

## The Critical Discourse Analysis of Language Teacher's Instructional Decisions

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### Abstract

Teacher's decision making is an instant indicator of the discourse activities in the context of education. A critical discourse analysis of the language teacher's classroom decisions is able to give an insight into the essence of discourse of teacher authority, power, and morality sneaking in classroom teaching at the micro and macro levels, and then understand the force that the hidden power of discourse relations acts on the subject and the object of teaching in the field of educational discourse, the way school discourse communicates as well, hoping teachers, students, language, knowledge being in harmony and free in the context of education.

#### Keywords:

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### 1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies and interprets the social and cultural issues through the analysis of language, which is a new interdisciplinary social science emerging after the reflection of western modern civilization. CDA has become an important field of linguistic research. CDA is not limited to the study of the intrinsic structure and function of the language system, but rather to analyze the various social realities in the context of placing language in the interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research. This new type of language view reflects the re-examination of historical civilization in terms of the "linguistic turn" of the western philosophy and sociology. CDA holds that discourse behavior and language are inherently embedded in historical contexts of status, legitimacy, morality, authority, and power, all of which coordinate the reality of discourse interaction. Language and discourse of the educational field are not of equal value in the actual language context, the ideas, assumptions and language ideologies they contain have an unavoidable impact on teachers' behavior and students' learning. Teacher's classroom decision making, as an educational discourse form, is one of the ways of constructing and being constructed, presenting and being presenting of social structure in the educational context.

#### 1.1. CDA and Education

CDA originated in the discourse research, female post-structuralism and critical linguistics etc., all of which are overlapping historical theoretical categories, and these theories emphasize the linguistic turn trend of social science. Over the past few decades, educators have also turned to critical discourse analysis to understand the way of meaning construction in the context of education, to answer the question of relations between language and society. Most of the linguistic analysis in early education research are mostly related to theoretical studies such as social linguistics (Gumperz, 1982; Labov, 1972), linguistic anthropology (Silverstein and Urban, 1996) and ethnography (Hymes, 1972) etc. As Sinclair and Coulthard (1976) describes a detailed theoretical framework to encode classroom communication discourse, meanwhile, sociology and cultural scholars have also studied the forms and ways of macro social structure presented in classroom communication, programs and traditions through critical social theory, and how social structures can be replicated in educational contexts through educational institutions' discourse (Bourdieu, 1984; Oakes, 1986; Willis, 1977). CDA is an important research method and angle in the field of education. It contains a series of dialectical processes to understand and analyze complex relationships such as authority, power, morality and ideology, and discursive practice to achieve this complex relationship in educational context (Fairclough, 1993; Peace, 2003; Rogers, 2002/2004). Discourse analysis focuses on the real language features, language behavior and interaction, nonverbal information in communication, interactive cognition and sociality in educational context (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

Classroom is a microscopic social context, teacher classroom decision making is one of the common forms of discourse practice in language education, which is embedded in the hierarchical structure of teacher-student relationship, culture, language and history. It is rare to analyze the classroom decision-making in the field of education from the perspective of critical discourse analysis.

## **2. The Critical Analysis of Teacher's Classroom Decision Making**

Teachers' classroom decision-making is a form of discourse representation, labeling teachers as the subject of knowledge in the classroom context. It is an immediate indicator in the practice of teaching discourse. Teacher's classroom decision making is a process of discourse practice that involves the coordination of complex factors such as knowledge, authority, power and morality. Oylar (1996) pointed out that many of the authoritative issues of education are theoretical, abstract and general exploration, and rarely penetrate into the problem of how power relations infiltrate into and switch to the concrete educational contexts.

The teacher authority in classroom decision is manifested in two forms: "being in authority" and "being an authority" (Peters, 1966), the former refers to the teacher being capable of directing action in the classroom, the latter refers to the teacher's status of being capable of possessing and imparting knowledge. The two are closely related and coexistent, coinciding with Foucault's (1980) concept of power/knowledge, that is, the legitimate of knowledge and power are actually affiliated to the same regulatory mechanism. In educational terms, the conception of "authority" includes the teacher has the power to guide the classroom action, and the legitimated bodies of knowledge that the student needs to acquire.

Classroom decision making is one of the presentation forms of symbolic control and symbolic form in the practice of discourse. It is the embodiment of the transformation of power relations and discourse relations in the teaching context. The analysis of it is related to the other two twin concept: power and morality.

Classroom and school power relations are considered to be the reproduction and continuation of existing social power relations, the purpose of school education is to nurture "good" citizens, this process also involves the legal form of knowledge reproduction (Bernstein, 1975; Apple, 1982). Therefore, the analysis of classroom discourse power relations in teacher decision-making should be concerned about the way in which individuals or groups use or control the power, and what specific practical activities in teaching fulfill this power relationship. In fact, the authoritative role of the teacher in the classroom is essentially a moral issue, and it relates to the degree to which the objectives of the democratic education are coordinated. The moral issues in educational decision-making are related to its definition and the covering surface of the meaning.

The realization of moral problems in classroom instructional decisions is complex, subtle and ubiquitous. The words and deeds of teachers and students in the classroom, and even the layout and decoration of the classroom may involve moral factors.

The critical analysis of the authority, power and moral issues of education at the theory and concept level is related to the classroom discourse practice and the grand education narrative, which can have a deeper philosophical thinking on the connotation behind the classroom decision. The interweaving interaction of authority, power and morality in teacher decision-making should be considered and analyzed in the context of microscopic classroom discourse and macro education narrative.

## **3. Micro Discourse Analysis of Teachers' Instructional Decisions**

The concept of pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 1975,1990,1996) provides a good theoretical framework for discourse analysis of instructional decisions. Bernstein argued that pedagogic discourse contains the discourse of professional competence and regulative social order that learners need to acquire, the former is called "instructional discourse", the latter is "regulative discourse". People usually take moral discourse and instructional discourse in the classroom separately, but Bernstein (1990) stated that there is only one kind of discourse, pedagogic discourse is a re-contextualizing principle/discourse, which contains competence in order and order in competence inclusively. Regulative discourse is a dominant discourse, but also a moral discourse, which creates a moral regulation that transmits or acquires social relations, including rules of order, relationships, and identity. The underlying standards and rules affect norms such as character, attitudes, and behavior, as in school it tells children what to do and what not to do. The moral order is considered to be prior to, and the prerequisite for the transmission of competencies (instructional discourse).

The concept of pedagogic discourse confines the classroom discourse of teacher decision-making to the contextual framework of power relations and moral values, which creates and regulates social relations and social identities. This so-called "regulate" has some form of existence in each classroom, and in some form highlights its meaning and value orientation, which is the intrinsic implication of classroom discourse, and is showing the instinct of symbol control in the external form. Actually, the essential understanding of symbolic control in the context of education must include an analysis of the pedagogic discourse, as it exists at the micro level of classroom interaction.

A cross-cultural classroom teaching fragment was examined to show the above analysis, the choice of this teaching episode is because the teaching dialogue shows a teacher's dilemma, this teaching episode demonstrates an interactive decision in the classroom discourse, this decision-making process reflects the teacher's meaning construction process in the classroom teaching, and the role struggle between a facilitator to protect students'

sense of autonomy and the authority to guide students to understand the cultural facts.

The purpose of the teaching fragment analysis is to examine how the content of cultural teaching is embedded in the discussion of behavior and social order; it involves the way teacher guides and educates, and the regulation of student behavior actually. Disciplining, educating and regulating the behavior of students is concerned with the moral aspects of teaching content, but also the expression of teacher power and authority. In addition, the selection of this teaching episode is because it also involves a specific moral issue in cultural teaching - how to avoid violating the privacy of others in cultural communication. This teaching fragment begins with a teacher's question:

(1) T: If you want to be successful in cultural communication, you should have more knowledge about culture. Now, a question, how are you going to ask foreigners to find more about their culture? Yeah, you?

(2) S1: How do you entertain the guests from the foreign countries?

(3) T: How do you entertain the guests from the foreign countries? Ok, what would that tell you about culture?

(4) S1: Maybe the answer is ... en ... (can't continue)

(5) T: Ok, go ahead, think, think, I just want to hear your thoughts on it.

(6) S1: Maybe will show the interesting places to show...(interrupted by John)

(7) T: So, let me say by this, if you ask them how to entertain foreigners, they might tell you more about their own culture. And in cultural communication, you must be sensitive, honest and hospitable.

(8) T: So, how about you? (to another student)

(9) S2: I think, ... eating with them.

(10) T: Eating with them.

(11) S2: And go to their home.

(12) T: Go to their home, and eat with them, right? And what would that tell you?

(13) S2: I think chatting with them, chatting something at their home.

(14) T: Ok, so, you are going to find out about how they eat, their dining habit, such thing is culture, eating.

(15) S3: I think I will ask them how to make money, or maybe how much they earn in a month.

(16) T: Oh, that's not a bad question to ask them how to make a living, because that is about their lives, while the other question maybe is, might offend somebody else, because how much they earn is absolutely a privacy. What would be acceptable as far as questions that we ask here, in communicating with foreigners? I really appreciate your ideas, but you know certain subjects that, uh, might or might not be acceptable to westerners.

The analysis of this teaching fragment mainly focused on two aspects. First of all, teachers' classroom decision-making is faced with how to construct the concept of "culture" and how to cultivate students as cultural communicators with the ability of cultural exchange. In essence, the teacher should apply this concept, intertwined Bernstein's "instructional discourse" and "regulative discourse" with "pedagogic discourse" in the classroom discourse; the second point is how teachers exercise classroom authority to achieve its moral educational goals. First let's investigate the supporting role of teachers' authority to the study of cultural communication.

Teacher as a knowledge transmitter first proposed the "cultural knowledge" concept, and this conceptual significance ran through the classroom discussion. In (1) and (16), when the teacher put forward the question of the content of cultural communication and the appropriateness of communicative content, students knew the connotation of cultural communication and what kind of questions conveyed appropriate information. These cultural information needs to be standardized as cultural communicators need to implement these specifications. Through discussions with students, teachers reminded students of which topics are appropriate in the context of specific cultural communication, more importantly, successful cultural exchanges require an honest, friendly and keen cultural awareness that is indispensable. At this point, teachers incorporated cultural and intercultural learning into a larger ethical framework to regulate and guide students' learning content, all of which require the cultivation of humanistic consciousness, i.e., a culture of respect for others.

Teacher becomes an authority in the guidance of what students should learn in the cultural class, and what quality features should be adhering to in the cultural communication, simultaneously, concerning the content of cultural communication and the appropriateness of the topic, the teacher first posed the question, then led students to engage in the discussion and guided the norms, he also put himself in authority (in authority). Teacher in this particular classroom decision-making context is both an authority and in authority, which means that his discourse behavior not only imparts the knowledge of cultural communication, but also regulates the behavior of students to learn cultural communication knowledge. Thereby, the dual meaning of authority is presented in the teacher decision-making discourse behavior.

Teacher's authority achieves moral education in the cultural teaching as well. The second point involves the role of the moral subject in the relationship between teacher and student. On this issue, the authority of teachers is faced with a dilemma in the classroom decision-making discourse: on the one hand, he wants to respect the voice of the individual - it is likely that this idea leads him to carry out a discussion in the classroom, allowing students to express their views freely. On the other hand, the teacher carries the moral responsibility of

cultivating all students to identify right and wrong, good or bad, and this responsibility causes him to judge and standardize the content and the way of the topic raised by the students, because the relevant cultural topic or the way of communication may have a direct impact on students' autonomous cultural awareness and the formation of values. This kind of concern undoubtedly symbolizes that teaching has become a kind of moral activity. At the same time, the connotation of teachers' attention also highlights the essence of the dilemma faced by teachers in classroom decision-making.

Through the response of the teacher's decision-making in the face of dilemma, we can find out how teachers use the authority of the teacher - the dual concept of power and knowledge - to achieve moral teaching and moral orientation in cultural teaching.

This kind of struggle in the classroom discourse has a very clear display, as in (5) that "I just want to hear your thoughts on it", and in (16) "I really appreciate your thoughts, but you should know that certain subjects might or might not be acceptable to westerners". The teacher's response to this dilemma is concentrated on the word "but", in the expression of this word, it is clear that he ultimately hopes the students will be able to find and express their voices in classroom learning, meanwhile he must estimate that the inappropriateness of students' expression may bring negative moral effects, as what the word "may offend" he used refer to. At the same time, the sublimation of the content of cultural communication in (7) and (14), and the interruption of intervention in (6) are the representation of the dual features of teacher authority in the process and result of concrete discourse, they are also the specific forms of expression to apply the soft power of teachers, as the moral subject, to the classroom decision making discourse.

Therefore, from the teacher's dilemma of decision in this cultural teaching fragment, it can be identified that multiple topics are intertwined in the classroom discourse.

The teacher's dilemma is an appropriate case of Bernstein's so-called "pedagogic discourse": the "educational discourse" in which students learn cultural communicative competence in order to give their unique voice is embedded in, or restricted to, "regulative discourse" of moral rules, This moral rule establishes and maintains social relations and social identities, and determines whether it is offensive or ethically acceptable, and is re-contextualized in the classroom discourse. In the process of participating in and controlling the pedagogic discourse, the teacher inevitably makes use of his authority to regulate the power relations and achieve the moral goal, and synchronously use the authority to support the students' learning and try not to suppress the individual freedom.

#### **4. Macro Discourse Analysis of Teachers' Decision Making**

As a decision maker, teachers' discourse behavior is confined to a macro-field of educational discourse. The discourse of educational institutions is essentially one of the representation forms of the re-contextualization of social discourse. The order of discourse contained in implicit power discourse relations regulates the discourse behaviors of teaching subject and object in school education. In the life world of teaching subject and teaching object, the teacher's discourse behavior in the classroom teaching is undoubtedly constrained and influenced by the order of discourse. The order of discourse refers to a series of discourse and language networks defined by social forces that are linked to specific social domains and constitutes the deep structure of society (Fairclough, 2003). The key elements of the order of discourse - language genre and language chain- "is not a language form" (Bakhtin, 1986), but rather a typical modality corresponding to a particular social activity that regulates human behavior, thought, knowledge, and faith, and eventually provides a way of life.

Under the macroscopic narrative background, the school institutional power promotes the discourse production of the subject and the object of education. Teacher's classroom decision-making discourse is placed under the macro background of school education, and the way of discourse activity will undoubtedly be influenced and restricted by this power discourse.

And because of the social and historical factors, the educational discourse field is filled with a variety of "off-the-root" discourse behavior, the so-called term "off-the-root" refers to the phenomenon that language gradually loses its primary and initial experience in the process of language conversion (Bourdiyo, 2002). These China's educational institutions promulgate and enact various teaching procedures with a variety of grammar and vocabularies containing western logic, and regulate thoughts, discourse and behaviors of teachers and students with discourse activities which are basically discursive, while considered to be scientific and rational. This kind of collective unconscious "off-the-root" discourse behavior do affect the teaching decision-making discourse of the teaching subject and the learning behavior of the teaching object in the educational activities all the time.

The macro-interpretation of teacher's decision making is closely related to the critical analysis of curriculum discourse. The curriculum is not simply a concept such as syllabus, examination, teaching material and various subjects. It should be understood as discourse or text, which can be simply but profoundly described as words or ideas. It is a social activity, and whole language phenomena occurring in the educational process (Pina, 2003).

The authority of teachers in classroom discourse activities is largely derived from the symbols in the curriculum, and the real source of curriculum symbolic control is the specific social condition (Bernstein, 1996). Teachers' classroom discourse is to re-contextualize the strong social discourse system into the context of education. The teacher's authoritative position and control in educational decision-making are also the

embodiment of the connotative social-dominant consciousness contained in the curriculum system in teaching activities. Teachers' classroom decision-making discourse is always connected with the teaching syllabus, teaching quality, lectures, examinations, lesson plan and teaching activities. These discourse forms the "text" network of the institutional order of discourse, and stipulates teachers and students' "grammatical rules", subjective consciousness and way of behavior in classroom discourse activities.

And whether the discourse in both written and spoken forms restricts or discourages the discourse and autonomy of teachers and students, largely depends on how the educational institution interprets these "text" symbols, and then recursively transmits its discourse meaning to the teaching subject and the teaching object, what reflects in the teaching is teacher's a variety of decision-making behavior in the classroom. The classroom decision-making discourse in the "text" network of a series of different language genres is a good way to reflect the way of discourse communication.

## 5. Conclusion

The study of teacher decision-making from the perspective of critical discourse analysis can be used to analyze the discourse mechanism and discourse mode of the administrative body, the teaching subject and teaching object in school education from a new visual angle, and to form a conscious ability to eliminate and control teachers' teaching consciousness and student autonomy of power symbol. The discourse behavior and discourse meaning in teacher's decision making can let us understand the essence of education and moral discourse under the teaching operation. The harmony between the two can make teachers and students complement each other in the context of life world, so that teaching is to get a rational identification in the framework of discourse, and knowledge is to gain a total freedom in the nutrition of language.

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