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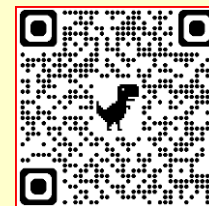
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Research on Project-Oriented Teaching of Intercultural Communication Based on Multiliteracies Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

The enhancement of Chinese students' multimodal literacy is essential for cultivating their global outlook and maintaining a Chinese perspective. Despite increasing research on the application of multiliteracies pedagogy to various language-related courses to enhance students' multimodal literacy, few is concerned with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) courses such as intercultural communication course and addresses both pedagogical design and evaluation. In this light, this article aims to investigate project-oriented teaching of a Chinese course on intercultural communication based on multiliteracies pedagogy in terms of pedagogical design and evaluation. It turns out to operationalize the pedagogical processes for the course and confirm their positive effect, especially in improving students' international communication from a Chinese perspective. It holds theoretical implications for multiliteracies pedagogy and practical implications for project-oriented teaching of intercultural communication course.

KEY WORDS: multiliteracies pedagogy, intercultural communication course, project-oriented, pedagogical design, evaluation

1. Introduction

With advancement of information technology, diversification of communication methods, and acceleration of international cooperation and competition in the 21st century, cultivating talents with a global outlook alongside a Chinese perspective has become a crucial mission for higher education in China. And this mission inevitably falls on tertiary foreign language teachers. To fulfill the mission, they need train students to critically understand and analyze real-life scenarios in different cultural contexts through multimodal semiotic resources within mobile Internet environment. Meanwhile, they also need empower students to effectively convey the voices of

China and share Chinese stories with the world in various modes of communication. Hence in this regard, how to enhance students' multimodal literacy is well worth examining.

Regarding pedagogical research on multimodal literacy, the pedagogy of multiliteracies proposed by the New London Group (1996) was most seminal, focusing on how to make best of multimodal semiotic resources to develop students' multiliteracies rather than still relying on traditional reading and writing. The multiliteracies pedagogy consists of the following four components: a. situated practice, which immerses learning in students' own real-world experiences; b. overt instruction, which involves active

interventions made by the teacher on metalanguages of multimodal discourses; c. critical framing, which helps students analyze discourse functions and interrogate ideologies underlying the discourses; d. transformed practice, which entails the transfer of knowledge and understandings to a new context (ibid.). On this basis, Kalantzis et al. (2005, p.72) translated the four components of multiliteracies pedagogy into four knowledge processes of experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing and applying in his Learning by Design approach. Cope & Kalantzis (2015, p.5) continued to refine the knowledge processes into experiencing the known and the new, conceptualizing by naming and by theory, analyzing functionally and critically, and applying appropriately and creatively, as depicted by Figure 1.

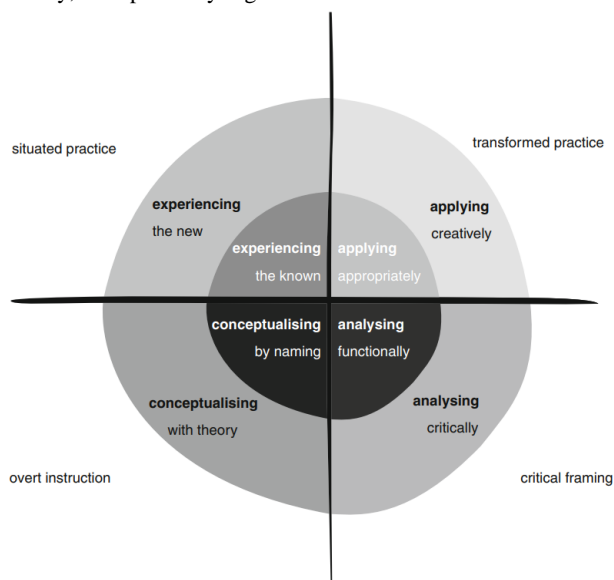


Figure 1 Mapping the original Multiliteracies pedagogy against the 'Knowledge Processes'

Based on the evolving theories of the multiliteracies pedagogy, there are increasing empirical studies involving various language-related courses. Taking transitivity analysis in systemic functional linguistics as a case, Feng (2017) explored the process and effect of the multiliteracies teaching for an English linguistics course in China, demonstrating the pedagogy can address the long-standing problem of students' disinterest in the course. Xing and Feng (2019) compared the teaching videos of two college English teachers who won the grand prize and the first prize in an English teaching competition, using the multiliteracies pedagogy framework. The results showed that the first-prize winner was more effectively utilizing multimodal resources than the grand-prize winner but placed second only due to her poorer oral English. This called for a need to develop a more scientific assessment rubric informed by the multiliteracies pedagogy. Drawing on the notions of genre and

register, systemic choice, metafunctions, and semiotic strata in systemic functional linguistics, Li and Feng (2019) elucidated the four essential steps of multiliteracies pedagogy in a national English teaching contest for normal college students. Building on Cope & Kalantzis' refined knowledge processes, Zhang and Liu (2014) proposed a theoretical framework for design learning and applied it into the college English teaching design of students' classroom oral presentation. In a similar vein, Wu and Zhang (2019) modeled the design learning of general English based on rain classroom which included pre-class, in-class and after-class phases and evaluated the model's effect on students' multiliteracies and attitudes. Informed by the multiliteracies pedagogy, Bond (2000) demonstrated the design of a South African course in management communication, and Parra et al. (2018) presented the curriculum design and results of a college-level course on Spanish for Latino students.

Prior empirical studies have contributed significantly to curriculum development for language courses and theoretical development for multiliteracies. Nevertheless, the research gaps in the studies are located in the two aspects: First and foremost, most studies focus on courses for language and linguistics while few addresses CLIL courses such as intercultural communication course which combines theoretical knowledge in the field of intercultural communication studies and language learning (Zhang, 2021); Second, a dearth of studies deals with both design and evaluation of the pedagogy for a course.

Given the practical background and the research gaps, the present study aims to investigate project-oriented teaching of a Chinese course on intercultural communication based on multiliteracies pedagogy in terms of pedagogical design and evaluation. Exemplified by the key topics of verbal communication and non-verbal communication in the course, the present study will address the following two research questions: How is the teaching of verbal and non-verbal communication across different cultures pedagogically designed based on multiliteracies pedagogy? How do students evaluate the pedagogical design? With these in mind, the present study will propose a model for teaching verbal and non-verbal communication across different cultures, followed by using questionnaire survey to analyze students' evaluation.

2. Pedagogical Design: Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Across Different Cultures

Table 1 constructs a model for teaching verbal and non-verbal communication across different cultures in terms of experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing and applying processes. The processes for teaching verbal communication and the processes for teaching non-verbal communication will be delineated separately as follows:

Topics	Pedagogical Design							
	Experiencing		Conceptualizing		Analyzing		Applying	
	The Known	The New	By Naming	By Theory	Analyzing Functionally	Analyzing Critically	Applying Appropriately	Applying Creatively

Verbal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Eliciting students to discuss the comparison of verbal texts between Chinese and American companies based on their previous experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Providing students with two news reports on corporate social responsibility from Chinese and American airlines' social media posts and eliciting students to compare their linguistic features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Conceptualizing clause, participant, process, circumstance, mood and modality ◆ Guiding students to identify all the authorial clauses (excluding downranked clauses) in the two verbal reports and annotate participant, process, circumstance, mood and modality in all the clauses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Systematically introducing systemic functional grammar in terms of ideational and interpersonal meaning and giving detailed illustrations for all subtypes of participant, process, circumstance, mood and modality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Eliciting students to recode the clauses according to subtypes of participant, process, circumstance, mood and modality ◆ Asking students to summarize distribution patterns of the subtypes, and their functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Guiding students to think about the underlying rationale for such functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Asking students to find verbal texts on a hot sociocultural issue, say environmental sustainability, delivered by China and a western country ◆ Asking students to apply appropriately what they have learned about systemic functional grammar to a comparative analysis of the verbal texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Asking students to make a presentation of their analysis and suggestions on how China communicates this issue better to the West based on their analysis
Non-Verbal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Eliciting students to discuss the comparison of images between Chinese and American companies based on their previous experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Providing students with two staff images from Chinese and American airlines' social media posts and eliciting students to compare their visual features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Conceptualizing participant, process, circumstance, gaze, social distance and perspective ◆ Guiding students to identify participant, process, circumstance, gaze, social distance and perspective in the two images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Systematically introducing visual grammar in terms of representational and interactive meaning and giving detailed illustrations for all subtypes of participant, process, circumstance, gaze, social distance and perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Eliciting students to recode the images according to subtypes of participant, process, circumstance, gaze, social distance and perspective ◆ Asking students to summarize distribution patterns of the subtypes, and their functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Guiding students to think about the underlying rationale for such functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Asking students to find images on university homepage websites presented by a Chinese and American university ◆ Asking students to apply appropriately what they have learned about visual grammar to a comparative analysis of the images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Asking students to make a presentation of their analysis and suggestions on how a Chinese university brands itself better to the West based on their analysis

Table 1 Model for teaching verbal and non-verbal communication across different cultures

2.1 Processes for Teaching Verbal Communication Across Different Cultures

2.1.1 Experiencing

The teacher drew on situated practice to encourage students to talk about their real-world experiences, connecting the known to the new. To start with, the teacher elicited students to discuss a question “Can you share the similarities and differences in verbal texts between Chinese and American companies such as corporate news, corporate profile according to your previous experiences?” Given that unlimited access to abundant corporate verbal texts on Internet or in real life, students were readily motivated to voice their opinions. Having reminded students to think about if they had sufficient evidences for their comments, the teacher showed students two news reports on corporate social responsibility from a Weibo post by China Southern Airlines and a Facebook post by Delta Air Lines. A project for students to accomplish was to compare the two reports’ linguistic features. The students were puzzled at what tools could be utilized to accomplish the project. The two corporate news reports were illustrated as follows:

Report I

南航保障国网新疆电力工作人员驰援河南|(1) 7月25日11: 52, 南航CZ8473航班搭载着81名[[支援河南防汛救灾]]的国网新疆电力工作人员|(2), 从乌鲁木齐飞往郑州|(3), 他们将前往参与[[主配网抢修]]和[[供电恢复]]工作|(4).

China Southern Airlines Supports State Grid Xinjiang Electric Power Workers to Assist Henan. At 11:52 on July 25, China Southern Airlines Flight CZ8473 carried 81 State Grid Xinjiang Electric Power workers to Zhengzhou from Urumqi. They will participate in the restoration of the main distribution network and the recovery of power supply.

(China Southern Airlines, 2021)

Note Posted on July 26, 2021.

Report II

This week, Delta people mobilized to support the U.S. government’s activation of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet(1), transporting Afghan evacuees to safety(2) and helping them prepare for life in their new homes(3).

[[Seeing hundreds of men, women and young children boarding with so few bags]] showed the immediate challenges [[facing these evacuees]](4). When flight Captain Joe M. greeted the departing passengers(5), he was hit by the gravity of the moment(6): “that’s all they have, that they left their country with.”

On behalf of the employees [[working around the clock to make these flights possible]], we’re humbled to use our time and resources to support those who [[need it most]](7).

Flight Attendant Kurt W. perhaps said it best(8): “These people have been through a world of hurt. Our care and compassion will bring love to everyone on board. That’s what’s most important.”

(Delta Air Lines, 2021)

Note Posted on August 28, 2021.

2.1.2 Conceptualizing

In line with students’ puzzles, the teacher clarified definitions of such linguistic concepts as clause, participant, process, circumstance, mood and modality. On this basis, students were asked to identify all the authorial clauses (excluding downranked clauses) before annotating participant, process, circumstance, mood and modality in all the clauses. Having offered students a trial, the teacher then explained systematically the tool for analysis, i.e., Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) system networks of participant, process, circumstance, mood and modality in systemic functional grammar, which were accompanied by detailed illustrations. In so doing, the teacher’s explanation would be more targeted and effective. For example, when it came to process, the teacher illustrated the six process types and their subtypes with examples which were demonstrated in Table 2.

Process Type	Subtypes	Illustrations
material process	•happening •creating •doing	• He ran away. • She painted a portrait of the artist. • It broke the rocks.
behavioral process	•behaving	• He’s always grumbling
mental process	•perceptive sensing •cognitive sensing •desiderative sensing •emotive sensing	• He saw the car. • He knows the car. • He wants the car. • He likes the car.
verbal process	•saying	• She says she prefers cigarettes to fish.
relational process	•being •having	• Tomorrow is December 1. • The poem concerns a fish.
existential process	•existing	• There was a storm.

Table 2 The process types and their subtypes with examples

2.1.3 Analyzing

Based on the teacher’s explicit conceptualization of the tool, students set about recoding authorial clauses (excluding downranked) in terms of participant, process, circumstance, mood and modality. Table 3 outlines the results of annotation.

Report	Clause	Participant	Process	Circumstance	Mood	Modality
I	4	corporation (3), passenger(1)	material(4)	circumstantial element of extent (1), circumstantial element of	declarative(4)	no modality marker

				location(2)		
II	8	staff group(3), staff individual(3), we(1), nominalization(1)	material(3), mental(2), verbal(2), semiotic relational(1)	circumstantial element of location(1), circumstantial element of manner (1)	declarative(8)	modalization of probability (1)

Table 3 Annotation in the two reports

Regarding participant, Report I is characteristic of 3 corporate names (and flights) like “南航(China Southern Airlines)”/ “南航CZ8473航班 (China Southern Airlines Flight CZ8473)”, whereas Report II 3 staff group nouns like “Delta people”, 3 staff individual nouns like “Joe M.”, and the first-person pronoun “we”. Drawing on Foley and Van Valin’s (1985, p.288) model of “animacy hierarchy”, i.e., “speaker/addressee > 3rd person pronouns > human proper nouns > human common nouns > other animate nouns > inanimate nouns”, Report I prefers more formal participants whereas Report II more personalized participants. Processes in Report I are all material while those in Report 2 are mental, verbal, and semiotic relational as well as material, for instance “was hit by”. It shows Report I tends to represent outer experience whereas Report II human consciousness. Regarding circumstance, there are very precise circumstantial elements of extent and location in Report I such as “81名 (eighty-one)” and “7月25日11: 52 (at 11:52 on July 25)”. By contrast, the circumstantial element of location in Report II, i.e., “this week” is more general. Regarding mood, all clauses in Report I and II select declaratives, which emphasize factuality. Regarding modality, there is a distinct marker of progressive tense “着(zhe)” and no modality marker in Report I but Report II uses a modal adjunct of probability “perhaps”. In summary, the authorial tone constructed in Report I is more implicit, impersonal and objective whereas that in Report II is more explicit, personal and subjective, albeit both are factual.

Drawing on the above functional analysis, the teacher went further to make an inquiry: “What are the underlying ideologies that cause such similarities and differences?” The teacher elicited students to explain it with the support of some intercultural theories.

2.1.4 Applying

After the teacher and students worked together to accomplish the project, the teacher elicited students to apply what they had learned from the project appropriately to a new project after class. The new project was to find verbal texts on a hot sociocultural issue, say environmental sustainability, delivered by China and a western country, analyze them using the tool of systemic functional grammar and make an academic presentation about the new project in class. To note, the presentation required students not only to report the whole process of analysis but to propose some creative suggestions on how China communicated this issue most effectively to the West based on the prior analysis. In so doing, the pedagogy could contribute to the development of students’ global outlook and Chinese perspective on the issue.

2.2 Processes for Teaching Non-verbal Communication Across Different Cultures

2.2.1 Experiencing

As with the experiencing process of teaching verbal communication across cultures, the teacher started by asking students “Can you share the similarities and differences in images between Chinese and American companies according to your previous experiences?” Compared to verbal texts, discussions on visual images more easily captured students’ interest. To address the question more scientifically, the teacher designed a project, which was to compare two staff images from a Weibo post by China Southern Airlines and a Facebook post by Southwest Airlines in terms of their visual features. The two corporate images were illustrated as follows:



(China Southern Airlines, 2022)

Note Posted on January 22, 2022



(Southwest Airlines, 2022)

Note Posted on February 2, 2022

2.2.2 Conceptualizing

The teacher clarified definitions of such visual concepts as participant, process, circumstance, gaze, social distance and perspective before requesting students to identify them in the two images. Having offered students a trial, the teacher then explained systematically the tool for analysis, i.e., Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) system networks of participant, process, circumstance, gaze, social distance and perspective in visual grammar, which were accompanied by detailed illustrations. For example, perspective was expounded in line with Table 4.






Perspective	Subtypes	Illustrations
horizontal angle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •frontal angle •oblique angle 	 
vertical angle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •low angle •eye-level angle •high angle 	  

Table 4 The perspective types and their subtypes with examples

2.2.3 Analyzing

Based on the teacher's explicit conceptualization of the tool, students set about recoding two images in terms of participant, process, circumstance, gaze, social distance and perspective. Table 5 outlines the results of annotation.

Image	participant	process	circumstance	gaze	social distance	perspective
I	staff member	actional process	realistic locale	non-direct gaze	long shot	oblique and low angles
II	staff member	reactional process	modalized locale	non-direct gaze	medium shot	frontal and eye-level angles

Table 5 Annotation in the two images

Except for similar participants and gazes, the two images are different in terms of process, circumstance, social distance and perspective. While Image I deploys actional process, realistic locale, long shot, oblique and low angles, Image II reactional process, modalized locale, medium shot, frontal and eye-level angles. In so doing, Image I aims to present the staff member as impersonal, objective and authoritative while Image II the staff member as personal, subjective and egalitarian.

Drawing on the above functional analysis, the teacher went further to make an inquiry: "What are the underlying ideologies that cause such similarities and differences?" The teacher elicited students to explain it with the support of some intercultural theories.

2.2.4 Applying

After the teacher and students worked together to accomplish the project, the teacher elicited students to apply what they had learned from the project appropriately to a new project after class. The new project was to find images on university homepage websites presented by a Chinese and American university, analyze them using the tool of visual grammar and make an academic presentation about the new project in class. To note, the presentation required students not only to report the whole process of analysis but to propose some creative suggestions on how a Chinese university brands itself better to the West based on their analysis. In so doing, the pedagogy could contribute to the development of students' global outlook and Chinese perspective on the issue.

3. Evaluation of Students

Using an online survey platform called *wenjuanxing*, the researcher created an online questionnaire with 7 items which aimed to unveil students' evaluation of the pedagogical design. The 7 items are designed in terms of the course's major learning objectives. The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale for scoring: 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly disagree. After collecting 21 valid questionnaires, the researcher used SPSS 19.0 to generate descriptive statistics for the data.

Item Description	Average Score	Standard Deviation	Strongly Agree=1 (%)	Agree=2 (%)	Not Sure=3 (%)	Disagree=4 (%)	Strongly Disagree=5 (%)
The pedagogy has changed the traditional teacher-centered knowledge transmission and increased your initiative and interest in class participation	1.286	0.784	85.71%	4.76%	4.76%	4.76%	0%
The pedagogy has strengthened your comparative analysis of verbal and non-verbal communication across cultures	1.190	0.602	90.48%	0%	9.52%	0%	0%
The pedagogy has enhanced your understanding and application of theoretical knowledge like systemic functional grammar and visual grammar	1.238	0.625	85.71%	4.76%	9.52%	0%	0%
The pedagogy has improved your ability of international communication from a Chinese perspective	1.048	0.218	95.24%	4.76%	0%	0%	0%
The pedagogy has improved your language skills	1.286	0.644	80.95%	9.52%	9.52%	0%	0%
The pedagogy has facilitated your mastery of digital technologies	1.190	0.602	90.48%	0%	9.52%	0%	0%
The pedagogy has facilitated your innovative outputs	1.333	0.796	80.95%	9.52%	4.76%	4.76%	0%

Table 6 Results of students' evaluation

As shown by Table 6, students have evaluated the pedagogical design positively in that they strongly agree with all the items in a percentage of over 80% and average scores for all the items are less than 1.5. There are the largest number of students (95.24%) who witness their improvement in international communication from a Chinese perspective. This illustrates that students have identified with their improvement in terms of the course's major learning objectives, especially ability of international communication from a Chinese perspective.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, this article has examined the pedagogical design for teaching verbal and non-verbal communication across cultures in the course of *intercultural communication* and students' evaluation towards it. Taking verbal and non-verbal communication across cultures as cases, the article has operationalized the experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing and applying processes of multiliteracies pedagogy. In addition, using a questionnaire survey, the article has confirmed the positive effect of the pedagogical design especially in improving students' international communication from a Chinese perspective.

In so doing, the current research has drawn insights from multiliteracies pedagogy to optimize the design of project-oriented teaching of intercultural communication course and corroborated the accomplishment of major learning objectives of the course, especially improving students' ability of international communication from a Chinese perspective. In this light, the research extends the application of multiliteracies pedagogy to CLIL courses other than courses for language and linguistics and holds practical implications for project-oriented teaching of intercultural communication course.

Nevertheless, the current research is confined to the subjects of verbal and non-verbal communication in intercultural communication course and students' own self-assessment. Future research is expected to incorporate more subjects in the course and teachers' evaluation of the pedagogy.

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