# Research on the Ecological Orientations of College English Classroom Discourses

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| Article Detail: | Abstract |
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| | *The importance of language dimension in classroom teaching is self-evident. The analysis tools that can be used to analyze classroom discourses is particularly important. This study adopts a discourse analysis approach from an ecolinguistic perspective to explore the ecological nature of classroom discourse in a college English class. The research focuses on four dimensions: classroom discourse subjects, classroom discourse environment, classroom discourse content, and classroom discourse interaction. The findings reveal imbalances in the ecological nature of classroom discourse in college English classes, manifesting as unequal discourse subjects, a lack of ecological discourse environment, monotonous discourse content, and insufficient discourse interaction. Corresponding improvement suggestions are proposed to promote ecological balance in classroom discourse and enhance teaching effectiveness.* |

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, various ecological and environmental problems have emerged one after another, and the concept of "ecology" has gradually been generalized in various fields of human production and life. In academic research, many disciplines have also experienced the phenomenon of ecologicalization (Li & Yuan, 1988).

There has been a growing interest in ecological linguistics both in studies of ecology and linguistics. Although most of the research in various disciplines focuses on ecology, linguistics, sociology, and psychology, the problem we face today is the multidimensional entanglement between psychology, society, language, and ecology. Ecological linguistics aims to study various fields of life and use a multidisciplinary perspective to introduce analytical methods that are more integrated with others' understanding of the world

(Huang, 2018）.A lot of scholars explore this field from different perspectives, including linguistic ecology, ecological analysis of discourse, and ecological translation research.

With the rapid development of globalization and informatization, English has become the common language of international communication, making college English education increasingly important. The college English classroom is not only the primary place for students to learn English but also a crucial link in cultivating their intercultural communication abilities and enhancing their overall quality. However, there are several issues in current college English classrooms, such as dull classroom atmospheres, student disinterest, and ineffective teaching. These problems are largely related to imbalances in the ecological nature of classroom discourse. In research related to foreign language teaching, foreign language classroom discourse analysis is an important part. The ecological

orientation is a novel and insightful perspective. The role of studying classroom discourse from an ecological perspective is to resist practices that support inequality and ecologically disrupt the classroom environment; Simultaneously seeking new trustworthy practices that could be implemented. Comprehensive analysis includes observing various discourse contents and forms, and seeking positive language forms that encourage respect and care for the classroom environment (Huang, 2018）.

Therefore, this study employs a discourse analysis approach from an ecolinguistic perspective to explore the ecological nature of classroom discourse in college English teaching, aiming to provide useful references for improving college English classroom instruction.

## II. ECOLINGUISTICS AND CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

### 2.1 Overview of Ecolinguistics

The Arran Stibbe defines the term "ecolinguistics" as "the study of the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans with other species and the physical environment" in the monograph of second edition entitled Ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2021).

Ecolinguistics is a discipline that studies the interplay between language and the ecological environment. It focuses on how language reflects and influences the ecological environment, as well as how the ecological environment shapes the development and use of language. Ecolinguistics believes that language is not merely a tool for communication but also an important medium for human interaction with the natural and social environments. Therefore, ecolinguistics emphasizes studying language phenomena from an overall ecosystem perspective, exploring the functions and roles of language within ecosystems.

The research content of ecolinguistics includes the relationship between language and the natural environment, language and the sociocultural environment, language and cognitive development, etc. In terms of research methods, ecolinguistics focuses on interdisciplinary approaches, combining theories and methods from linguistics, ecology, sociology, psychology, and other disciplines. At the same time, ecolinguistics also emphasizes empirical research, exploring the relationship between language and the ecological environment through the collection and analysis of language use instances.

### 2.2 Definition and Importance of Classroom Discourse Analysis

Classroom discourse analysis refers to in-depth and detailed analysis and research on language use in classroom communication. It focuses on the language communication process in the classroom, including teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, and the structure and function of classroom discourse. According to Van Lier (1988:122), "classroom discourse analysis is the process of analyzing classroom interaction through careful investigation of audio-visual recordings of classroom interaction". AllWright and Balley (1991:61) define it as "the analysis of the spoken language used by teachers and students in the classroom". Classroom discourse analysis is one of the important research methods in educational linguistics and is crucial for improving classroom teaching and enhancing teaching quality.

Firstly, classroom discourse analysis helps uncover the nature and laws of classroom communication. By analyzing discourse content, we can understand the themes, structures, participant roles, and other information in classroom communication, thereby revealing the nature and laws of classroom communication. This aids teachers in better understanding student needs and interests, adjusting teaching strategies, and improving teaching effectiveness.

Secondly, classroom discourse analysis helps assess teaching quality and effectiveness. By analyzing classroom discourse, we can evaluate teachers' teaching levels and students' learning outcomes. For instance, we can analyze whether teachers' discourse is clear, accurate, and inspiring, and whether students' responses are active, accurate, and insightful. This helps teachers promptly identify teaching issues and take targeted measures for improvement.

Furthermore, classroom discourse analysis promotes educational equity and inclusivity. By analyzing the roles and statuses of discourse participants, we can uncover power relations and inequalities in the

classroom. This aids teachers in paying attention to student differences and diversity, adopting more inclusive and fair teaching strategies, and promoting educational equity and inclusivity.

### 2.3 Classroom Discourse Analysis from an Ecolinguistic Perspective

Classroom discourse analysis from an ecolinguistic perspective views the classroom as an ecosystem where teachers, students, textbooks, teaching equipment, and other elements are interconnected and mutually influential. In this ecosystem, classroom discourse is an important link connecting various elements. It not only reflects teachers' teaching philosophies and methods but also embodies students' learning states and needs. Therefore, analyzing classroom discourse from an ecolinguistic perspective helps uncover the operating mechanisms of the classroom ecosystem, identify existing issues, and propose corresponding improvement suggestions.

From an ecolinguistic perspective, classroom discourse analysis needs to focus on several aspects: First, the diversity of classroom discourse. Classroom discourse should encompass various types and styles of language use to meet the needs and interests of different students. For instance, teachers can use different language styles, tones, and vocabularies to stimulate students' interest and participation. Second, the interactivity of classroom discourse. Classroom discourse should be a bidirectional interaction between teachers and students, rather than a one-way transmission and reception. Teachers should encourage students to actively participate in classroom discussions, raise questions and viewpoints, and promote the development of students' thinking and expression abilities. Third, the contextuality of classroom discourse. Classroom discourse should adapt to specific teaching situations and reflect teaching content and goals. For example, during oral training, teachers should use more colloquial language to help students better understand and apply oral expression skills.

## III. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ECOLOGICAL NATURE OF CLASSROOM DISCOURSE IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

Matthiessen (2006) believes that the construction of the functional semiotic theory model can be divided into four stages: (1) using the framework of a certain theory for discourse analysis; (2) Based on the discourse analysis of the first stage, describe language phenomena with a certain number of discourses according to a specific theoretical framework; (3) Based on the language description in the second stage, classify the types of language; (4) Construct a language theory model. This study is currently in the second and third stages of research on the model. It is basically on a 'bottom-up' research path (Matthiessen & Halliday, 2009).

### 3.1 Classroom Discourse Subjects

In terms of linguistic features, Stibbe proposed that the arrangement and presentation of participants in clauses is one of the parts that analysts need to pay special attention to (Stibbe, 2021:30). Classroom discourse subjects refer to all parties involved in classroom communication, including teachers and students. In college English classrooms, the ways and characteristics of discourse use by teachers and students directly reflect the ecological nature of classroom discourse. Therefore, analyzing classroom discourse subjects is an important way to understand the ecological nature of classroom discourse.

For teachers, their discourse use and characteristics are mainly reflected in the choice of instructional language, classroom management strategies, and feedback on student discourse. Teachers should use clear, accurate, and vivid language to explain knowledge points, stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning. At the same time, teachers should also focus on classroom management, guide students to actively participate in classroom communication through questioning, discussion, and other methods, and promptly provide feedback and evaluation on students' discourse.

For students, their discourse use and characteristics are mainly reflected in their enthusiasm for participating in classroom communication, the accuracy and fluency of discourse expression, and other aspects. Students should actively participate in

classroom discussions, raise their viewpoints and questions, and attempt to express and communicate in English. At the same time, students should also focus on the accuracy and fluency of discourse expression, continuously improving their English speaking skills.

When analyzing classroom discourse subjects, it is necessary to pay attention to the discourse interaction between teachers and students. Classroom discourse interaction refers to the mutual communication and influence between teachers and students through discourse. Good classroom discourse interaction can promote communication and understanding between teachers and students, improving teaching effectiveness. Therefore, analyzing classroom discourse interaction is also an important aspect of understanding the ecological nature of classroom discourse.

### 3.2 Classroom Discourse Environment

The classroom discourse environment refers to external factors that affect classroom discourse communication, including the classroom physical environment, classroom atmosphere, teacher-student relationship, etc. These factors have significant impacts on the effectiveness and quality of classroom discourse communication.

The classroom physical environment refers to the physical conditions such as classroom layout, facilities, and lighting. These factors directly affect students' concentration and comfort, thereby influencing the effectiveness of classroom discourse communication. For example, whether the classroom layout is reasonable, facilities are complete, and lighting is adequate will affect students' listening effectiveness and enthusiasm for participating in classroom communication.

The classroom atmosphere refers to the emotional communication and interaction state between teachers and students in the classroom. A positive, open, and inclusive classroom atmosphere can stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning, promoting communication and understanding between teachers and students. Conversely, a dull, oppressive, and indifferent classroom atmosphere will hinder students' enthusiasm for participation and desire to express

themselves, resulting in ineffective classroom discourse communication.

The teacher-student relationship is one of the important factors affecting classroom discourse communication. A good teacher-student relationship can enhance students' sense of trust and belongingness, promoting communication and understanding between teachers and students. However, tense teacher-student relationships can lead to students' resentment and rebellious psychology, affecting the effectiveness and quality of classroom discourse communication.

### 3.3 Classroom Discourse Content

Classroom discourse content refers to the specific content of teacher-student communication in the classroom, including knowledge point explanations, discussions, viewpoint expressions, etc. The richness and diversity of classroom discourse content are important indicators for evaluating the ecological nature of classroom discourse.

In college English classrooms, teachers should focus on explaining and expanding knowledge points, using vivid examples and specific cases to help students understand and master English knowledge. At the same time, teachers should also encourage students to actively participate in discussions and express their viewpoints to cultivate students' critical thinking and expression abilities.

The richness and diversity of classroom discourse content are not only reflected in the explanation and discussion of knowledge points but also in the emotional communication and humanistic care between teachers and students. Teachers should pay attention to students' emotional needs and psychological states, establish good teacher-student relationships through listening, understanding, and support, thereby enhancing students' sense of trust and belonging.

When analyzing classroom discourse content, it is necessary to focus on the accuracy and fluency of discourse. Accurate classroom discourse can help students better understand knowledge points and discuss issues, while fluent classroom discourse can improve students' oral expression abilities and self-confidence. Therefore, teachers need to focus on the accuracy and fluency of classroom discourse,

continuously improving their oral proficiency and teaching abilities.

## 3.4 Classroom Discourse Interaction

Classroom discourse interaction is one of the important indicators for evaluating the ecological nature of classroom discourse. It refers to the mutual communication and influence between teachers and students, as well as among students, through discourse in the classroom. Good classroom discourse interaction can promote communication and understanding between teachers and students, thereby enhancing teaching effectiveness and students' academic performance.

In college English classrooms, teachers should emphasize the development of classroom discourse interaction. Firstly, teachers can guide students to actively participate in classroom communication by asking questions, initiating discussions, and other methods, encouraging them to express their viewpoints and questions. Secondly, teachers should promptly provide feedback and evaluation on students' discourse, offering positive encouragement and affirmation to boost students' self-confidence and enthusiasm for participation. Additionally, teachers should pay attention to the diversity and flexibility of classroom discourse interaction, flexibly applying different interaction methods and techniques based on teaching content and students' actual situations.

When analyzing classroom discourse interaction, attention should be given to aspects such as the frequency, quality, and mode of interaction. The frequency of interaction refers to the number and rate of exchanges between teachers and students in the classroom. The quality of interaction pertains to the effectiveness and quality of classroom discourse exchanges, including the accuracy, fluency, and coherence of discourse. The mode of interaction refers to the specific forms and methods of communication between teachers and students in the classroom, such as questioning, discussion, and group collaboration.

## IV. ANALYSIS OF THE ECOLOGICAL NATURE OF CLASSROOM DISCOURSE IN COLLEGE ENGLISH

This research found that in the teaching process, English teachers' classroom discourse contains both ecological and non-ecological features (Zhang, 2020). The ecological characteristics of teacher classroom discourse are mainly reflected in the frequent use of polite language and intertextuality. The ecological nature of teacher discourse promotes student development and the formation of a good teacher-student relationship in the classroom. The non-ecological characteristics are reflected in the turn taking between teachers and students in the classroom. The problems exist in the following aspects:

(1) Unequal Classroom Discourse Subjects

In college English classrooms, teachers often occupy a dominant position, limiting students' right to speak. When explaining knowledge points, teachers tend to adopt a one-way transmission method, lacking interaction and feedback with students. Students, on the other hand, are in a passive receptive state, rarely having the opportunity to express their viewpoints and questions. This unequal relationship between classroom discourse subjects can lead to a decline in students' learning interest and motivation, affecting teaching effectiveness.

Furthermore, there are differences in the participation of students of different levels in classroom discourse. Some students with higher English proficiency often actively participate in classroom discussions and express their viewpoints, while those with lower English proficiency tend to be silent and lack confidence. This disparity can further exacerbate the phenomenon of unequal classroom discourse subjects, resulting in uneven teaching effectiveness.

(2) Lack of Ecological Classroom Discourse Environment

The ecological nature of the classroom discourse environment refers to whether the environment and atmosphere of classroom discourse exchanges are conducive to students' learning and development. However, in college English classrooms, there is often a lack of ecological classroom discourse environment.

Firstly, the physical classroom environment is not comfortable enough. Issues such as unreasonable classroom layout, inadequate facilities, and insufficient lighting can all affect students' listening effectiveness and enthusiasm for participating in classroom communication. Secondly, the classroom atmosphere is not sufficiently positive and open. Some teachers focus too much on classroom discipline and order, lacking emotional communication and humanistic care for students, resulting in a dull and oppressive classroom atmosphere that impedes students' learning and development.

(3) Limited Classroom Discourse Content

In college English classrooms, classroom discourse content is often limited to the explanation and discussion of textbook knowledge points, lacking connection with real-life and social hot topics. This limited classroom discourse content can lead to a decline in students' learning interest and motivation, affecting teaching effectiveness.

Furthermore, some teachers tend to lack depth and breadth when explaining knowledge points, simply retelling textbook content without providing guidance and inspiration to students. This lack of depth and breadth in classroom discourse content can restrict the development of students' thinking and creative abilities, hindering their comprehensive development.

(4) Insufficient Classroom Discourse Interaction

In college English classrooms, classroom discourse interaction is often insufficient. Some teachers adopt a one-way transmission teaching method, lacking interaction and feedback with students. Students also often lack the motivation to actively participate in classroom discussions and express their viewpoints. This lack of interaction in classroom discourse can result in poor learning outcomes for students and limit the teaching effectiveness and vitality of the classroom.

Specifically, the insufficiency of classroom discourse interaction manifests in the following aspects: Firstly, the frequency and quality of teachers' questions are not high. Some teachers rarely ask questions in the classroom or pose questions that are too simple, failing to stimulate students' learning interest and thinking abilities. Secondly, students' enthusiasm for answering questions is not high. Due to the dull classroom atmosphere or students' insufficient understanding of knowledge points, they often lack the motivation to answer questions. Thirdly, there is a lack of effective discussion and collaboration. Some teachers rarely organize students to engage in discussions and collaborations in the classroom, resulting in students lacking opportunities for communication and collaboration, and being unable to fully express their viewpoints and ideas.

## V.  SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

In response to the problems existing in the ecological nature of classroom discourse in college English, this study proposes the following improvement suggestions:

(1)  Establishing an Equal Relationship Between Classroom Discourse Subjects

To establish an equal relationship between classroom discourse subjects, teachers should focus on interaction and feedback with students, encouraging them to actively participate in classroom discussions and express their viewpoints. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to students' differences and diversity, adopting different teaching strategies and methods to meet the needs of different students. For example, diversified teaching methods such as group discussions and role-playing can be used to stimulate students' learning interest and motivation.

(2)  Creating a Positive Classroom Discourse Environment

To create a positive classroom discourse environment, teachers should focus on the comfort of the classroom physical environment and the positivity and openness of the classroom atmosphere. The classroom layout should be reasonable, facilities should be complete, and lighting should be adequate to provide a good learning environment. Additionally, teachers should focus on emotional communication and humanistic care for students, paying attention to their psychological states and needs, to establish a good teacher-student relationship.

(3)  Enriching Classroom Discourse Content

To enrich classroom discourse content, teachers should focus on expanding the depth and breadth of knowledge points, guiding students to connect classroom knowledge with real-life and social hot topics. For example, relevant cases, news reports, and other materials can be introduced to enrich classroom content, stimulating students' learning interest and thinking abilities. At the same time, teachers should also focus on guiding and inspiring students, encouraging them to think and explore independently.

(4) Strengthening Classroom Discourse Interaction

To strengthen classroom discourse interaction, teachers should focus on the quality and frequency of questions, designing inspiring and targeted questions to guide students' thinking and answers. Additionally, teachers should encourage students to actively participate in discussions and collaborations, adopting different interaction methods and techniques to stimulate students' learning interest and motivation. For example, debate competitions and group discussions can be used to enhance classroom discourse interaction, improving students' oral expression and thinking abilities.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the perspective of ecolinguistics, this study employs discourse analysis methods to explore the ecological nature of classroom discourse in college English. The study finds that there is an imbalance in the ecological nature of classroom discourse in college English, mainly manifested as unequal classroom discourse subjects, a lack of ecological classroom discourse environment, limited classroom discourse content, and insufficient classroom discourse interaction. In response to these issues, this study proposes corresponding improvement suggestions aimed at promoting the ecological balance of classroom discourse in college English and enhancing teaching effectiveness.

Optimizing the ecological nature of classroom discourse in college English is a long-term and complex process that requires joint efforts from both teachers and students. By establishing an equal relationship between classroom discourse subjects, creating a positive classroom discourse environment, enriching classroom discourse content, and strengthening classroom discourse interaction, we can gradually improve the imbalance in the ecological nature of classroom discourse in college English, enhance teaching effectiveness, and provide better support and guarantee for students' comprehensive development.

Future research can further delve into the influencing factors and mechanisms of the ecological nature of classroom discourse in college English, as well as how to optimize it through teaching reform and innovation. At the same time, attention can also be given to the performance and differences of students from different cultural backgrounds and language proficiency levels in classroom discourse, providing useful references for formulating more targeted and personalized teaching strategies. Ecological discourse analysis research should be combined with specific language environments to refine the types of ecological discourse; to explore the ecological value of various discourses; Efforts should also be made to enhance the ecological literacy level of the entire population. This is of great benefit to the further expansion of ecological linguistics research (Ha & Huang, 2022).

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