

The Implications of Acculturation Model Theory on Foreign Language Classroom Teaching

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Abstract: Language is the carrier of culture, without understanding the culture of the language you learn, you can't really learn a language. John Schumann's Acculturation Model Theory is a theory that explores the rules of foreign language learning from the perspectives of social and psychological factors to overcome the unfavorable factors affecting foreign language learners' acquisition process. This paper focuses on the background and two influential factors of the Acculturation Model Theory, and then analyzes its practice in Chinese foreign language classroom teaching and its implication to foreign language teaching.

Keywords: acculturation model; social distance; psychological distance; foreign language teaching

1. Introduction

According to the Acculturation Model of John Schumann^[1], from the aspects of social environment factors and personal psychological factors of learners, Schumann discusses why there are significant differences in the speed and effectiveness of second language acquisition by learners. Although its theory is based on second language acquisition in natural language environment, we can also learn from its model to analyze foreign language classroom teaching in our country, to further understand the rules of foreign language learning, create a favorable teaching environment, and overcome the adverse psychological factors in the learning process of learners.

This paper first introduces the background and basic concepts of Acculturation Model, and then analyzes how to construct an efficient foreign language classroom under the influence of psychological factors from the six aspects: consciously arrange extracurricular reading materials, the cultivation of extracurricular cultural consciousness, using multi-media, create a real cultural learning environment, contrast of similarities and differences between cultures, right learning motivation.

2. The Background of Acculturation Model

Culture, as an ingrained set of behaviors and modes of perception, becomes highly important in the learning of a second language. A language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language.

Crossing a linguistic boundary to participate in another language community, and to identify or be identified with it, requires learning that language. It is both a necessary tool for participation and a badge which allows passage. Full participation also commonly requires learning the culture of that community and adapting to those values and behavioral patterns: i.e., acculturation. Acculturation is an important concept in second language acquisition theory, because second language acquisition is an aspect of acculturation, and the learner's degree of acculturation to the target language community culture will restrict his level of second language.

In the 1970s, Schumann found in his experiments that among the second language learners, some learners' language acquisition speed is very slow or even stagnant. Schumann attempted to explore the factors influencing second language acquisition through longitudinal research. After examining the natural acquisition of English by six Spanish immigrants to the United States, Schumann and his colleagues found that Alberto, 33, barely improved his English compared to the other five learners. Excluding intellectual and biological causes, Schumann proposes an "Acculturation Model." Schumann believes that learners' acculturation to the target language group will determine their level of acquisition of the target language. Acculturation emphasizes that second language acquisition is determined by social and psychological distance between learners and the culture of the language they are learning. The closer you are, the easier it is to acquire a second language.

Brown^[2] divided acculturation in the second language acquisition process into four stages: excitement and happiness at the initial exposure to a new culture; cultural shock and the resulting feeling of alienation and resistance to the target language culture; gradual easing of cultural stress; assimilation or adaptation to a new culture. Cultural shock and cultural stress are the psychological feelings that learners must experience in the process of encountering a new culture and adapting to it. Brown believes that children complete the stages of acculturation earlier than adults, because children are less aware of the mother tongue culture, less bound by the mother tongue culture, less cultural shock, and cultural stress.

Schuman^[3] divided acculturation into two categories according to the way learners combine with the target language community. The first type of learners takes the target language community as a frame of reference, hoping to be completely assimilated by its lifestyle and values. The second type of learners want to be socially integrated with the target language community, psychologically open to its language, but unwilling to be assimilated into its lifestyle and values. Schumann emphasizes that both types of acculturation can effectively promote the development of second language acquisition.

3. Factors Affecting the Acculturation Model

Schumann identifies other group factors that affect SLA outcomes negatively in his Acculturation Model. For example, factors that are likely to create social distance between learner and target groups, limit acculturation, and thus inhibit L2 learning are: dominance of one group over the other, a high degree of segregation between groups, and desire of the learner group to preserve its own lifestyle. English speakers in the Southwestern USA often live and work side by side with Spanish speakers for years without acquiring more than a few words of the language, and Spanish speakers in Paraguay who employ Guarani speakers as servants in their homes rarely learn more than a smattering of Guarani^[4].

3.1 Social distance

The Acculturation Model identifies group factors that are likely to create social distance between learner and target groups and ultimately inhibit L2 learning. The social distance refers to the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures that come into contact within an individual. Social distance is determined by a series of social factors that reflect the relationship between the learner community and the target language community, including:

Social dominance: it means that in the fields of politics, economy, culture, technology, etc., the status of the learner community and the target language community is equal, and neither side is superior to the other.

Integration pattern: it refers to whether the learner community is assimilated by the target language community, or retains its own lifestyle and values, or both, adapting to the target language culture and following its own cultural ways in its own life circle.

Enclosure: the extent to which the two communities are separated by their respective schools, churches, hospitals, and other social facilities.

Cohesiveness: it refers to whether the learner community is mainly in the circle or in the circle. The former is cohesive, while the latter is non-cohesive.

The size of the learner community.

Cultural congruence: it refers to whether the two community cultures are similar or different.

Group attitude: it refers to the positive or negative attitude of the two communities towards each other.

Intended length of residence: it refers to the length of time the learner community intends to stay in the target language community.

3.2 Psychological distance

Language shock: it refers to the confusion and fear that learners experience when using the target language.

Culture shock: it refers to the anxiety and sense of loss that learners experience when they are exposed to a new culture.

Motivation: it refers to the learner's purpose of learning the target language and the efforts made to

achieve this purpose. It can be divided into integrative motivation and instrumental motivation.

Ego permeability: it refers to the plasticity and rigidity of learners' verbal self. It refers to the plasticity and rigidity of learners' verbal self. Language ego is a kind of psychological barrier which is gradually established and protected by foreign language learners in the process of first language acquisition. The stronger the psychological suppression of foreign language learning is, the weaker the self-transparency is, and the more difficult it is to absorb speech and information.

4. Implications of Acculturation Model for Foreign Language Classroom Teaching

Currently, second language learners in our country are only completed in a classroom setting. In this environment, second language learners learn far away from the target language community and cannot have direct contact with the target language community. According to Schumann, psychological factors mainly play a role when social distance is difficult to determine, that is, social factors do not have a positive or negative impact on acculturation.

In the context of foreign language education, learners' personal psychological feelings towards the target language and its culture, that is, the role of psychological distance may become more prominent. At this time, how to help learners overcome language and culture shock, choose the right learning motivation, and cross the psychological barrier of language self has become a key issue for foreign language educators to consider. In our English teaching process, if teachers can fully realize this point, give proper guidance, stimulate students' interest in English learning, mobilize students' learning enthusiasm, and improve students' cultural adaptation, it will certainly promote the teaching effect of English classroom.

4.1 Consciously arrange extracurricular reading materials

PEP High School English Compulsory Three^[5] Unit 3-*Diverse Cultures*, as a teaching example to explore the role of students' psychological factors through teaching design. In this article, there is a sentence in the third paragraph: "When these immigrants left their countries, they carried a bit of home in their hearts, and build a new home here." Here, the author mentions the history of the gold rush and the Chinese who went to the United States to seek gold and build railroads. So, teacher can give students a reading material about Chinese immigrants during the Gold Rush the day before class. By reading the article, students can perceive the situation of Chinese immigrants in San Francisco at that time in advance, and then it is easier to understand the two homes when they understand the original text in class. The first home includes homesickness, national identity, language, customs, etc. The second home refers to a new home, a new job, a new future, and the new ideas and customs formed by Chinese immigrants. In this teaching design, teacher help students better understand the text by supplementing the cultural background knowledge of the text. The provision of these background materials can fill the gaps in students' cultural background knowledge and pave the way for in-depth understanding of the text and appreciation of cultural values.

4.2 Using multi-media

At the beginning of the passage-*Diverse Cultures*, the reconstruction of San Francisco after the earthquake triggered the author's exclamation of "What a pity". This "pity" here aroused the curiosity of the students, what is the pity, why the author would issue such emotion. However, students who did not know about the San Francisco earthquake could not understand the hardships of San Francisco's reconstruction, so they could not understand the author's exclamation. Here, the teacher interspersed videos about the San Francisco earthquake to help students understand the situation after the San Francisco disaster, to make a contrast between the present San Francisco described in the text, and to help students overcome the culture shock. This teaching design will help students truly understand the author's emotions and pave the way for further understanding of the multi-culture of San Francisco.

In addition, using multimedia to shorten students' psychological distance to English cultural adaptation is also an effective teaching means. By showing pictures and playing videos, learners can mobilize their visual and auditory senses to feel the culture of the target language, which is also conducive to easing the cultural shock of students to a certain extent.

4.3 The cultivation of extracurricular cultural consciousness

It is not enough to use the limited classroom time to learn about foreign cultures; teachers must also guide students to use their extracurricular time to learn about foreign cultures.

Students can read some English newspapers and magazines outside of class, which is helpful for students to have a deeper understanding of the original English articles in the exam, and exercise students' English thinking ability.

Students are encouraged to watch more original British and American movies and TV programs outside of class, not only because the content of most movies or TV programs itself reflects the culture of the country, but also through watching the performances of actors in the movies, students can understand and learn the social ways and behaviors of the target language community.

Some well-known experts and scholars can also be invited to make special reports in this regard, so that students can learn more about English culture, cultivate their sensitivity to it, encourage students to communicate more with British and American people, and eliminate the fear of communication.

For an example, when leaning PEP High Scholl English Compulsory Three, Unit 5-*The Million Pound Bank Note* reading part, teacher can ask students to play roles in groups after class. Students prepare their own props and arrange narration and lines. In such activities, students' self-confidence and cooperation ability can be exercised. In the process of preparation, students repeated, and active reading of the text helps them to experience the charm of foreign drama, experience English thinking through performance, and thus appreciate foreign culture at a deeper level.

4.4 Create a real cultural learning environment

Only when the cultural learning situation is related to the reality of life, can the cultural experience achieve better results.

Moreover, teacher should be closely related to the teaching content when designing the classroom cultural situation. While enhancing students' interest in English learning, it helps students to experience and perceive the intrinsic value of culture in the context.

PEP High School English Compulsory One, Unit 2-*Traveling Around-Be a Good Tourist* tells the problems brought about by the development of tourism, the corresponding measures are also proposed in the text. In class teaching, teacher can first present pictures of engraved characters and destruction of cultural relics in major tourist attractions around the world, to arouse students' thinking: why are cultural relics in these tourist attractions destroyed? After asking the students to evaluate the uncivilized behavior of these tourists, the teacher led the students to find out the author's suggestions on the problems brought about by the development of tourism from the text. After the students discussed in groups and put forward more suggestions on civilized tourism, the teacher set the following task in combination with the local tourist attractions and tourism status quo: Please make a speech at the opening ceremony of the tourism festival on behalf of the primary and secondary school students of the city and put forward suggestions on civilized tourism to tourists. Civilized tourism is a hot topic close to students' life. The authentic task assigned by the teacher at the end let the students internalize the value concept of civilized tourism in the real culture situation.

4.5 Contrast of similarities and differences between different cultures

Teacher should help students to understand and master the cultural conventions and contexts in which two languages are used. Use similarities to strengthen positive transfer in second language acquisition and use differences to prevent negative transfer.

PEP High Scholl English Compulsory Three, Unit 1-*Festivals and Celebrations-Why do we celebrate festivals?* Tells how the world festivals are celebrated and why they are celebrated. Teacher can combine reading materials to allow students to compare the similarities and differences between Christmas and Spring Festival from the following five aspects: origin of festival, date on and places in which people celebrate this festival, activities people usually do, food people usually eat, significance of the festival. After reviewing the differences between the two festivals in five aspects, the teacher guided the students to conclude that although the specific celebration methods are different, the two festivals are both opportunities for family reunion and for relatives and friends to express their love and blessings to each other. In addition, through comparison, students deepen their understanding of the traditional Chinese

Spring Festival and the Western Christmas and have a further understanding of the common meaning of the two festivals. Students understand that whether it is a Chinese festival or a Western festival, family reunion and the blessing of relatives and friends are the common demands of people, which shortens the psychological distance between students.

4.6 Right learning motivation

From the perspective of psychological factors, learners should clarify and correct their own foreign language learning motivation. There is a positive correlation between learning motivation and academic achievement. High-motivated students tend to achieve better than low-motivated students. Therefore, teacher should try to mobilize students' learning motivation in foreign language classroom teaching.

Since the motivation of most students to learn a foreign language is instrumental motivation, teachers should strengthen students' integrative motivation, that is, foreign language is not only a means to study, graduation and employment, but also an important cultural carrier, and cultivate students' intrinsic interest in language learning. Improving learners' understanding of the cultural value of the target language is an important step to stimulate and maintain students' learning motivation. Du Fuxing^[6] thinks as for English learners, English can be regarded as a goal, and the greater the value of the target task, the greater the incentive value it gives to the individual.

To improve students' achievement value of English, it is necessary to help them further realize the importance of English, such as the rich British and American culture and advanced scientific and technological information contained in English. Teacher can assign homework according to the teaching content, for an example, let students design posters, and then select excellent posters to display in the school window. Such activities improve the enthusiasm of students to learn English, so that students get a sense of self-achievement, improve the learning drive.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, when using Schumann's Acculturation Model for reference, it is necessary to consider not only the various influences that social factors may have on Chinese foreign language learners, but also the role of psychological factors to help learners overcome language and culture shock, establish appropriate and high learning motivation, enhance self-permeability, and thus shorten the psychological distance from the target language and its community.

Acculturation Model makes teacher more deeply aware of the role of cultural factors in foreign language learning, broadens the thinking of foreign language teaching and deepens the cultural awareness of foreign language teachers. Teacher should dig deep into cultural connotations in daily teaching, set up cultural learning situations, appropriately supplement cultural background knowledge, give full play to students' learning enthusiasm, and help students acquire cultural knowledge in the real language environment. Students can feel the differences between Chinese and western cultures and ways of thinking in the cultural comparison to enhance cross-cultural communication skills.

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