

A Study on Intercultural Pragmatic Failure and Development of Intercultural Interactive Competence based on International Chinese Education

Un estudio sobre el error pragmático transcultural y el desarrollo de la competencia de interacción intercultural basado en la educación china internacional

国际中文教育视角下跨文化语用失误分析与跨文化互动能力培养研究

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Abstract: Inter-cultural interaction is prevalent within international Chinese education. However, a variety of factors often lead to cross-cultural pragmatic failure and failed interactions. This article studies the practices of international Chinese education and intercultural interaction failure and its factors, aiming to find out how cognitive psychological factor decides and explore strategies of developing students' cross-cultural interactive competence to reduce failure.

Key Words: international Chinese education; Pragmatic failure; intercultural interactive competence; Strategies.

Resumen: La interacción transcultural es un fenómeno universal en la educación China internacional. Este fenómeno siempre conduce al fracaso pragmático transcultural y al error de la interacción, que se ven afectados por diferentes factores. Con base en las prácticas de la educación China internacional y el análisis de estos fenómenos, así como de sus factores, se ilustra que el factor psicológico cognitivo es la causa raíz de este fenómeno. Luego se exploran las estrategias y métodos para el cultivo de la competencia de interacción intercultural y así tener éxito en lugar de error en la interacción intercultural.

Palabras clave: La educación china internacional; fracaso pragmático; competencia interactiva intercultural; estrategias.

摘要: 跨文化互动是国际中文教育中普遍存在的现象。由于受不同因素的影响，互动主体经常出现跨文化语用失误并导致互动失败。结合国际中文教学实践，通过分析跨文化语用失误现象和原因，进一步揭示出互动主体的认知心理是根本因素，并由此进一步提出培养跨文化互动能力的策略方法，以期减少语用失误，促成跨文化互动的成功。

[关键词] 国际中文教育；语用失误；跨文化互动能力；策略

1. Introduction

In recent years, as China has seen increasing comprehensive strength as well its increasing prominence and role on the world stage, different countries and regions have successively strengthened cooperation in economy, trade and cultural exchange, which has reciprocally fostered the thriving of international Chinese education. Therefore, cross-cultural interaction between China and foreign countries has become more frequent. However, due to both interacting sides having discrepancies with regards to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as well as their values and cognitive psychology, among other differentiating reasons, it is impossible for them to accurately comprehend, understand or judge the purposes and intentions of each other, leading to cross-cultural interaction failures. In addition, it must be said that the sudden COVID-19 pandemic changed the methods of communication and interaction from offline to online, from face-to-face interaction to remote interaction. This inevitably extends

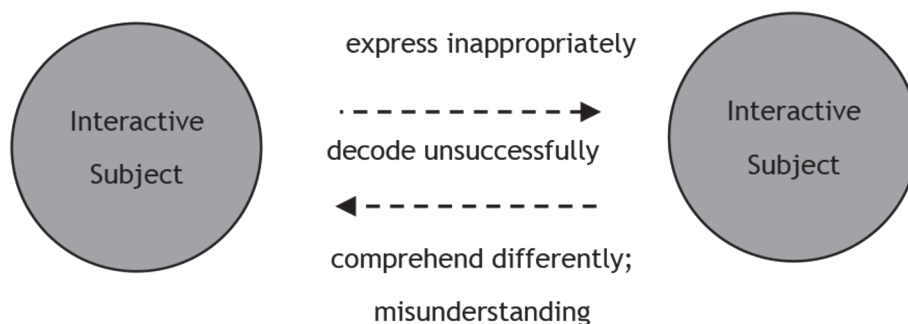
interpersonal distance to some extent, thereby losing the real target-language environment. As a result, Chinese language learners will have more difficulty with regards to accurate and appropriate expression.

Cross-cultural interaction is the interaction between native and non-native speakers, as well as the interaction between two parties who have differences in terms of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Put simply, it is the interaction and communication between different cultural backgrounds, relating to linguistics, pedagogy, cultural and cross-cultural discipline, among others. The goal of effective cross-cultural interaction is to structure and create shared meaning, and then reach a general consensus. Cross-cultural interaction can be divided into two parts according to the different participants. One is that both parties come from one country, speaking one language but with different racial identities, for instance, the interaction between the Han nationality and minority nationalities in China. Another is those who come from different countries and regions, speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds, for example, the interaction between Chinese and western countries or other foreign countries. From the perspective of the international Chinese education, cross-cultural interaction mainly means the interactive behaviors between Chinese and foreigners with different cultural backgrounds, and this kind of interaction more likely leads to pragmatic failure. Therefore, the second situation will be discussed and analyzed in the following paper.

2. Interpretation of Pragmatic Failure Theory

The concept of pragmatic failure was first put forward by the famous British pragmatist Jenny Thomas in 1983. In *Cross-cultural Pragmatic Failure*, Thomas (1983: 91-112) points out that pragmatic failure is the inability to understand what is meant by what is said. Along with putting forward this concept, many Chinese scholars have also explored and researched in this field. For example, He Ziran (2004: 168) pointed out that pragmatic failure is when speakers inadequately express themselves, yet assume listeners could fully understand them, causing the listener to misunderstand. In terms of an informative interaction, it also means the two communicating parties cannot decode the information successfully, causing both sides to enter a semantic debate because of their different cultural backgrounds, with the listeners and speakers deriving an inappropriate or even incorrect meaning due to the absence of knowing their pragmatic rules, social rules, as well as the cultural knowledge. This is shown in the figure below:

Figure 1. Formation of Pragmatic Failure



Pragmatic Failure was divided into two types by Thomas, those being pragma-linguistic failure and socio-pragmatic failure. The former identifies failure on the linguistic level, referring to the misuse of phonetics, vocabulary and semantics, grammar and structures, and it is the result of applying languages. The latter refers to failure on the pragmatic level, such as inappropriate expression originating from neglecting or not understanding the mutual discrepancies between cultural backgrounds, pragmatic order and idiomaticity. However, in terms of international Chinese education, cross-cultural interaction not only relates to the differences between linguistic behavior and social communication, but also includes the classroom context, as well as the nonverbal interaction in the second classroom. In consideration of the above criterion for classification, we will analyze from the following from three aspects, those being pragmatic failure on language, social communication and on nonverbal interaction.

3. The Phenomenon of Cross-cultural Pragmatic Failure and Cause Analysis

3.1 Pragmatic Failure on Language Aspect

3.1.1 Phonetics

Different tones, intonation and stress may give speech diverse meanings. When listeners cannot make an accurate judgement or understand these various cues, it can lead to cross-cultural pragmatic failure. For example, during an interaction, the speaker might use some methods like rising tone to show his or her impatience or even condemnation in Chinese. In these circumstances, if listeners do not comprehend this, thinking the speaker is asking a usual question and then giving a declarative answer, it will leave

the speaker unable to respond. Moreover, different tones have different meanings in Chinese, like “bēi zi” (杯子, cup) and “bèi zi” (被子, quilt). In the process of interaction and communication, if one cannot grasp the fourth tone in Chinese, the presence of a foreign accent causing strange inflections in words or not understanding one another’s pronunciation, as well as having incorrect word collocation, pragmatic failure is hard to avoid.

3.1.2 Vocabulary and Semantics

The meaning of vocabulary consists of both a conceptual meaning and a homonymous meaning. For people from different cultural backgrounds, if the two parties only grasp the conceptual meaning of a word rather than the homonymous meaning, thereby only understanding one meaning of the word, they will not have a complete grasp on the meaning of the word. Therefore, this will create difficulty applying the words correctly in specific situations, thereby causing misunderstandings. “玉” (yù, jade) culture is a good example. In Chinese, the word has a complimentary aspect to it, indicating nobility, and is a symbol that has carried cultural influence since ancient China. Therefore, Chinese idioms exist that use the perceived positive qualities in jade to describe nobility and good morals in men, or beauty in women. On the contrary, jade has had a derogatory meaning in western countries, being used to describe a female who is considered worthless. On the other hand, the vocabulary of a language always gets changed and recontextualised, forming new slang words like “内卷” (nèi juǎn), “凡尔赛文学” (fán’ěrsài wénxué) and “柠檬精” (níngméng jīng) with new meanings and usages. Before any cross-cultural interaction, both parties should choose words carefully and correctly in order to avoid pragmatic failure.

Pragmatic failure and the failure of communication also often occurs when the interacting subjects fixate on the literal meaning when understanding one another rather than grasping the intended meaning. For instance, when one says “this is not my cup of tea”, if the listener did not understand this saying, meaning “to not be interested in it”, and therefore proceeded to ask “What tea? Where is the tea?”, it would make the speaker confused and not know how to respond.

The two verbs “搞” (gǎo) and “弄” (nòng) always cause pragmatic failure. Because of the broad range of meanings these two words can have, the meaning is dependent on the object of the sentence. The former can mean “engaged in one’s occupation or work” (such as “搞房地产开发”), “engaged in writing” (such as “搞活动方案”), “try to get something” (such as “搞点儿吃的”), or “do evil” (such as “搞腐败”). Diverse meanings and

flexible collocation often make Chinese learners confused, and they may articulate inappropriate sentences like “我搞我的手机”, which won't be used in Chinese.

3.1.3 Grammar

The premise of efficient cross-cultural interaction is based on comprehending the different structures and rules of grammar in various languages. For example, the yes or no question “你不喜欢奶茶吗?” in Chinese shows the notable difference in rules when compared with other languages. In Chinese, this yes or no question contains the speaker's presupposition of judgment, and taking this sentence as an example, it can be interpreted that the speaker thinks the listener “doesn't like bubble tea”. Therefore, before answering the question in Chinese, the listener has to use “是” (yes) or “不” (no) to first confirm or negate the speaker's presupposition, and then express their own ideas, such as “I like to drink bubble tea” or “I don't like to drink bubble tea”. On the contrary, when native English speakers answer these kinds of questions, they only need to be concerned with their own point of view and then answer “yes, I like it” or “no, I don't like it” according to the question. If learners are not clear about the different rules and orders on yes or no questions between Chinese and their own native language, pragmatic failure like “不, 我不喜欢” will happen frequently.

The phrase “why not...” is often used to make suggestions in English, but some teachers who teach Chinese as a second language are influenced by Chinese structures and rules in grammar and thus use affirmative forms when giving students instructions during the class, especially in the beginner level Chinese classes, such as “you can sit down at the first row”. Such behavior does not correspond with the forms of expression in the target language and makes it more likely for pragmatic failure to occur.

It is not hard to find that Chinese learners can easily construct correct sentences according to Chinese grammar rules. However, sometimes their expressions are inappropriate or inauthentic, and can even confuse Chinese listeners as to what they would like to express. When examined closely, it can be seen that this is due to the difference in discourse structure between Chinese and western languages. The main characteristic of Chinese discourse structure is “intuitive, concrete and roundabout” (Wu, 2009: 170-173). For example, in Chinese it is preferred to state the reason before the result, with a structure like “因为……, 所以……” (because..., therefore...), whereas discourse in English is analytical, abstract and linear, with the result being stated before the fact, such as “..., because...”. Those unaware of the structural features and forms of expression of both

Chinese and western languages can cause the interacting parties to have irregular formation of words and sentences, and also inaccurately convey information and fail to cross-culturally communicate.

3.2 Pragmatic Failure on Social Communication Aspect

3.2.1 Greetings

In order to show one's respect, maintain social connections and have normal social communication, people tend to greet each other with greetings like "hello", "how are you", or something trivial, which is not necessary to answer, such as "have you had your dinner?" "where are you going?" or "you are going to the school, right?". However, due to the differences in social standards and language conventions between China and foreign countries, these expressions might cause pragmatic failure in cross-cultural circumstances. For example, saying "hello" is quite common when people meet each other in western social communication, but in China, unless it is under a formal circumstance or seeing others for the first time, people usually do not greet each in this manner, and it is not customary to ask "how are you?" to strangers. In some certain circumstances, people might become more alert if someone says "hello" to them, as they will contemplate the other's true intentions. If a good friend or colleague suddenly says "hello", it probably would make the listener feel some degree of distance between themselves and the speaker, and even make the listener feel that they may have done something wrong. If a westerner greets a close Chinese friend or colleague by asking "how are you?" in Chinese ("你好"), this will sometimes make the listener feel somewhat alienated. When teaching Chinese, many textbooks will select expressions according to what is used in the native language of the western speakers like "how are you?". However, in real-life communication, Chinese people barely ask "how are you?", save for when they are aware the listener is physically or mentally unwell and wish to express concern, and they may ask "你还好吗? (are you okay?)". Some teachers haven't realized this distinct difference of the greetings between China and other countries, so some inappropriate expressions are taught, and when it comes to the social interaction, this might cause pragmatic failure and make people have difficulty responding.

On the contrary, in western languages, asking "have you eaten? (你吃饭了吗?)" like Chinese people usually do, would be regarded as an invitation. Also, if one asks "where are you going? (你去哪儿?)", westerners might feel slightly offended and see it as an invasion of privacy. From this, we can see western culture is more inclined to the individual, unlike Chinese culture, which leans more towards collectivism.

3.2.2 Forms of Address

In the process of interaction, forms of address can not only be used as an indicator to draw others' attention, but also can reveal the relationship between speakers. An appropriate form of address will be easily received well by the listener, whereas a negative impression can be left if inappropriate, and halt the interaction. Therefore, having some knowledge about address forms for different cultural backgrounds is necessary.

In China, people usually address an elder stranger as “叔叔” (uncle) or “阿姨” (aunt). This kind of address is unlikely be used in the western world as it is influenced by its individualistic culture. Westerners often use “Mr.” or “Miss” to address others. In recent years, with the increasing frequency of inter-communication between China and other countries, Chinese people have also adopted using “Mr.” and “Miss” in formal contexts. Furthermore, we can add others' professions or titles behind their names like “张老师” (Mr./Ms. Zhang), “吴院长” (Doctor Wu) or “王院士” (Scholar Wang) to show our respect. In the Western world, this form of address is also appropriate, but, unlike Chinese, in English the title and profession is placed before the name, such as “Dr. Taylor”, and it is a neutral address without any other pretext or preference.

No matter if it is a monosyllabic or disyllabic name, in Chinese the word “小” (xiǎo) can be used before as a diminutive, like “小王 (Xiao Wang), and if one's first name is a one syllable word, the name can be repeated, such as “明明” (Mingming) to address that person; when it is a disyllabic name, one can address that person by using their given name. This form of address is used between families, good friends or other close relationships. In the west, people are used to addressing others according to their given names, but in China, people prefer not to use any intimate forms of address, especially between men, so as not to be identified as homosexual.

The difference between formal and informal address could confuse people when communicating. For example, some foreign students might ask “老师，周末您老婆在家吗？我想去拜访一下儿老师和您老婆。” (Sir, is your wife home? I would like to visit you and your wife.) Upon hearing this, the teacher will be inclined to simply offer an embarrassed smile to deal with this awkward situation. On one hand, “老婆” (lǎopo) is a casual form of address and viewed as not formal enough, therefore potentially causing some misunderstanding. On the other hand, to a certain degree, due to the influence of some traditional concepts like “men should deal with the business outside, while women take care of the domestic affairs”, males still have the predominant position in social communication. In this case, if

we replace “老婆” (lǎopo) into “师母” (shīmǔ, teacher’s wife), it would be much more appropriate.

3.2.3 Farewell

When an interaction is about to finish, people usually use some specific language signifiers to say goodbye. In Chinese, words and phrases showing consideration such as “慢走” (take care), “慢点儿” (watch your step), “路上小心” (be careful on the road), “注意安全” (travel safely), or just saying “再见” (see you again) are used. In English, “goodbye” “bye-bye” and “see you” are commonly used. For foreigners, if they don’t know the pretext of these having an intention of being considerate, they might think that Chinese people are very strange, or regard it as an action of prying into their privacy. In this case, sometimes the two sides of communication would need to explain their true intention in order to avoid cross-cultural pragmatic failure.

In China, when bidding farewell to somebody, no matter if it is after a formal dinner or other occasion, the host will usually extend their wish that they hope they can come or meet again soon, therefore saying something like “没事儿再来玩儿” (please come again), “咱们找时间再聚” (let’s find time to hang out again). However, sometimes this is just the host being courteous, and doesn’t necessarily literally mean what was told. As a result, this might be confusing to some and cause misunderstandings.

3.2.4 Compliment

Giving others compliments is quite common in interactions. An appropriate compliment can make cross-cultural communication smoother as well as reduce barriers and friction. However, if one makes an inappropriate compliment, pragmatic failure will occur and end the cross-cultural communication.

Due to cultural differences, the reactions or attitudes to hearing compliments vary. People from western cultural backgrounds tend to give compliments to others directly, and the range of praise is very broad. For example, among others, compliments can range from noticing the recipient has a new haircut, finished a job at work, or even to just the way someone looks. It is common to make comments such as “beautiful hair” “well done” “so sexy”. On the other hand, in Chinese, the range reduces, and is usually used in the context of working, such as “干得漂亮!” (Good job!), “做得不错!” (Great work!), and also is accompanied by further encouragement, such as “论文写得太棒了, 你一定检索了不少的资料吧。” (The thesis is quite good, you must have done a lot of research.), “你的课讲得太好了, 一定花了很多心思精心准备过吧” (Your class was excellent, you must have spent a long time preparing it.) Furthermore, in China, it is rare to

compliment a woman on her looks, especially from a man, as this would make the woman feel embarrassed, and the man giving the compliment might be regarded as having an ulterior motive.

In response to a compliment, as Chinese people emphasize modesty, they would typically opt for a response intimating as such. For example, “没有没有” (no, it's not like that), “还差得远着呢” (there is still a long way to go), “还需要继续努力” (not even close) or “漂亮什么呀” (no, it is not good at all) may be used. Not responding in this manner may indicate that one is arrogant. On the other hand, in western culture, it is more typical to take the compliment with pleasure and say “thank you”.

3.2.5 Invitation and Rejection

In China, if one is invited to a formal dinner, sometimes even if that person wants to attend, it is polite to decline the invitation at first, or he/she will be seen as being impolite. In the west, the inviter would typically like to receive a clear response upon offering the invitation. The invitee cannot give an ambiguous response. While social courtesy dictates that it is needed to invite someone multiple times in China, to people of western cultures this may seem inauthentic and give off a negative impression.

When we are declining someone's invitation, in order to avoid the inviter losing face (a salient element of Chinese culture), a euphemistic declination will be employed by Chinese people, for which some implicit expressions are quite common, such as “别麻烦了” (please don't trouble yourself), “你太客气了” (you're too polite), “我尽量过去吧” (I will try my best to see if I can get there), “再说吧” (we'll see) or “可能要考虑考虑” (I'll probably need to consider). These might confuse people with a western cultural background, so if a Chinese learner doesn't know the logic or implication beneath the words, it could lead to cross cultural pragmatic failure.

3.3 Pragmatic Failure Due to Non-verbal Communication

In real-life communication, the interactions between people are not only limited to verbal communication. Non-verbal communication often factors in to interactions to the point that it can supplement or even replace verbal communication. American scholar Larry A. Smovar (2017: 170) noted that “non-verbal behavior is even regarded as the replacement of communication.” Sometimes information transmitted through non-verbal behavior is ambiguous, meaning different people might interpret these signals in a variety of ways, perhaps even in the opposite way to which was intended. If the two interacting parties preemptively interpret the interaction through the negative cultural transfer of their native language

and culture while ignoring the meaning of non-verbal behaviors in different cultures, it will cause pragmatic failure and affect the communication between the interacting parties. In international Chinese education, pragmatic failure through non-verbal communication primarily occurs due to aspects such as body language, paralinguistic and objective language/general appearance.

3.3.1 Body language

Nodding, shaking one's head, smiling, shrugging, waving, shaking hands, gesturing, clapping, patting one's belly, stomping, and crossing legs are all body language. It is one of the most commonly used non-verbal languages we conduct during our teaching, and how to use it properly is a matter that needs to be studied. Different students from different cultural backgrounds have their own gestures they use when they are answering questions. Most Chinese people prefer to rise up or wave their right hands to draw the teacher's attention. In Spain, we have found that Spanish students usually raise their right hands with their forefingers up. When Japanese people meet, they will bow, and sitting on their knees is as common as sitting on a chair. However, in China, bowing is usually reserved for funerals as a way to pay respect to the deceased, or indicates apology to somebody. Kneeling in China sometimes could signify the deprivation of one's dignity, so due to the great difference between the perception of these gestures, a public figure, especially star kneeling would create big shock wave in Chinese media. Therefore, a lack of awareness of the different cultural perceptions between gestures can cause great problems when communicating with students in an international Chinese class.

3.3.2 Paralinguistic

Paralinguistic is defined as "the non-lexical component of speech, such as pitch, volume, speed, and turn-taking" (Zu, 2015: 115). There are differences in the volume of speaking of people who come from different countries, so in Chinese teaching and actual communication circumstances, pragmatic failure due to speaking volume is quite common. Chinese women under the influence of traditional social requirements like behaving demurely and modestly speak in a low volume to convey politeness and decency. On the contrary, women from the west use a high speaking volume to show their strength otherwise they would be discerned as weak. Japanese students, no matter what kind of circumstances (school or other social communication environment) have a comparatively lower speaking volume and sometimes they will choose to be silent, undoubtedly influencing the interactions and modes of communication within a diverse Chinese class.

3.3.3 Object Language/General Appearance

This mainly refers to people's fashion, including accessories and colors worn. Pragmatic failure because of object language/general appearance is far beyond rare. In Japan, Korea and some other countries, there are dress codes for teachers. Males are required to wear a suit or some other formal attire. However, in China, there is no such requirement for teachers, and they prefer to choose casual, comfortable clothing, which could give the impression that Chinese teachers do not care to maintain their own personal appearance and are even sloppy. What's more, Chinese people regard red as a symbol of luck, revolution, success and happiness, so during New Year's eve, antithetical couplets with a red background are pasted on the doors of every family, and the lanterns or other decorations are also usually red. In the wedding, brides and grooms wear red dresses, red shoes and socks, but in the west, red is a symbol of danger, so it requires some guidance or explanation when teaching.

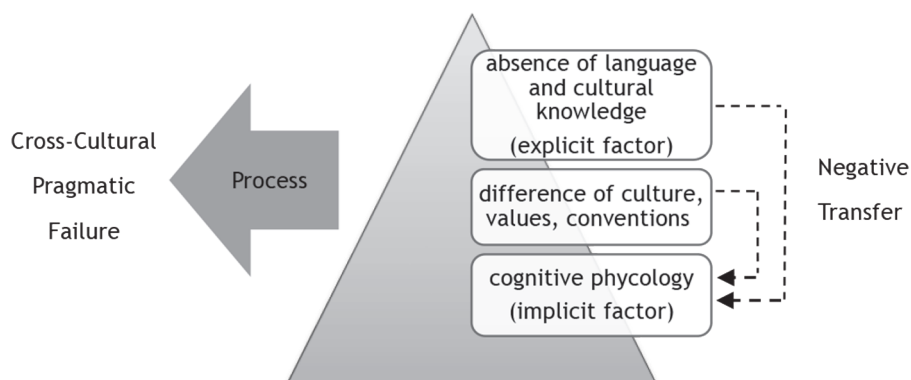
Li Yuansheng (2004: 115) pointed out that the pragmatic failure in verbal and non-verbal behavior is fundamentally caused by cultural differences. Xu Kaibin (2013: 379) also pointed out that the cultural differences between different countries lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Through analysis of the literature, we may easily find that the absence of language and cultural knowledge, the negative transfer of language and culture, cultural differences as well as differences in values, habits and cognitive psychology are the main reasons for pragmatic failure. In addition, different aspects of pragmatic failure occur for different reasons. The aforementioned verbal and non-verbal pragmatic failure mainly relates to two factors: inadequate knowledge of the target language and culture as well as negative transfer of language and culture. Lack of knowledge in terms of language and culture create the obvious effect of making the interacting party only able to operate in terms of rules, thought processes and cognitive methods already known to them, that is to say, using the forms of expression within their native language. Due to the fact that there are differences in cognitive psychology between language and culture, this often causes pragmatic failure and negative cultural transfer. Similarly, non-verbal behavior, which is ambiguous by nature, is understood through learning. Only through more active learning and knowing each other's language and culture can one grasp the conventions of the same non-verbal behavior in different languages and cultures. A scarce knowledge of non-verbal behavior in other languages and cultures will make it impossible to share different cultures. Added together with expressing non-verbal

behavior based on one's own cognitive psychology, conflicts in non-verbal behavior will be unavoidable.

On the contrary, the prominent factors of pragmatic failure with regards to social communication are: (1) the differences in culture and values, (2) the differences of habits and conventions, (3) the differences of cognitive ways and psychology. The differences in cultural backgrounds, values and conventions shape different cultural identities and practices. For the same objective situation or type of behavior, different feedback may be received and different response strategies may be used. In other words, they are very transferable. Whether they will be transferred, and if it will be positive or negative transfer mainly depends on how the two parties comprehend the different cultures, namely the implicit factors: the use of cognitive psychology is stressed in this process. That is to say, when pragmatic failure happens, no matter if it is due to the absence of language and cultural knowledge or the differences of cultures, values, habits and conventions, the result will cause negative transfer mainly determined by one's own cognitive psychology.

Thus, it can be seen that explicit factors affecting pragmatic failure on the verbal and non-verbal level act through implicit factors; cognitive psychology will determine how one responds, whether the transfer will happen and what kind of transfer it will be in the end. Therefore, cognitive psychology is the most important dimension and it plays the decisive role and is the root of pragmatic failure. The absence of language and cultural knowledge is located on the surface layer, and the differences in cultures, values and conventions located in between both of them. Both the factors on the surface and in the middle layer can trigger the wrong information organizing and processing, as is shown in the figure below:

Figure 2. Factors of Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure



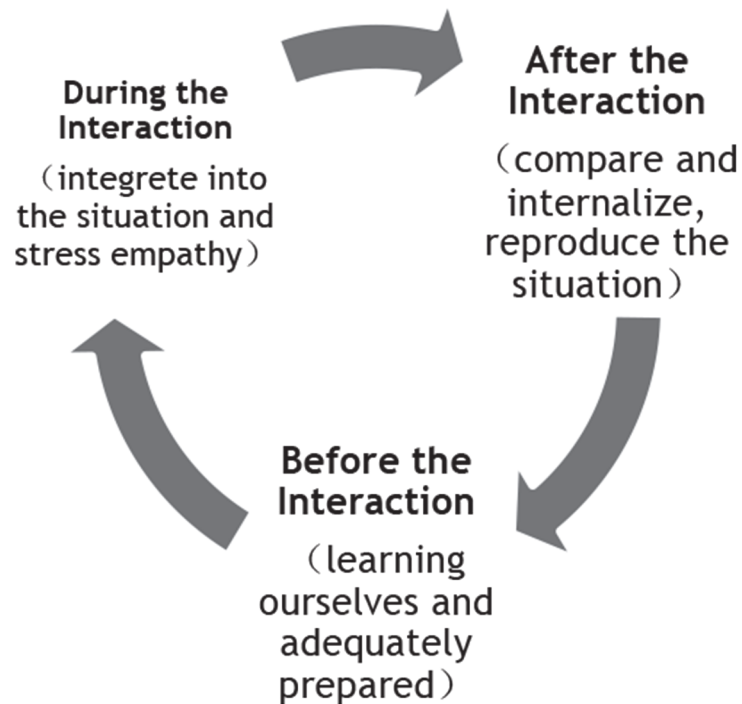
In general, whether or not interacting parties are lacking in terms of mutual cultural knowledge, how to treat different cultures, as well as values and conventions, it can be figured out through mutual discourse. The subjects of the interaction are those involved in the discussion, and the cognitive viewpoints as well as subjective view of initiative differ, and so therefore due to the emotional filters produced by different cultures towards each other, it is difficult for both parties to obtain the expected judgement, which makes accurate processing of information impossible. This contrast to one's expectation with regards to cognitive understanding prompt both parties to use their own culture as a frame of reference for the information, leading to ineffective psychological decoding and recoding. In other words, the obstacles in the process of cross-cultural communication are mainly caused by differences in cognitive styles(Jiang, 2020: 26-28). Therefore, pragmatic failure and ineffective interactions ultimately point to cognitive psychological factors concerning the interacting subjects.

4. Strategies of Cultivating Cross-Cultural Interaction Competence

In essence, international Chinese education belongs to foreign language education, which is the vital platform of cross-cultural interaction (Zhang, 2012: 2-7), demanding that Chinese teachers not only impart language knowledge, but also that students acquire knowledge of the language and culture at the same time, so as to transform this knowledge into the capability to interact. The famous scholar Byram (1997: 57-63) divided cross-cultural competence into five parts: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction and critical cultural awareness. The cross-cultural interaction competence based on international Chinese education is mainly revealed in the desire of both two parties to interact, the structure of the knowledge, as well as the skills and strategies of interaction, meaning it concerns whether they have the will and motivation to interact with others, whether they have adequate knowledge needed for the interaction, and whether they can interact and communicate with others appropriately. Since the one-way development path from the beginning of the interaction to the end of the interaction only emphasizes and pays attention to the process of interaction and ignores the after-effects of the interaction, the "linear path" should be changed to the "circular path", that is to say, the entire cross-cultural interaction process should follow a sequence of "before interaction - during interaction - after interaction - before interaction", with emphasis on the use of after-effect feedback on a new round of interaction. Therefore,

the main importance in an interaction is adequate preparation before the interaction, positively integrating into the specific cultural environment, internalizing the interaction into one's existing background knowledge and abilities after the interaction in order to lay a solid foundation and provide support for the next interaction, thereby avoiding cross-cultural interaction pragmatic failure, as well as promoting communication and understanding and allowing for cross-cultural interaction success. This is shown in the figure below:

Figure 3. Formula of Cross-Cultural Interaction



In view of the above, combined with the analysis of pragmatic failure and the practice of international Chinese education, we suggest to cultivate learners' cross-cultural competence in the following ways.

4.1 Develop the Role of Cognitive Psychology Prior to the Interaction

On one hand, importance should be placed on the role of metacognition and we should be self-aware, examining one's own cultural literacy and cross-cultural interaction ability, and we should rationally analyze the cultural structures and their levels. Meanwhile, we should be

aware of the diversity and differences in the world, eliminate stereotypes and prejudices, convert and change our cultural identities, and make an effort to increase the capacity for cultural sensitivity, cultural tolerance and cultural consciousness, in order to increase the willingness for cross-cultural interaction and psychological communication.

On the other hand, it is important to change from passive learning to an active acquisition of Chinese language and cultural knowledge. Firstly, this can be achieved through acquiring Chinese cultural knowledge actively under the guidance of international Chinese teachers. In order to help Chinese learners understand the diversity between different cultures, international Chinese teachers should organically combine culture with language while teaching, that is to say, strengthen the introduction to said culture in the teaching process, and integrate cultural factors into Chinese teaching, so that learners can grasp the differences between the different cultures, starting from a surface level, simple lesson to an in-depth and difficult lesson(Sun, 2011: 10-11). At the same time, we must pay attention to the application and development of cross-cultural teaching cases, create a real interactive environment that can reflect cultural differences, increase communicative exercises that have a realistic premise, improve skill training sessions, and effectively transform language and cultural knowledge into interaction skills to encourage students to actively seek strategies to cope with cultural conflicts. Secondly, students should take the initiative to acquire Chinese knowledge actively through textbooks and files they already have access to. The content of the teaching materials should be rationally arranged and localized teaching materials that fit real-world circumstances should be compiled, while content such as “你好吗” (how are you) that does not fit or even deviates from the principles of Chinese communication should be eliminated. The content should not only strive to link the linguistic content while emphasizing the pragmatic content, improve its relevancy, make Chinese learners able to use phonetic forms, vocabulary sentence patterns and linguistic style, or, as Lv Bisong (1992: 164-165) described it, “combine grammar with pragmatic”, but it is also suggested that more cross-cultural case exercises and after-school classes that stimulate learners’ interests and provide reflections are added, developing and practicing the “grammar-pragmatic-culture” model as well as making learners’ forms of expression more appropriate. Thirdly, acquiring Chinese knowledge actively through diverse teaching and learning methods is important. Discovering the most suitable learning methods and teaching patterns, such as Program Based Learning, Theme Based Learning, Task Based Learning, Experiential Learning, and Immersive Learning to

increase the interaction between Chinese teachers and learners, as well as the interaction between learners and learners should be implemented. Meanwhile, we can also make learners better understand the different cultures by watching and performing scenes. After class, searching for materials and cases, such as watching videos, interviews and communicating with others are also good ways to better understand the diversity of values, ways of thinking, habits and conventions. We can also utilize the “extended class” (the second class) to expand upon the knowledge learned in order to facilitate a comprehensive understanding.

4.2 Adhere to the Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle

During cross-cultural interaction, the two parties should first abide by the principles of conversational cooperation and politeness so as to provide the other party with truthful, relevant, clear, and sufficient information while narrowing the opposition and confrontation of emotions and views, increasing praise and encouragement towards one another. Meanwhile, we must monitor ourselves efficiently, combining adjusting to the real-world situation with corresponding communicative principles and strategies according to the circumstances so as to facilitate smooth communication and interaction.

Secondly, it is important to carry out meaningful negotiation and equal dialogues on the basis of removing prejudice as well as correctly and effectively dealing with conflicts in cross-cultural interactions. Topics should be ended at appropriate times, and turn-taking should be employed while avoiding aggravating any conflict. Alleviating and making up for culture clashes through smiling, eye-contact and gestures should be used to increase physical distance and non-verbal communication to encourage reconciliation and resolution of conflict for both parties.

Thirdly, teachers should fully take on the leading role, actively guide and explain cultural differences, urge both parties to improve their empathy, their ability to see their world from other’s perspectives and understand the meaning and emotions conveyed through verbal and nonverbal behavior from the perspective of the other party. There is no need to judge the behavior and culture of others according to one’s own values and paradigms, and not doing as such will thereby increase the capability for practical language use.

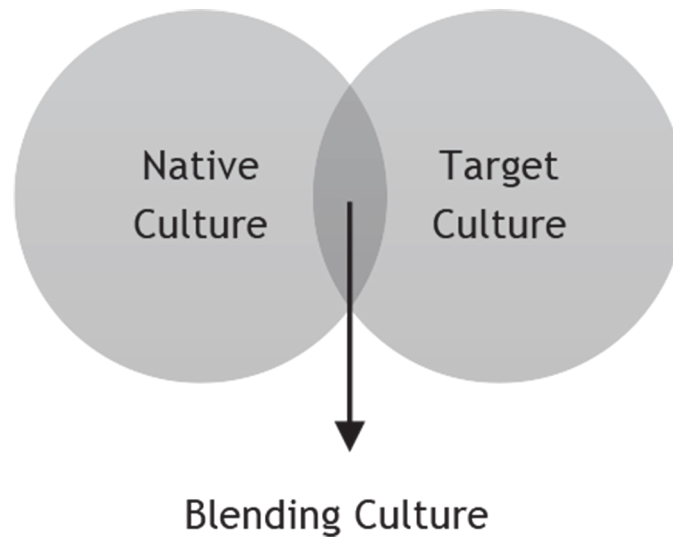
4.3 Evaluation

Different verbal and non-verbal behaviors are the result of various cultures and carry their cultural mark on them. These differences are

both shallow and deep reflections of culture. Evaluation can better reveal whether the subjects of the interaction already have cross-cultural interaction competence. Alvino E. Fantini (2012: 390) said that “what we assess ultimately reflects what we consider to be most important”. On one hand, both the listener and speaker ought to evaluate himself or herself through metacognition, and conduct a comparative analysis and summary of the cultural similarities and differences shown in the interaction process, so as to be internalized into their own ideologies. This enables both parties to have a more thorough understanding of different cultures and, at the same time, they can deepen their understanding and recognition of their own cultures. Only through knowing oneself and each other can one interact and reduce pragmatic failure. On the other hand, the international Chinese teacher should also evaluate the cross-cultural interaction abilities of both parties in accordance with corresponding standards to help Chinese learners better develop their cross-cultural interaction skills.

During the interaction, heterogeneous cultures will also experience cultural blending and convergence. For instance, in China the “女士” (nǚshì, Ms.) and “先生” (xiānsheng, Mr.) forms of address are seeing widespread usage, and contemporary Chinese people no longer think that the color red is exclusive to marriage and accept and acknowledge the concepts of “dignity” and “purity” associated with white. When celebrating birthdays for others, young Chinese people are also accustomed to ordering a birthday cake instead of having traditional Chinese noodles. This kind of blending and convergence of culture is not simple in nature, but rather is based on a global perspective, which can enhance the cultural identities of the interacting parties and better guide effective interaction and communication. Therefore, the interactive subject must not only discover cultural differences from cultural comparisons, but also promote dialogue and interaction between different cultures at the behavioral level, establish a large pattern of cultural interaction and integration, and actively explore the “third space” (Kramsch, 2009: 233-254), as shown below:

Figure 4. Blending of Heterogeneous Cultures



In addition, people's language and culture are acquired in a certain context. After the interaction, both listener and speaker can look back on the conflict in retrospect and reproduce the context to reconstruct the actual points of failure and success. Through multiple exterior sources and personal experience, working together, investigating and practicing methods of self-reflection, people can have a deeper knowledge and understanding of other cultures and reduce pragmatic failure.

5. Conclusion

Pragmatic failure occurs frequently during cross-cultural interaction. Analyzing this may help us better understand the differences between China and other cultures, which at the same time can undoubtedly provide guidance and practical significance for international Chinese education, as well as reduce pragmatic failure. Research shows that the absence of linguistic and cultural knowledge, negative transfer, differences of cultures, values, conventions, and cognitive psychology are the main reasons of pragmatic failure, with cognitive psychology being the root cause. Based on the process of interactive communication and the practice of international Chinese education, this study goes on to propose strategies and methods for more feasibly cultivating the capability for cross-cultural interaction. At the same time, we should be aware that not only are interactions dynamic and prone to change, but so too are languages and cultures. For example,

in Chinese the word “狗” (dog) taken in the derogatory sense has been changed to also have a complimentary usage, such as “单身狗” (bachelor), and “逆行” (go in the other direction) changed to the complimentary sense like “逆行者” (a hero who puts themselves in danger). It reveals the importance of cognitive psychology and reminds us that in cross-cultural communication it is also necessary to conduct a comprehensive analysis in combination with real-world changes and developments.

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