foreign Linguistics. However, faced with large numbers of concepts, terminology, and academic opinions, students generate lots of confusion. This study quantitatively analyzes the teaching situation of IEL course under the framework of Legitimation Code Theory, and explores the influence of different teachers' classroom discourse patterns on students' learning efficiency. It is found that the use of knower code in teachers' classroom discourse is an important factor in students' learning efficiency while not being affirmatively proved to be effective in a pronounced manner, suggesting that a more advanced model of teachers' classroom discourse pattern combining both knowledge code and knower code for postgraduates majoring in Foreign Linguistics is urgently needed.

Keywords

Legitimation Code Theory, teachers' classroom discourse, knowledge code, knower code, postgraduates, Foreign Linguistics

1. Introduction

"Introduction to English Linguistics (IEL)" is an important professional knowledge course for postgraduates majoring in foreign linguistics, aiming at introducing rich achievements of linguistics, cultivating students' language awareness, and developing their rational thinking. For linguistics major postgraduates, it is the first time for them to come into contact with profound theoretical textbooks written in English, and they are confused by a large number of concepts, terminology, and many

schools of linguistics and academic opinions. In traditional linguistics classrooms, teachers tend to teach with the knowledge code which emphasizes the imparting of theoretical knowledge while neglecting the knower code, thus preventing students from successfully constructing cumulative knowledge. In recent years, the research on English professional skills and interdisciplinary courses has achieved fruitful results, but there is little study on English professional courses, especially on linguistics courses. Therefore, this study attempts to analyze the teaching situation of the IEL course with the framework of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), and explores the influence of different teachers' classroom discourse patterns on students' learning efficiency.

Compared with positive attempts and exploration of scholars abroad like Maton (2007, 2014), Maton and Chen (2020), Chen and Ma (2018), etc., problems of insufficient theoretical understanding and insufficient attention are widely found in China. First of all, the number of domestic LCT-related studies is relatively less. In the advanced search of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) with the theme of "Legitimation Code Theory", there are only 33 articles of various levels and types, of which 10 are theoretical introductions, mostly explaining the concepts related to LCT and exploring the theoretical interface between LCT and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Secondly, the research perspectives are limited. Most of the empirical studies are restricted to textual analysis of teaching guides and academic texts, with few attention paid to specific teaching practices and other socio-cultural activities beyond of teaching. Thirdly, research subjects are limited to undergraduates while little research focuses on the education of postgraduates professional courses.

2. Theoretical Framework: Legitimation Code Theory

According to LCT (Maton, 2014), there may be two major misunderstandings that restrict teaching practice and educational development of linguistics courses, i.e., knowledge blindness and segmentalism. The former is manifested in focusing only on the learning process and ignoring the knowledge and knowledge learners, while the latter is manifested in only imparting discrete ideas or skills rather than accumulating learning based on existing knowledge.

LCT includes five dimensions of legitimacy, including autonomy, density, specialization, semantics, and temporality (Maton, 2014). Among them, the specialization is the earliest, most detailed, and most widely applied principle. Maton (2014) argues that the practice of knowledge not only depends on epistemic relations (ER), but also has to do with social relations (SR). So he corresponds ER to the ontology of knowledge, and SR to knower, and then establishes the "knowledge-knower structure" in the field of knowledge practice. ER focuses on the object relationship between knowledge and learning, while SR focuses on the subject relationship between knowledge and learning; the relative strengths of ER and SR can vary independently from strong to weak, forming a series of specialized codes (ER+/-, SR+/-), which can be represented by building a topological space with an axial coordinate system (Figure 1). Based on the strength of ER and SR, Maton (2014) classifies four types of specialized codes, i.e., knowledge code, knower code, elite code, and relativist code. It is important to note that the

262

knowledge construction behaviors of different disciplines are considered valid and successful only if they conform to the relative codes. The features of a particular curriculum may pose a dilemma for education and teaching.
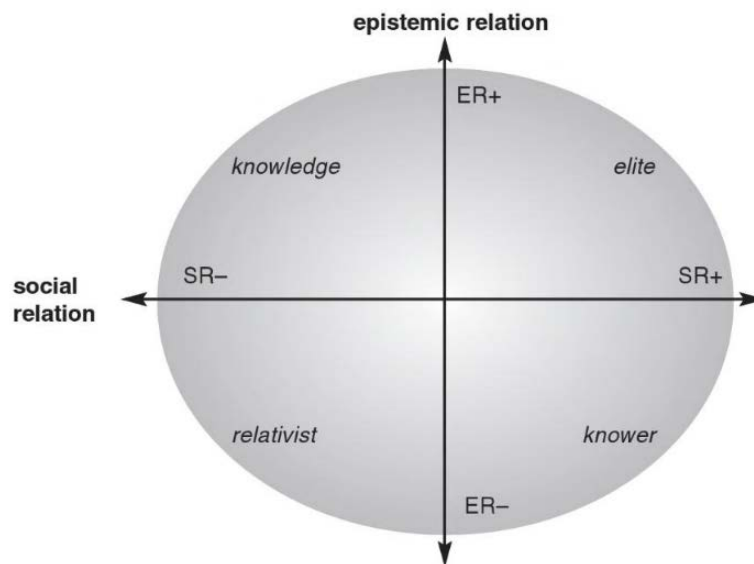
Figure 1. Legitimation Codes of Specialization (Maton, 2007)

Since its creation, LCT has continued to improve and develop, and many scholars have utilized its principles to conduct empirical research on knowledge construction in various disciplines, mainly focusing on the following four areas:

First, studies on disciplinary knowledge systems. Lamont and Maton (2008) analyses National Curriculum, General Certification of Secondary Education (GCSE) syllabus and pupils' attitudes towards a range of school subjects including music in the light of the LCT. Chen and Ma (2018) notes that the subject of college English embodies knower codes where achievement relies on being the right kind of knower instead of possessing specialist knowledge. Liu and Shan (2017) analyze the basic features and organizing principles of the three courses based on LCT, i.e., English for General Purposes, English for Specific Purposes and Intercultural Communication.

Second, studies on teachers' classroom discourse. Maton (2013) analyzes the classroom discourse of teachers in biology and history classes, and finds that teachers' "unpacking" and "packaging" behaviors of complex abstract concepts in textbook materials effectively helped students better construct their knowledge systems. Zhu (2015) introduces and comments on previous research results and then notes that spatiality should be regarded as another formative mechanism of semantic waves. Zhang and Qin (2016) first introduce the application of the LCT to the analysis of the Chinese teachers' discourse in foreign language teaching. Then, they explore its appropriateness in the application of teachers' discourse studies.

Third, studies on identity construction. Kuang and Liu (2017) analyze the intrinsic relationship between the social functions of language and the identity construction of individuals. Zheng (2019) explores the construction of the criminal's legal supervisor's identities in the investigation and assessment prior to community correction through analyzing their verbal and nonverbal languages in light of LCT, Appraisal System and categorization of body language system. Zheng and Yuan (2021) propose a framework for analyzing judicial social workers and identify their four identities with the help of corpus software.

Forth, academic and educational discourse analysis. Yu (2018) annotates and compares two excerpts of astrophysics from popular science discourse and textbook discourse according to different degrees of semantic density compared as to how knowledge is built, aiming to provide insights for teachers' cumulative knowledge building in classroom discourse. Wang (2021) investigates changes in English textbooks by People's Education Press (PEP) edition for senior secondary school students from perspective of legalized coding. Luo and Yang (2020) aim to put forward a legitimate construal of semantic waves in scientific texts on two bases, i.e., delicate semantic scales of semantic gravity in terms of rhetorical units of discourse and semantic density scales in terms of fractal elements within a message.

3. Methodology

3.1 Experimental Design

Two classes of first-year graduate students in Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at Xi'an International Studies University (XISU), i.e., Class A and Class B, are selected as subjects, with a total number of 60 (30 for each). Teachers of compulsory courses of this major are trained to master the classroom discourse model of the knowledge-knower code. The experimental group taught the IEL course with knower code, while the control group taught the course without knower code.

This study aims to answer the research question that does knower code improve the learning efficiency of learners in introductory linguistics course? The research question was validated with learners' test scores. If there is no significant difference between the classroom discourse model using the knower code and that not using the knower code (original hypothesis H_0), then it means that the knower code does not affect the learning efficiency of the learners; otherwise, it means that the knower code does affect the learning efficiency of the learners.

The independent variable in this experiment was classroom discourse patterns, the knower code and non-knower code (i.e., the knowledge code) were different levels of this single factor, and the dependent variable was the final exam score of the linguistics course.

3.2 Experimental Materials

Class A is the experimental group using classroom discourse pattern with the knower code; Class B is the control group without using the knower code. Sixty final examination papers of Classes A and B are

selected as experimental materials. The average grade for Class A was 80.27 and the average grade for Class B was 80.03.

3.3 Experimental Procedures

The teachers of the two classes are trained in advance to learn the content of the LCT to master the classroom discourse patterns of knower code and knowledge code so as to map out the syllabus and related courseware, and to design the final examination paper in accordance with the latest National Teaching Objectives, which not only focuses on the traditional language knowledge and language ability, but also adds the examination of the student's ability of critical thinking, intercultural communication ability, and self-directed learning ability. The final paper is worth 100 marks. The experimental duration is set as one single semester. The textbook used is *Introduction to Linguistics* (edited by Hu Zhuanglin). Lecturers teach IEL to two classes, A and B, by respectively using knowledge code and knower code. At the end of the course, the two classes are organized to take the exams at the same time, and the results are recorded according to the marking of the exam papers. The results will be calibrated by SPSS in terms of descriptives, homogeneity of variance and one-way ANOVA.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows a difference of scores attainted in final term examinations. It can be seen that the minimum of Class A and Class B are respectively 66.00 and 61.00 while the maximum, 97.00 and 96.00. Table 2 shows p=0.169>0.05, satisfying the equality of variances. One-way ANOVA analysis of variance (Table 3) shows no statistical significance between the overall means of the two groups (F=0.012, p=0.912>0.05).

Table 1. Descriptives

Scores								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Class A	30	80.2667	7.10965	1.29804	77.6119	82.9215	66.00	97.00
Class B	30	80.0333	9.00377	1.64386	76.6713	83.3954	61.00	96.00
Total	60	80.1500	8.04400	1.03848	78.0720	82.2280	61.00	97.00

Table 2. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Scores			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.937	1	58	169

Table 3. ANOVA

Scores	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	817	1	817	012	**912**
Within Groups	3816.833	58	65.807		
Total	3817.650	59			

The overall results show that the range of scores between Class A and Class B are pronounced, suggesting that the class taught with knower code had relatively better performance in academic achievements than the class without using knower code. However, when comparing them at an AVONA level, the significance is not as noticeable as at the range level, implying that the discourse pattern guided by the knower code merely exerts slight influence on the learning efficacy and cannot be affirmatively convinced to be as effective as to be applied in the curriculum so far.

5. Conclusion

This study applies LCT to teachers' discourse pattern in the classroom of postgraduates majoring in foreign linguistics. Conducting a quantitative analysis of students' scores impacted by the discourse patterns with and without the knower code. The results revealed by SPSS show that there is a difference in terms of highest and lowest scores in the final exam scores of classes A and B, suggesting the use of knower code in the classroom discourse pattern is an important factor in the learning efficiency of students in the introductory linguistics course. However, the results also illustrate that there is no significant difference in terms of ANOVA between two classes. This supports the conclusion that the classroom discourse pattern of knower codes does not impressively affect students' learning efficiency. The construction of classroom discourse patterns in postgraduates majoring in foreign linguistics will be a long-term research project, and we need to continue to explore how to use appropriate discourse codes to enhance students' learning under the framework of LCT, thus developing a model of teachers' classroom discourse patterns that really works.

Acknowledgements

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