

Constructing the "Third Space": Innovative Practices in the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture within International Chinese Education

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of the field of international Chinese education, effectively combining language learning with cultural experience to enhance learners' intercultural communication skills has become a pressing issue. Based on the "Third Space" theory and the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture, this study explores the innovative application of this pedagogy across different cultural contexts, particularly through the use of emerging technologies (e.g., Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence) and strategies adapted to multicultural environments to achieve this goal. By analyzing multiple teaching cases, the study demonstrates how this pedagogical approach can enhance students' language skills and cultural adaptability in intercultural settings. The findings indicate that this approach not only promotes a deep integration of language and culture but also helps students reconstruct their cultural identities during intercultural communication.

KEYWORDS

Third Space Theory; Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture; Intercultural Communication Skills; Application of New Technologies

1 Introduction

Amid the wave of globalization, the international influence of the Chinese language has expanded, with a significant increase in the number of Chinese learners worldwide. However, traditional Chinese language teaching often focuses heavily on language skills while overlooking the importance of cultural knowledge. Particularly in intercultural communication, a lack of understanding of the target culture can hinder flexible language application and effective communication.^[1] To address this issue, scholars have increasingly emphasized the integration of language learning and cultural experience, which not only enhances language skills but also facilitates intercultural communication. Against this backdrop, the combination of "Third Space" theory and the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture offers a new perspective for international Chinese education.

The "Third Space" theory posits that learners can construct new cultural identities between their native and target cultures through real cultural activities and reflection, thereby enhancing their adaptability in intercultural environments.^[2] The Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture integrates cultural experiences into language learning through scenario-based simulation and role-playing, allowing learners to practice language in authentic or virtual cultural contexts and gain a deep understanding of core values and social norms in the target culture. This approach transcends the

limitations of traditional teaching, promoting both language use and intercultural communication skills. This study explores the combination of "Third Space" theory and the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture, examining the role of emerging technologies like Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and Artificial Intelligence in deepening cultural experiences and enhancing learners' language skills and intercultural communication abilities. Through a wealth of teaching examples, this study aims to provide insights for innovation and development in international Chinese education.

2 Interaction Pathways between "Third Space" Theory and the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture

In intercultural communication education, learners must not only acquire language knowledge but also undergo a process of cultural identity reconstruction and intercultural adaptation. The "Third Space" theory provides theoretical support for identity transformation, while the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture offers a concrete pathway for learners through practical cultural experiences. The integration of these two frameworks creates a new interactive model for language education, enabling learners to build cultural identity alongside language proficiency and enhance their intercultural communication skills.

2.1 Cultural Identity Reconstruction in the "Third Space" Theory

The "Third Space" theory, proposed by Homi K. Bhabha, examines the dynamic formation of cultural identity amid the fusion of diverse cultures.^[3] This theory posits that cultural identity is not fixed but evolves through intercultural interactions, with learners gradually constructing a "Third Space" identity that integrates diversity through dialogues between their native and target cultures. This process involves stages of acceptance, reflection, and integration of the new culture, allowing learners to deepen their understanding of their native culture while becoming more adaptable in intercultural communication. In Chinese language education, the "Third Space" theory is particularly relevant. Given that the Chinese language is deeply influenced by cultural elements, learners must not only acquire linguistic knowledge but also understand the cultural mindset it reflects. By engaging in dialogue between their native culture and Chinese culture, learners can reflect on their own cultural identity, ultimately forming a new cultural identity through comparison and integration, which is essential for language acquisition and intercultural adaptability.

2.2 Mechanisms of Intercultural Adaptation in the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture

The Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture advocates for mastery of the target language and cultural background through participatory practice and personal experience in real contexts. At its core, this approach enhances intercultural communication skills by enabling learners to engage in scenario-based interactions, fostering a deeper understanding of the target culture.^[4] This method creates a safe, interactive environment in which learners can familiarize themselves with the behavioral norms and thought patterns of the target culture through role-playing and scenario simulations. It transforms students from passive receivers of information into active participants in cultural experiences. This participatory learning approach not only deepens learners' cultural identity but also improves their cultural adaptation skills through continuous reflection and practice, laying a solid foundation for enhanced intercultural communication abilities.

2.3 Integrating "Third Space" Theory with the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture

The integration of "Third Space" theory and the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture provides an innovative pathway for intercultural language education. While the "Third Space" theory focuses on identity reconstruction between native and target cultures, the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture gives concrete form to this process through experiential activities. Through role-playing, students participate in activities from the target culture within the "Third Space," fostering understanding and acceptance and enhancing intercultural adaptability and communication skills.

In the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture, scenario-based simulations and role-playing provide a platform for cultural identity reconstruction within the "Third Space." For instance, during a Chinese New Year role-playing activity, students may take on roles as family members, or in a simulated business negotiation, they may play different roles. These activities allow students to apply language in social contexts and to experience the process of cultural collision and integration through simulated interactions, thus understanding and adapting to the norms of the target culture. As participation and reflection deepen, learners gradually establish a new cultural identity, achieving identity transformation within the "Third Space."

3 Application Cases of the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture in Multicultural Contexts

The Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture combines cultural experience with language learning, providing an interactive learning platform for learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. This approach aids in overcoming cultural barriers and enhancing a sense of belonging to the target culture.^[5] The following examples illustrate typical multicultural educational cases to demonstrate the application of this pedagogy in promoting intercultural communication and discuss its impact on learners' cultural adaptability and language proficiency.

3.1 Western Cultural Context: Role-Playing in Cross-Cultural Business Communication

For learners from Western cultural backgrounds, cross-cultural business communication is a common scenario. Instructors can design a simulated business meeting between Chinese and Western companies, with participants acting as representatives from each side and engaging in collaborative discussions. In addition to using Chinese for communication, students must understand and apply Chinese concepts of "guanxi" (relationship-building) and "mianzi" (face). Through this role-playing activity, learners experience cultural differences within a simulated business environment, gaining insights into Chinese collectivism and indirect communication styles. By directly engaging in negotiation activities, they learn techniques for effective communication while respecting cultural differences.

3.2 African Cultural Context: Cultural Adaptation through Agricultural Experiences

For students from African cultural backgrounds, teachers can design an agricultural-themed experiential activity centered on Chinese rural agriculture, such as simulating a Chinese rural agricultural cooperative project. Students can assume roles as farmers or agricultural experts and discuss the impact of technological innovation on agricultural development. This activity helps students acquire agriculture-related Chinese vocabulary and deepens their understanding of China's agricultural models and their influence on social structures. By comparing agricultural practices in China and Africa, students can reflect on similarities and differences between the two

nations. Given that agriculture is a key area of Sino-African cooperation, this interactive activity helps students understand China's social values regarding teamwork and technological innovation.^[6]

3.3 Southeast Asian Cultural Context: Cross-Cultural Comparison of Festival Cultures

For learners from Southeast Asian cultural backgrounds, experiencing festival cultures is an engaging teaching approach. Teachers can organize activities that compare Chinese New Year with Southeast Asian festivals (e.g., Thailand's Songkran Festival or Vietnamese Tet). Students take on family roles during Chinese New Year, experiencing traditional customs such as New Year's Eve dinners, paying New Year's visits, and giving red envelopes, allowing them to understand the importance of family values and reunion in Chinese culture.^[7] This cultural comparison enables students to acquire Chinese expressions related to festivals while deepening their understanding and acceptance of Chinese culture.

4 Application of Emerging Technologies in the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture

With the rapid advancement of technology, emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are gradually being integrated into international Chinese education, offering new support and pathways for the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture.^[8] The inclusion of these technologies expands cultural teaching beyond traditional classroom formats, creating a virtual "Third Space" where learners can interactively experience multiple cultures and reflect on their self-identity, thereby reconstructing cultural identification.

4.1 Immersive Cultural Experiences with Virtual Reality (VR)

Virtual Reality (VR) uses computer-generated simulations to create an interactive virtual environment, allowing learners to explore the target culture in a near-immersive way.^[9] VR is particularly suitable for scenario-based simulations and cultural role-play, providing a practical platform for building cultural identities within the "Third Space." By wearing VR devices, users can immerse themselves in a three-dimensional world where they can not only visit historical sites in China, such as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, but also participate in activities like Chinese New Year celebrations or traditional crafts. For example, research institutions could develop a VR-based Spring Festival experience course, enabling learners to participate in New Year greetings and festive dinners in a virtual environment. This interaction helps learners acquire language knowledge related to the Spring Festival and allows them to deeply understand the symbolic meaning of "reunion" in traditional Chinese culture. Additionally, participants can communicate with digital characters in virtual scenarios, further enhancing their understanding of the culture through role-playing.

4.2 Dynamic Cultural Display with Augmented Reality (AR)

Augmented Reality (AR) merges virtual information with real-world environments, providing learners with a more intuitive cultural interaction experience.^[10] This technology allows virtual elements from the target culture to be integrated into real-life settings, enabling users to browse Chinese cultural content in real-time via smart devices. This approach not only enhances the

interactivity and flexibility of the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture but also allows learners to better engage with and understand the target culture both inside and outside the classroom. For example, when discussing Chinese architectural culture, students can use AR to experience the structural features of ancient Chinese buildings, such as the siheyuan (courtyard houses) or garden layouts. Through smart devices, learners can interact with these virtually reconstructed historical structures and explore their design concepts and cultural background. This teaching method not only helps students grasp specialized architectural terminology but also provides them with a deeper understanding of Chinese traditional philosophy, such as the concepts of "harmony between humans and nature" and "blending of the real and the imaginary."

4.3 Personalized Cultural Interaction with Artificial Intelligence (AI)

As technology advances, AI plays an increasingly prominent role in language education. Through AI, virtual characters can simulate real-life individuals, interact with students, and provide real-time feedback and guidance.^[11] For instance, by simulating a Chinese businessperson or restaurant owner, AI can engage in dialogue with learners, offering culturally appropriate suggestions and corrections based on their responses. This type of interaction not only improves students' Chinese language proficiency but also provides them with a deeper understanding of unique Chinese communication styles and social behaviors. Additionally, AI can analyze learners' performance in different cultural contexts, helping them achieve self-awareness and adjustment of their cultural identity within the "Third Space." Based on individual language skills and cultural understanding, AI can adjust its content or create more complex cultural scenarios to further enhance learners' language skills and intercultural communication abilities.

5 Conclusion

The Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture, combined with "Third Space" theory, offers an innovative approach to international Chinese education. Against the backdrop of globalization, traditional language teaching falls short of meeting the demands of intercultural communication. By integrating language learning with cultural experiences through role-playing and scenario-based simulation, this method immerses learners in real or virtual cultural contexts, enhancing their language proficiency and their ability to adapt to diverse cultural environments. Through these cultural practices, learners construct a new cultural identity within the "Third Space," forming connections between their native and target cultures, which is essential for cultivating intercultural communication skills. The application of emerging technologies further advances the development of the Pedagogy of Performing Another Culture. Technologies like VR, AR, and AI enhance the immersive and interactive aspects of cultural experiences, transcending time and space limitations to provide personalized platforms for learners from various cultural backgrounds. As educational technology progresses, the application of this pedagogy will become more widespread, playing a crucial role in the globalized language learning environment.

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