

Corpus-Based Study on the Appropriateness of Communicative Culture in Integrated Chinese3

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Abstract. This study uses corpus linguistics to study the appropriateness of communicative culture in the American Chinese textbook Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing 3. We find three communicative culture items: "yao fan", "pang", and "xiao jie". These items may cause cross-cultural conflicts. We use the Modern Chinese Corpus of the Ministry of Education to check if the textbook uses these words properly. We find that correct translation of word meanings and clear cultural notes are both important for proper language use. This study can help with textbook writing and Chinese teaching.

Keywords: corpus, Integrated Chinese, communicative culture, linguistic appropriateness

1. Introduction

One final goal of learning a language is to use it for successful and proper communication. Learners need to know the language itself and its culture behind it. Zhang Zhanyi (1984) divided culture into "knowledge culture" and "communicative culture". Communicative culture refers to linguistic and non-linguistic factors in cross-cultural communication. These factors directly influence the accuracy and appropriateness of information transmission. They can effectively avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

Textbooks are important carriers of knowledge in language teaching. The selection and presentation of communicative culture in textbooks directly affect learners' cross-cultural communicative abilities. Integrated Chinese is a widely used local Chinese textbook in North America. Its writing purpose clearly states that it aims to cultivate users' Chinese communicative abilities. Therefore, studying whether the communicative culture in the textbook is accurate and appropriate is of great significance for evaluating the textbook. It can also summarize useful results for international Chinese teaching.

Existing studies on Integrated Chinese mostly focus on the overall evaluation of the textbook, exercise design, analysis of cultural factors, or comparison with other textbooks. Although some studies have paid attention to the communicative cultural factors in it, most stay at the level of qualitative description and classification. Few studies use tools such as corpus. It is difficult to quantitatively evaluate the appropriateness of communicative cultural language in the textbook. This study aims to use the method of corpus linguistics to quantitatively analyze the use of some communicative cultural expressions that may cause cross-cultural conflicts in the textbook in the real context of modern Chinese, so as to evaluate the appropriateness of their linguistic expressions.

The study will focus on the following questions: (1) What is the usage frequency of the communicative culture reflecting "appropriateness" selected in the textbook in the corpus? (2) Do they conform to the real pragmatic habits of Chinese? (3) What enlightenment can the corpus-based findings provide for textbook compilation and Chinese teaching?

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition and classification of communicative culture

Since Zhang Zhanyi first put forward the division of culture into "knowledge culture" and "communicative culture", this concept has got wide attention and deep discussion in the field of international Chinese education [1]. Zhang Zhanyi further emphasized the "comparative nature" of communicative culture, and pointed out that non-verbal communicative behaviors also belong to the scope of communicative culture [2]. Meng Zimin gave a specific definition: communicative culture is a series of norms that interfere with cross-cultural communication. His team made a detailed classification framework of communicative culture. It includes verbal communicative culture (such as address terms, taboo words, euphemisms) and non-verbal communicative culture (such as body language, social customs) [3]. Lü Bisong thought communicative culture reflects deep cultural factors, like national psychology and values [4].

All these studies give a strong theoretical basis for this study to find and choose communicative culture items in textbooks. This study uses the framework of Meng Zimin's team to sort out the communicative culture content in textbooks.

2.2. Related studies on linguistic appropriateness

As pragmatic theory goes into second language teaching, "linguistic appropriateness" becomes an important view in second language acquisition research. Li Ruihua stressed from the pragmatic view that matching language use with the context is the key to successful communication. He made appropriateness the core concept of pragmatics [5]. Qu Maisheng studied foreign students' language use. He found that even if second language learners use correct grammar, they still make many mistakes in appropriateness. He said appropriateness should be the core goal of teaching Chinese as a foreign language [6]. Wu Weiping analyzed corpus data. He found that learners' oral appropriateness is not always the same as their language level. He put forward the teaching idea of "pragmatics as the core". He thinks context, function and content are the key points to judge if oral language is appropriate [7].

In short, appropriateness means the speaker's information can be understood correctly. It affects smooth communication and is an important way to measure learners' pragmatic ability.

2.3. Related studies on chinese: listening, speaking, reading & writing

Zhao Jinming took Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing as an example. He said the textbook uses topic-function compilation, and its text content is close to American students' life, so it is very popular with learners [8]. Zhou Xiaobing and Chen Nan compared it with other local textbooks. They found the textbook pays attention to the comparison between learners' mother tongue and Chinese. It has rich culture content and shows obvious local characteristics [9]. Zhou Yuling focused on exercises. He found the number of exercises is right. It focuses on sentence pattern training and communicative ability. But its pronunciation and character exercises are single [10].

Studies on Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing mainly talk about textbook evaluation, exercise design, topic selection and comparison with other local textbooks. Most studies use qualitative analysis and questionnaire surveys. They do not pay enough attention to the "appropriateness" of communicative culture language in textbooks. There are also few quantitative studies that use real corpus to verify objectively.

In summary, this study tries to use corpus linguistics. It searches and analyzes the appropriate use of typical communicative culture expressions in real corpus. It uses quantifiable data to provide more scientific and objective evidence for textbook analysis and teaching practice.

3. Research methods

3.1. Research object

This study takes Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing 3 (the latest 4th edition) as the research object. It is the first textbook for intermediate learners. It has more and deeper communicative culture content. For example, Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing 2 briefly introduces Chinese eating habits with "Most Chinese people like to eat with chopsticks". But Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing 3 introduces the use of chopsticks in detail. It also talks about some taboos in using chopsticks. These deep cultural contents are important for learners to learn and master.

3.2. Sample selection and analysis process

This study uses the communicative culture analysis framework of Meng Zimin's team [3]. We carefully read Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing 3 and find out all communicative culture content. Then we select items that may cause misunderstanding or conflict in cross-cultural communication. These items include:(1) Pragmatic error cases, such as the waiter asking "do you want rice" in the text of Unit 3;(2) Controversial social words, such as saying someone is "fat";(3) Address words with multiple meanings, such as "Miss".

The analysis steps are as follows:(1) Search: We use "yao fan", "pang", "xiao jie" as key words to search in the corpus. We get all the texts that have these words.(2) Statistics and comparison: We count the number and percentage of each use in all valid corpus. We compare them with the uses in the textbook. If the use in the textbook is the most common in the corpus, we think its language use has high "appropriateness".

4. Results and analysis

4.1. Corpus statistical results

We searched and counted the Modern Chinese Corpus of the Ministry of Education [11]. We got the following results (see Table 1).

Table 1. Corpus statistical results

Content	Number of Corpus Content	Number of Matching Meanings	Percentage
yao fan	57	54	94.7%
pang	697	402	57.7%
xiao jie	554	329	59.4%

4.2. Yao fan

The statistics show that 94.7% of the uses of "yao fan" in the corpus mean "begging" or "beggar". This matches the context in the textbook. A Chinese student named Lin Xuemei corrects a waiter's wrong use. The textbook uses a dialogue to show the mistake: people mix up "want rice" with "yao fan". This mistake can cause misunderstanding. The textbook gives a cross-cultural conflict case and a solution. It also adds cultural notes to teach learners the deep cultural meaning.

The corpus results prove this is a real pragmatic rule in Chinese. It shows the teaching is necessary and the use is appropriate. Teaching with cross-cultural conflict cases helps learners remember the right words ("want rice"). It also lets them know why conflicts happen. This improves learning and helps avoid conflicts.

4.3. Pang

"Pang" is an adjective to describe a person's body. More than 57.7% of its uses in the corpus are this meaning. This is one of its main uses in modern Chinese. So the textbook sentence "Don't eat too much meat... or you will get fatter and fatter" is correct in language.

But Chinese and English have different cultures. One action is okay in one culture but not in the other. In Chinese culture, saying a close friend "is pang" can mean care. But in English culture, this is a social taboo. This shows why cultural explanation is needed. However, the textbook only gives the translation of the sentence. It does not point out the cultural conflict between "care" and "taboo". Learners may think this sentence is offensive because of their mother tongue. The corpus results show the textbook's language is correct, but it lacks deep cultural explanation. This may hurt the appropriateness of use.

4.4. Xiao jie

The data shows that nearly 60% of the uses of "xiao jie" are polite addresses for young women (like "Miss Wang"). The textbook translates it as "Miss, young lady". This is correct.

But 40% of other uses show its special usages. Appropriateness means choosing the right address. The corpus shows it used to mean "daughter of a rich family" in old times. Now it has a bad meaning because of some social events. The textbook only gives the translation. It has an example "Miss Wang", but it does not talk about the cross-cultural conflict when we use it alone. Without cultural notes, learners may offend others by accident. This affects normal communication. It shows again that cultural notes are very important for appropriate language use.

5. Discussion

5.1. Implications for textbook compilation

Based on the above findings, this study gives suggestions for writing international Chinese textbooks:

(1) Focus on linguistic appropriateness Textbook writers can use corpus. They can check if words and sentences are used correctly. Then they can make the textbook's language more appropriate.

(2) Strengthen cultural notes For words and sentences that may cause cultural conflicts, textbooks should add more cultural notes. They should not only give basic translations. They should explain deep cultural meanings. They should tell learners when to use them properly and when they may

cause misunderstanding. They should also give ways to avoid or solve conflicts. This helps learners use the target language properly.

5.2. Implications for international Chinese teaching

Based on the above findings, this study gives suggestions for international Chinese teaching:

(1) Aim to cultivate "appropriateness" Teachers should not only teach language knowledge. They should also teach how to use language properly. They should ask students to pay attention to the situation when using language.

(2) Use corpus to help teaching Teachers can check if teaching content is correct and appropriate when preparing lessons. This is especially important for content with few cultural notes. In class, teachers can guide students to use corpus simply. This helps students learn language rules by themselves.

(3) Guide cultural comparison Based on textbook content and corpus data, teachers should let students compare their mother tongue culture with the target language culture. Students need to know the cultural meanings of what they learn first. Through comparison, students can see the differences in language use across cultures. This helps them avoid cross-cultural conflicts and improve communication.

5.3. Research limitations

This study has some limitations:

(1) Insufficient consideration of changing cultural meanings Linguistic appropriateness changes with society, generations and situations. This study mainly uses current corpus. It does not discuss the changing trend of appropriateness standards enough.

(2) Insufficient investigation of users' actual feedback This study analyzes communicative cultural appropriateness from the corpus perspective. It does not combine with the actual users of the textbook. Knowing learners' experience can help us understand the rationality of textbook arrangement and cultural appropriateness more fully.

6. Conclusion

This study uses corpus linguistics to study the linguistic appropriateness of communicative culture in Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing 3. It analyzes the use of "yao fan", "pang" and "xiao jie" in the Modern Chinese Corpus of the Ministry of Education. It gets these conclusions:

First, correct language form is the base of appropriate communication, but it is not all. Corpus data shows that the words in the textbook match the usage of native Chinese speakers. This is the first step to teach learners appropriate communication. But the lack of explanation about situations and pragmatic rules makes it hard for learners to communicate correctly and appropriately.

Second, to teach appropriate communication, learners need systematic pragmatic guidance and detailed cultural notes. "Yao fan" is a good example: the textbook shows the wrong use and explains why it is inappropriate. Learners understand the problem and avoid conflicts. But "pang" and "xiao jie" lack explanations about situations and usage scope. Learners may know the correct language form, but not how to use it properly.

Third, corpus methods can give data for appropriateness research, but they still need cultural explanation and pragmatic instructions. Corpus can show the frequency of word use. To judge

appropriateness, we need to consider culture, relationships and situations. This needs professional cultural notes from textbook writers and targeted teaching from teachers.

Fourth, to cultivate appropriate communication ability, textbook compilation and classroom teaching need to work together. Textbooks should provide enough pragmatic information and situational exercises. Teachers should guide students to pay attention to language situations. Through learning cultural differences and comparison, students can build the awareness and ability to communicate appropriately.

Future research can expand in these directions:

(1) Expand the research to the whole Chinese: Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing or other textbooks. Do corpus analysis on more communicative culture about appropriateness. Build a more comprehensive and scientific evaluation framework.

(2) Combine learners' actual feedback. Study the relationship between textbook content and learners' appropriate communication ability. Check the actual effect of textbooks on teaching appropriateness.

(3) Do cross-cultural comparison research. Study the appropriateness differences of the same content in different cultures. Give more practical pragmatic cases for textbook writing.

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