

The Study of Cultural Interactions in Business English Classroom using Microethnography Approach

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Pattama Panyasai
Loei Rajabhat University

Eric A. Ambele
Maharakham University

Abstract

This article highlights issues of cultural interaction in business English classrooms and the perspectives of a microethnography approach to business discourse studies. Cultural interactions in business situations describe the interaction of people in a professional setting, both in terms of written and spoken language. The microethnography approach is a discourse analysis approach to further understand social interaction in business English classes by combining attention to how people use language and other communication systems to establish occurrences with attention to social, cultural, and political processes. The article also provides perspectives on cultural communication and English-language learning in the English business classroom. Some perspectives on the rationale and business discourse studies cultural interactions are presented, and the microethnography study in the language learning classroom is discussed at the end.

Keywords: Cultural Interactions; Business English; Microethnography Approach; Discourse Analysis

Introduction

In social interaction, two or more people interact by exchanging thoughts which are cultural interactions involving different human beings and different formations. Social interaction is not only an exchange of everyday communication; it also begins with any discussion of things that are happening in a specific situation. People frequently link culture with objects, such as food, clothing, music, art, and literature. Others might link culture to norms such as social interaction patterns, values, thoughts, and attitudes. In addition, there are many definitions of culture in the classroom, and teachers should first describe culture before students participate in interactive cultural discussions (Frank, 2013). As mentioned, the culture, particularly in the classroom, should be defined as the traditional system of classroom manners (e.g., greeting teachers and classmates, asking and answering a question, asking for permission) in language learning and teaching. It also involves

language formality levels: appropriate language use and promoting learning environment together with good behavior in the social interaction. Moreover, Ghadami et al. (2014) suggested that our interactions occur at the intersections and boundaries of cultures as people move between and across them. In this circumstance, the complexity of cross-cultural communication and cross-functional and cross-social interaction can be challenging. Integrating cultural knowledge with language skills helps learners become better interactors. Thus, the students who incorporate cultural knowledge with language skills become better communicators. For language students, intercultural competence in the target language is critical, and the foreign language anxiety they experience should be viewed as a positive aspect of raising cultural awareness (Yurtsever & Dilara, 2021).

In the ELT context, the main essentials of the language classroom are normally focused on four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) of language practices, and all these skills are aimed to develop the students' appropriate communication skills. Thus, cultural interaction is also expected as the fifth skill of language learning to remind students of how they should act properly in the particular situation. In addition, students are supposed to learn about how cultural interaction impacts cultures and societies with different cultural beliefs and different cultural practices. This can lead to students finding themselves in a culturally diverse environment because much of the practice takes place in the classrooms as well (Yurtsever & Dilara, 2021). In the business English classroom, the students should learn to perform tasks in a foreign language in a specific professional culture that is different from using the language for everyday life. Even participants using L1, they also learn new behaviors. Also, there are at least two levels of difficulty for business language students (coping in a foreign language, coping in a business situation). Therefore, the students need to consider their linguistic competency and effective communication. All aspects of culture (e.g., symbols, language, norms) are relevant to communication. Still, the social structure also impacts on communicative forms and processes, and it may play a role in both everyday and business discourse. The students may be unwilling to adopt strategies which are unusual to their own cultural attitudes and behaviors, and they may refuse to follow the patterns they are taught (Moradi, 2019; Trosborg & Shaw, 1998).

To enhance a research approach in investigating the cultural interaction in the particular setting, a microethnography approach seems to be an appropriate method that offers a methodology for investigating face-to-face interaction and specific viewpoints on language use in arrangements involving different participants in complex societies to understand what represents social and communicative competence and connecting situated interactional occurrences to cultural issues such as social opportunity and current cultural events (Garcez, 2017). The cases of microethnographic research are based on empirical details of actual behavior captured on videotape and made available to the visually examining audience.

This paper highlights the relationship among these three sets of theoretical perspectives by first providing the theoretical viewpoints on English language learning in the business

English classroom. Next, I refine cultural interaction in the classroom to make a clearer understanding regarding the different types of classroom interaction. Finally, I describe the importance of using the microethnography study to grasp the cultural interaction in the business English classroom. Moreover, this paper will consider the implications for business English lecturers to increase awareness and raise understanding of cultural interaction perspectives as well as to prepare the communitive resources to develop their instruction effectively to enhance the students' learning abilities.

Cultural Interaction in the Classroom

In regards to cultural interaction, there is attention to a wide range of topics within that large body of existing research, including the digital divide, multicultural education, cultural relevance, internationalization and localization of educational content, and cross-cultural awareness. In the cultural interactions and empirical studies in those areas, cultural critiques, analyses, definitions, and theories abound as globalization trends intensify (Ghadami et al., 2014). In the classroom environments, the cultural interaction generally happens when students communicate with their classmates and teachers to deliver their thoughts and/or exchange ideas by using formal and informal language as a medium to communicate with people of various levels. They are sometimes given the task of producing their work while using appropriate language for the situation to improve their communicative skills. Thus, the aforementioned can be the cultural interaction that is supposed to create a better learning environment in the social and cultural interaction. Individual work may be insufficient to engage students in developing efficient communicative skills; however, pair work or group work may be more effective in creating a productive environment for social interaction and practicing language skills. In terms of Business English, students are required to learn about business subjects, particularly communication skills for specific purposes such as telephoning, negotiating, and small talk (Léon-Henri, 2015).

The nature of interactions between native and non-native speakers in the globalized business world supports that the cultural dimension is becoming increasingly crucial for successful communication. Cultural interaction has gained much importance as a means of facilitating inter-cultural relations that benefits people of all professions (Hemmige, 2017). Previous intercultural communication research has focused on the behavior of people who are confronted with cultural differences in language and the consequences of these differences. The most important aspect of teaching foreign languages as a means of communication between people of various nations and cultures is that they must be studied in combination with the world and culture of the people who speak to them (Shamsitdinova, 2020). In a classroom, learning a language includes more than just memorizing words, phrases, and sounds. Students must also be aware of the cultural rules surrounding oral communication. Understanding these cultural differences can assist teachers in avoiding underestimating students' intellectual abilities and learning levels in certain types of classroom interactions. Johnson (1997) stated that there are three types of interaction to focus on when studying students' culture interaction: (1) Whole-class interaction: the

teacher engages with the entire class through class discussion or question-and-answer periods; (2) Interaction in small groups: students interact with one another; and (3) Student presentations: Students "perform" for the entire class in a formal setting. In these types of interactions, students from various cultures will react differently. When a classroom contains students from many cultures or different perspectives, the students contribute a great deal of diversity to the classroom. Teachers must grasp that diversity—how students' regular attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors differ from one another, especially from those of the teachers. Furthermore, some previous studies show that there are some impacts of social anxiety during learning interactive activities and the students found it difficult to be themselves and communicate with others (Eskiyurt & Alaca, 2021; Mouet al., 2022; Russell & Topham, 2012).

Understanding cultural differences is a simple way to improve and increase the effectiveness of classroom management. Suggestions include engaging students with a satisfying situation by requiring a great deal of team and group work, as well as providing points to students and reducing misbehavior rather than forcing them to gain points through competition. As mentioned, teachers can vary their classroom procedures, but they will never be able to conduct the class in a way that is always comfortable for all students. Nevertheless, understanding the relationship between students' social anxiety and their classroom interactions may enable instructors to modify teaching methods to better assist students with various needs, such as incorporating appropriate instructional strategies.

English Language Learning in the Business English Classroom

The Business English classroom is seen as a particular classroom for learning English for specific purposes where students can improve their English language and practice based on using business content. English language use in a business situation is merely one example of English for Specific Purposes. Business English has become particularly crucial in a globalized context, while more and more organizations require their employees to be fluent in the language. The primary aim of any Business English course is to enhance students to communicate effectively with others in various business communication forms (e.g., correspondences, face-to-face conferences, and negotiations; Fitria, 2019). Moreover, other goals of the new international Business English highlight teaching content to support students in critical thinking and to use their knowledge both of general and business English in participating in classroom activities. Furthermore, students will have the opportunity to enhance the business skills that will be required in their future careers, particularly in business organizations (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012).

In order to accomplish the students' goal of language learning, the Business English course generally provides related contents in business for the students such as business correspondence, negotiations, formal presentations, business vocabulary, report writing, and professional vocabulary. Each of these may be more or less challenging for different students. From the previous discussion, some students might understand the concepts of the courses and pay attention to learning, while other students might require more time to

prepare for their lesson and need more explanation in their native language (Martyn, 2018). Zunaidah (2019) found that there are some challenges faced by EFL students in learning business English focused on self-confidence, vocabulary knowledge, improvement of communication skills, and internship problems. In the classroom situation, for example, students can meet with difficulty when they have to study in the same group for entire academic years, and they may feel uncomfortable having a conversation with other people who are unfamiliar. Thus, it will be a problem for them in the future when asked to share ideas with their manager or colleague in the workplace.

Due to Business English being complex and integrative, its teaching objectives, teaching contents, and teaching methods differ from traditional English. Business English students also require increasingly more understanding about cultural communication skills as well as business practice skills. This means the students need more collaboration and activities to practice their skills. Moreover, providing more opportunities to interact with others in English can enhance their cross-cultural communication skills and essential business skills they should have learnt (Gu, 2020). Cross-cultural communication skills are developed when people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact with one another. Understanding different business behaviors, beliefs, and communication styles focused on cross-cultural workplace communication should be expanded in the classroom in order to improve cross-cultural communication and increase English-language proficiency for the students' future careers. Current trends of Business English learning also highlight the way that English learning should include the use of information communication technologies and the Internet. Due to the class environment having changed to online classes, many language courses have offered various instructional experiences that use the digital network for interaction, learning, and dialogue. Furthermore, this may effectively encourage more instructional activities for students with updated content areas and boost social connections so that students can gain new knowledge through interaction to develop their language abilities (Bali & Liu, 2018; Nambiar, 2020; Tratnik et al., 2019).

In summary, English language learning in Business English classrooms should be integrated and based on the students' proficiency and needs. Most importantly, university students' current English teaching and learning should not be undertaken using a teacher-centered classroom. With the rapid technological changes, English learning appears to be a significant challenge. Thus, in such contexts it remains essential to develop students' linguistic competency and business skills and overcome the challenges facing Business English lecturers as they strive to improve student creativity, promote cross-cultural awareness, and enhance the students' social interaction.

Rationale and Business Discourse Studies

Discourse studies have rapidly evolved over the last 10 years, influenced by a developing academic approach among linguistics that takes into consideration anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and established sub-fields within linguistics. An

increasing interest in historical ethnographic and corpus-based approaches to discourse has helped to raise the relevance of the social contexts in which discourse occurs as well as increase the value of what matters as 'discourse' to include multi-modal texts and interaction (Bhatia et al., 2008).

Business discourse has its origins in language for specific purposes (LSP) studies. The amount and diversity of research accumulated lead to the understanding business discourse necessarily in broad terms (Cap, 2009). Business discourse concerns how people communicate in commercial organizations to complete their work. It is also concerned with how individuals communicate in business organizations to complete works or projects, whether verbally or in writing in general, and language in particular, in business contexts, most commonly in professional settings (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007; Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2013). Business communication's goal orientation results in effective interaction. There are genres that are utilized to do a specific action to attain goals that have patterns. Discourse analysis can be used to identify genres in business discourse and to evaluate structures of communicative practices of specific discourse communities. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships include teachers, peers, close friends, colleagues, co-workers, and many others who constitute the network of social connections. Thus, the use of language in commercial contexts is intimately linked to the social and cultural contexts in which it is produced. Conversation analysis can include examining how social and cultural factors influence discourse, such as intercultural communication.

However, discourse analysis can significantly contribute to Business English research and education. Business discourse research could play an essential role in providing students with the knowledge they need for effective corporate communication, given the increased importance of Business English today. It can throw light on the description of Business English, which is one of the critical contributions of discourse analysis to the teaching of Business English. It also describes how people use language in business and what linguistic qualities learners may need to know when working. As a result, the data can suggest which linguistic aspects should be included in teaching materials and how people use these linguistic features in this context.

Microethnography Study in the Language-Learning Classroom

Ethnography is a comprehensive study technique that uses ethnographic narratives of actual communication events and occasions to investigate different cultural and environmental aspects of communication. It provides extensive theoretical foundations and thorough methodological processes for analyzing and comprehending discursal and other communication sign systems in everyday interactions and mediated rituals (Noy, 2017). Smith (1978) defines different ethnographic conceptual traditions based on anthropological and sociological perspectives. While these perspectives represent a growing body of work, he argued that there was also a similar body of work focusing on what it took to conduct participant observation. He argued that more investigation was needed to clarify what this social science approach as a methodology involves. He also

introduced “new ethnographies,” which moved the focus from a more holistic study of a group or community and toward analyses of audio and videotapes of classroom events, a direction he termed “microethnography.” This is an approach of describing and analyzing the language and communication of a specific group of people within the context of larger social and cultural organizations, practices, and communities. The approach also builds on the broader discourse studies that investigated the discourse and linguistic structure and processes in social communication in their daily lives (Kim, 2018). In addition, employing the microethnography approach to explore classroom behavior includes videotaping the classroom situation and then attentively analyzing the recording to define its social organizational features. The analysis might involve related documents and anticipate the nature of actual action of people as well as sequence a set of teaching procedures in a classroom or analyze whether the students understand and attempt to follow the teacher’s guidance for receiving attention or answering questions (Au & Mason, 1982).

Microethnography study investigates how people interact socially and culturally in specific settings, such as classrooms. It is also concerned with the degree to which natural interaction can be achieved in particular classroom activities. For the study method, it should be considered what people produce in real-time in terms of context and sense making by using video and audio recordings, observation, and fieldnotes of naturally occurring social encounters (Dougherty, 2019; Garcez, 2017; Herrle, 2020). Bloome and Carter (2013) suggest that literacy events and practices are constructed by people acting and reacting to each other through written language, according to a microethnographic discourse analysis perspective. Importantly, microethnographic study is about discourse analysis which is a way of “seeing,” theorizing, and exploring to extend or, at times, problematize our understanding of people’s actions and reactions, meaning-making, and relationship-building processes within a community (Kim, 2018). Spoken language and different modes of communication may be used in literacy events and practices. The relationships between written and spoken language and other modes of communication vary depending on the nature of the social events and practices. Moreover, employing the microethnographic approach to classroom research should be conducted in qualitative studies to gain more comprehensible information from various specific contexts in the classroom.

De Moraes Garcez (1993) investigated a case of microethnographic study of a cross-cultural commercial interaction. The study demonstrated how differing discourse organizing conventions may alter natural conversation by examining how two Brazilians and two U.S. businesspeople structured their speech during their talks. The purpose of this study was to highlight the stylistic differences in point-making utilized by American and Brazilian negotiators, as well as to analyze the implications of these findings for education in general and specifically for ESP and business training. Although this study illustrated the structure of the cross-cultural commercial communication patterns which occurred during the negotiation of the two groups, it was also instructive in terms of its investigation of the use of semiotic resources (e.g., verbal, non-verbal, gazes, visual) in

the interactional communication in the business courses. In the English for Tourism course, for example, the inquiry could focus on the interaction between verbal and nonverbal communication when students use English as a tour guide (Carrasco et al., 2017; de Moraes Garcez, 1993; Herdanti & Saefullah, 2021; Latipah, 2021).

The context above shows that microethnography studies in language learning classrooms should focus on specific scenes in educational settings. It provides different perspectives of language classroom research to discuss the complexity within the field of literacy studies and within broader cultural movements (Bloome et al., 2004). The primary purpose of conducting such analyses is that learning in a classroom is deeply ingrained in the flow of social interaction between the teacher and the student. Understanding students' failure to understand necessitates an understanding of communication failure on the part of one or both participants in these interactions. Provided the time and effort required to conduct such appropriate analyses, consideration should be given to the distinctive contributions of this research approach and how the information received can relate to efforts to improve classroom literacy instruction. It will be welcomed by scholars working in language and literacy studies, and educational researchers interested in classroom discourse analysis and the language used in the particular setting.

Conclusion

Studying cultural interaction in the classroom, especially in the Business English classroom, is considered an appropriate method and is a primary process for gaining valuable data from the participants. Investigating the nature of language and its connections to the self, others, thought, knowledge, culture, and society are at the heart of education. For example, text and discourse are two topics that should be investigated further. It is crucial to distinguish between them to comprehend the various explanations for discourse analysis. However, the Business English content, particularly in the classroom setting, has paid little attention to employing microethnography study to investigate cultural interaction. Thus, further investigation should involve the analysis of the correlation of patterns in particular social interactions with different modes of communication aspects (e.g., verbal, non-verbal, signal, visual), points of view on language use, and social and communicative competence. In addition, the investigation should focus on cultural expression patterns that differ among each group of students in the classroom, which may influence group members' attitudes and behaviors, including political engagement patterns. Although cultural differences may cause communication difficulties in the classroom, this does not indicate that communication will not occur appropriately. Informed and concerned teachers can fully engage students in learning by using the information offered here and collaborating to overcome the challenges that cultural communication norms present.

Authors

Pattama Panyasai (pattama.pan@lru.ac.th) is a lecturer in the Business English Program at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Loei Rajabhat University. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in English Language Teaching at Mahasarakham University. Her research interests include English for Specific Purposes, teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, Needs Analysis, and Discourse Analysis.

Eric A. Ambele (ambesis@gmail.com) is a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Western Languages and Linguistics, Mahasarakham University. He holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and is author/co-author of numerous articles and book chapters. His research interests focus on Global Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca; Sociolinguistics; English Medium Instruction; Teacher Education; beliefs, attitudes and identity; Discourse Analysis, Intercultural Communication, and Innovative Research Methodology.

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