

A Research on the Communicative Environments of Schools and Classrooms in Language Learning

Hong Cai

Xi'an Peihua University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China, 710125

Keywords: sociocultural; classroom communities

Abstract: The paper mainly analyzes the sociocultural perspective on language learning, how schools and classrooms act as communicative environments, the intrinsic relationship between teaching and learning lead to the design of two pedagogical approaches concerned with creating effectual learning conditions in the classroom. One approach is broad-based in that it focuses on reconceptualising classrooms as communities of learners. The second is more restricted in that it focuses on incorporating cooperative learning practices into the traditional classroom.

1. Introduction

A sociocultural perspective on language, cultural and learning has drawn attention to the significance of classrooms as bona fide sociocultural communities and thus to the importance of the languages and cultures of classrooms. In their classrooms, teachers and students together create communities based on shared goals, shared resources and shared patterns and norms for participating as legitimate members of the communities. In their interactions with each other, teachers and students assume particular identities and roles, and together they develop understandings of what constitutes not only the substance of what is to be learned, but also the very process of learning itself. These understandings, in turn, give fundamental shape to learners' development as language learners and users.

The role that teachers of these classrooms play is regarded as especially consequential. Given the jointly constructed nature of development, it is assumed that the differences in learning opportunities that teachers make available to their students in their classroom practices, and differences in these practices across classrooms lead to the development of different communities of language learners, and within those communities, differently developed individual learners.

An understanding of classrooms as sociocultural communities important in their own right as sites of development has informed several current strands of research in applied linguistics. Language classrooms, be they first, second or foreign, and mainstream classrooms comprising linguistically and culturally diverse learners. A sociocultural understanding of classrooms also forms the foundation of at least two approaches concerned with the teaching of language and culture.

2. Schools and classrooms as communicative environments

One strand of current research concerned with the language and culture of classrooms looks at the

communicative environments of schools and classrooms. Drawing on Hymes's ethnography of communication approach to describe features typical of particular classrooms environments, these studies seek to answer questions such as: What do classroom communities look like? What are the typical communicative events and activities? What are the conventional norms and patterns of participation? Who are the participants, and what roles do they play?

The studies on classrooms, and on language classrooms in particular, have used more general ethnographic methods. Data come from varied sources and include videotapes of classroom activities, interviews with teachers and students, and institutional archives and written documents that are typical of the learning communities. Some of these studies take a language use in school contexts. Their aim is to uncover the particular cultural assumptions embodied in the classroom routines and activities so that we may understand more fully the sociocultural worlds into which learners are being socialized along with them. Other studies have been concerned with linking learners' classroom lives to the larger social, political, economic and historical conditions that give them shape. Still others have been concerned with uncovering the cultural and ideological assumptions embodied in the particular identities that teachers and students adopt, or are appropriated into, within their learning communities.

3. The role of classroom discourse

A related strand of research concerned with the language and culture of the classroom has looked more closely at how the worlds of the classrooms are constructed through languages. General interest here is in uncovering links between students' participation in particular patterns of interaction and their subsequent communicative and academic development.

A three-part sequential exchange (IRE) consisting of the teacher's initiation (I), the learner's response (R), and the teacher's evaluation of the response (E). The IRE pattern of interaction involves the teacher, in the role of expert, eliciting information from individual students in order to ascertain whether the students know the material. The teacher does this by asking a known-answer question to which one student is expected to provide a brief but 'correct' response. The teacher then provides an evaluation of the student's response **with** such phrases as 'God', 'That's right'. or 'No, that's not right'. After completing a sequence with one student, the teacher typically moves into another round by asking either a follow-up question of the same student or the same or related question of another student.

4. Redesigning curriculum and instruction

The view of classrooms as significant sociocultural communities in their own right, coupled with an understanding of the intrinsic relationship between teaching and learning, has led to the design of two pedagogical approaches concerned with creating effectual learning conditions in the classroom. One approach is broad-based in that it focuses on reconceptualising classrooms as communities of learners. The second is more restricted in that it focuses on incorporating cooperative learning practices into the traditional classroom. While they are slightly different in scope, they share a view of the importance of using language and other cultural resources to create supportive and effective learning environments.

4.1 Communities of learners in the classroom

A recent response to learners (Wells, 1999, 2000). According to this approach, if what we do in the classroom is intimately tied to learners' development, then what we need to do is create effectual

classroom communities of learners. In such communities, learning and laborative and mutually beneficial process in which learners, through their participation in their classroom activities, assume new understandings, take on new skills, and ultimately develop new sociocultural identities. Because language is considered to be primary tool for socializing learners into these communities, classroom interaction is seen as fundamental to work together to address issues, concern to their community. The role of the teachers is to provide ample opportunities for learners to appropriate the particular communicative and cultural knowledge and skills that have been deemed important to participation in their larger social communities.

4.2 Cooperative learning practices

A second pedagogical approach concerned with the language and culture of the classroom is *cooperative learning*. *cooperative learning* refers to various methods and activities for organizing classroom instruction. Unlike an approach based on a community of learners concept, which involves a full transformation of education programmes, this approach is better viewed as a particular instructional strategy for fostering cooperation among learners to accomplish shared goals in supportive learning environments.

Originally based on Allport's (1954) contact theory of inter-group relations, cooperative learning was first developed as a means of helping students from different social and cultural backgrounds to develop interpersonal relationships in schools. According to Allport's theory, the kinds of contact that occur between individuals from different social groups shape the kinds of social relationship they develop. The more the purpose of the contact is cooperative, built on common goals and officially supported by the larger institution that is bringing the individuals together, the more likely that the individuals will view each other positively and work towards building mutually beneficial relationships.

5. Summary

Pedagogical approaches that takes a sociocultural view of classrooms and learning have sought to create particular kinds of learning communities in the classroom. These are characterised by an atmosphere of cooperation, share trust, and mutual respect, built on shared goals, and realized through jointly constructed activities. Language is viewed as especially significant in these communities since the way in which language is used in the classroom creates both the shape and content of the language that learners learn. That is, language is not just a means by which information is conveyed. It is also, and more significantly, the quintessential sociocognitive tool by which learners move through, respond to, and make sense of their worlds.

Given the intrinsic link between teaching and learning, and the importance of classrooms as sites of development, we still know very little of the various shapes that learning communities take in different sociocultural contexts. Given our current limited knowledge, a goal of future research on the sociocultural worlds of classroom communities should be to understand these worlds more fully. What are needed are additional investigations identifying the specific social, historical and political contexts within which classroom communities are nested, and the communicative events and activities through which learning communities are formed in classrooms. Also needed are investigations that examine the varied paths that are created by teacher and learner involvement in their classroom communities and through their constitutive role relationships, the different ways that individual learners position themselves relative to the activities and the processes by which they are being specialized into them, and the varied consequences—in terms of identity and ideological development in addition to communicative development—that arise from these actions. Once we

have a deeper understanding of what we are doing in our classroom communities and the myriad conditions that influence what we do, we can make informed decisions about how we might design communities of learners that will shape learners' development in ways that are considered to be appropriate to their specific social, cultural, communicative and other needs.

References

- [1]GuoMing Chen. "Foundations of International Communication" 2009. 31-32
- [2]Ahearn, L. (2001) *Language and agency*. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30: 105-107
- [3]Penuel, W. And Wertsch, J.(1995)*Vygotsky and identity formation: A sociological approach*. *Educational Psychologist*, 30:83-92
- [4]Hus S H, Hsiang C F, Saint S B. *Constructing a consumption model of fine dining from the perspective of behavioral economics*[J]. *Lops One*, 2018, 13(4).
- [5] Die L. *Design of Evaluation Model of English Teaching Achievement in Micro course*[C]. *International Conference on Measuring Technology & Mechanics Automation*. 2018.