The Reconstruction of Life Classroom Based on the Development of the Interpersonal Meaning in the Girl in the Fifth Row

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ABSTRACT: *Life is the organism with the activity, and life classroom embodies an education idea of the pursuit of human development based on the people-oriented thought. Therefore, according to some relative theories on Conversational Analysis, the interpersonal meaning, one of the chief constituents, has been made use of to analyze the development of the interpersonal meaning in The Girl in the Fifth Row from three stages, the purpose of which is to reveal the relationship between interlocutors through the reconstruction of discourse so that educators are allowed to realize the significance and its value of the reconstruction of life classroom and students can appreciate the charm of language choice and understand the intention of the writer.*

KEYWORDS: *life classroom; the interpersonal meaning; reconstruction; the choice of words; Intertextuality;*

I. INTRODUCTION

Life classroom focuses on helping students build a powerful intentionality, learning to love (like something or someone), and having the confidence (Zhang and Liu, 2007: 84-86). The Girl in the Fifth Row （He, 2008） from Integrated Teaching Course published by Shanghai Foreign Language Press is a deeply moving story, which tells why the writer started his Love Class, how he conducted it, that is to say, how he and his students combined theory with practice, and what wonders the girl in the fifth row made of his life. In this paper, we attempt to use conversational analysis to analyze the discourse from three stages in The Girl in the Fifth Row. The aim is to realize the significance and its value of the reconstruction of a student-oriented classroom through the study of discourse analysis. Firstly, the relative background will be discussed in Section 1. Section 2 is about some major literature reviews. In Section 3, an analysis of three stages of text will be conducted, including the result of the analysis which will be summarized. Finally, the conclusion will be reached in Section 4.

II. BACKGROUND

The author Felice Leonardo Buscaglia (1924 -1998), born in Los Angeles, was the youngest of four children of Italian immigrants. He was raised Roman Catholic, and was influenced by Buddhism in his adult life. The combination of physically demonstrative love of life learned from his Mediterranean parents combined with the inner reflection learned from travels and studies in Asia served him well. By means of books, lectures, and recordings, he was a tireless advocate of the power of love; he often reinforced his message by physically embracing members of his audiences.

The study of love brought him to the study of life. His motto is "To live in love is to live in life, and to live in life is to live in love." But he thinks this should never be done passively.Buscaglia was teaching in the Department of Special Education at the University of Southern California in the late 1960s when one of his students committed suicide. She had been one of the sets of "kind eyeballs" he always looked for in the large auditorium, because her responses showed him that at least one student was hearing what he said, so the news that she killed herself had a great impact on him. This incident led him to form a non-credit class titled Love Class. There were no grades. The class led to lectures and a manuscript loosely based on what was shared in those weekly classes. Buscaglia said he never taught this class, only facilitated it, adding that he learned as much as anyone. However, to put the further question, how can he realize his ideas on love? How does he reconstruct the interpersonal relationship? With the bewilderment, we use some related conversational analysis to analyze the mood of *The Girl in the Fifth Row* from three stages and to reveal the relationship between participants through the reconstruction of discourse.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication, as a tool, is an interactive process by means of language, which delivers messages from an interlocutor to the other or others. Interpersonal meaning is an important part in linguistic communication. Undoubtedly, we will reveal interpersonal meaning of a text mainly by means of conversation analysis and other relative theory on systematic functional linguistics. On the other hand, life is the organism with the activity, that is, classroom teaching should be people-oriented. Therefore life classroom of life is an education idea of the pursuit of human development based on the people-oriented thought. Life classroom attempts to think of the student as the main body and the classroom as the position to carry out a full of vitality of the thought, between the person and person's cultural, emotional exchange. This is a new exploration that some linguistics theories can be integrated with the reconstruction of life classroom.

2.1 Systematic functional linguistics

Systematic functional linguistics focuses on three functional modes of meanings of language from the point of the semantic system: (1) ideational (experiential and logical); (2) interpersonal; and (3) textual. Halliday (2002:198) states that they are different kinds of meaning potential that relate to the most general functions that language has evolved to serve. Therefore, it's necessary to research into interpersonal meanings so that the subject matter of a text can be realized and the social relation between characters or interlocutors can be constructed.

2.3 Conversation analysis

Conversation analysis is a popular approach to the study of discourse. It is a way of thinking about and analyzing the pragmatics of ordinary conversation, focusing on the interactive, practical construction of everyday interchanges. We know, some examples have been of conversations where the turns are brief, but the lengthy stories that sometimes occur in conversations can be examined with the focus and methods of conversation analysis, too. It turns out that, counter to what we might expect, "Stories and other extended-turn structures in conversation are not simply produced by a primary speaker, but are jointly or interactively produced by a primary speaker together with other cooperating participants" (Nofsinger, 1991：94).

2.4 Interpersonal meanings

Interpersonal meanings focus on the interactivity of the language, and concern the ways in which we act upon one another through language (Martin, J. R. et al., 1997, Martin, J. R. et al., 2003). In either spoken

texts or written texts, an interlocutor or narrator expects to tell listeners/readers via text. This means that each text has a relationship between providers of information and recipients of information. See the following sentences as an example;

[1]   (Declaratives)   Mike arrived at school at nine o'clock.

[2]   (Interrogatives)   Did Mike arrive at school at nine o'clock? or What time did Mike arrive at school? or Where did Mike arrive at nine o'clock?

[3]   (Imperatives)   Tell me when Make arrived at school.

According to Halliday (2002), in the declaratives, the information is provided from the interlocutor or narrator to a listener/reader; the former is a provider of information and the latter is a recipient of information. But in the interrogatives, we can see the opposite movement of information; the interlocutor or narrator expects to receive an answer (yes/no, at nine o'clock, or at school) from a listener/reader. This shows that the former is a recipient of information, and the latter is a potential provider of information. Finally, in the imperatives, the interlocutor or narrator demands the information (or goods & services), to a listener/reader (as cited in White, 2000:7); the former is a recipient of information, and the latter is a provider of information/service, as in the case of the interrogatives. The relationship between interlocutors or narrator and listeners/readers is shown as follows:

Table 1: Relationship of Interlocutors and Listeners/Readers

	Interlocutor	Listener/Reader
Declaratives (Statement)	Provider of information	Recipient of information
Interrogatives	Recipient of information	Provider of information
Imperatives (Demand)	Recipient of information/ Recipient of goods & services	Provider of information/ Provider of goods & services

ANALYSIS

Since conversational description is one of the major approaches of the description of literary or dramatic work, it has a great effect on the background introduction, conflicts, characters and relationship and so on. Therefore, conversation analysis that is used to analyze conversations of literary or dramatic work helps to clarify the relationship between characters, to access characters, to show the subject matter, etc. The following is an analysis of interpersonal meaning and the reconstruction of discourse from three stages in *the Girl in the Fifth Row*.For the purpose of experimenting with the analysis of texts in terms of functional grammar, some important texts will be used in this paper as follows. For convenience, each sentence is numbered so that they can be clearly presented.It is clear that analysis will focus on how interactions are constructed, especially paying particular attention to interpersonal meanings: such as (1) how the narrator and interlocutors position themselves or are permitted to position themselves interactively; (2) how the sorts of roles and relationships are constructed by language choices; (3) how the narrator and interlocutors reconstruct the discourse underway, and represent the subject matter with which they are concerned.

3.1 Naught utterance and the absence of discourse from Liani

3.1.1The charm of Liani's personality: naught utterance

At the very beginning of the text *the Girl in the Fifth Row*, the author makes use of the first person to narrate the charm of Liani's personality. Look at the following:

Text 1: At that moment of panic I noticed in the fifth row a *poised, attentive* young woman in a summer dress. Her skin was *tanned*, her brown eyes were *clear and alert*, her hair was *golden*. Her *animated* expression and *warm* smile were invitation for me go on. When I'd say something, she would nod, or say, "Oh, yes!" and write down. She emanated the *comforting* feeling that she cared about what I was trying so haltingly to say.

In Text 1, the narrator "I" chooses the most beautiful words in the world (see the italic adjectives) to speak highly of Liani and her qualities of caring and awareness. However, Liani has not any utterance, and the declaratives have been employed by the narrator, which shows the narrator is positioned himself the algate provider of information. In this way, the author conveys not only the personality charm in Liani via the monologue of the narrator "I", but also the subject of Text 1.

3.1.2The origin of Liani's death: the absence of discourse

In literary work, all tragedies are always beyond expectation. Liani obviously dies of absence of discourse, which can be seen from the following texts:

Text 2: (1) Liani never came. (2) About five weeks into the semester, she missed two weeks of classes. (3)I asked the students seated around her (4)if they knew why. (5)I was shocked to learn (6) that they did not even know her name.

Text 3: (1) I called Liani's parents. (2)From the tenderness with which Liani's mother spoke her, (3) I knew that (4)she had been loved. (5)But it was obvious to me (6)that Liani had not felt loved.

We can see from Text 2 and Text 3, all the sentences are declaratives. Naturally, the narrator "I" is positioned the provider of information and initiates turns while readers are recipient of information. In Text 2, sentence (1) and (2) are pragmatic presets, which prefigures indistinctly information about Liani's tragedy. When the narrator "I" wants to ask other students for information on this major narratee, no one knows her. That is to say, Liani is ignored by all because of the absence of discourse, which results in the failure of communication with Liani and her classmates. Therefore, the absence of discourse is the origin of her tragedy. What's more, this origin of tragedy can also be proved through the absence of discourse between Liani and her parents, which can be seen from sentence (4) , (5) and (6) in Text 3 so that Liani has never felt being loved.

To sum up, It is because of the absence of discourse between Liani and her classmates, her parents that the narrator "I" starts his Love Class.

3.2 hree to-and-fro dialogues：the success of love assignments

First of all, three love assignments by the narrator's initiation are presented as follows:

Text for Love assignment 1: (1) He said, " (2)I love you, Dad," and kissed him. (3) His father's eye's welled up with tears as he muttered, "(4)I know. And(5)I love you, too, son"

Text for Love assignment 2: (1) He went over and said, " (2) Uh, hello." (3) She looked at him suspiciously for a minute. "(4) Are you a relative?" "(5) No." "(6) Good! (7) Sit down, young man."

Text for Love assignment 3:   (1) "I'd like to meet the chef," (2)I said to the waiter. (3) We walked back to the kitchen, (4) and there he was a big, sweaty man. (5) "What's the matter?"

(6)He demanded. "(7) Nothing. (8)Those pork chops were just fantastic." (9) Then he said warmly, "(10)Would you like another?"

In Assignment 1, all declaratives are affirming statements, and there are no words implying ambiguity or possibility such as 'probably' or 'maybe'. This shows that the interlocutors"He"and "His father" have the same power facing loving and being loved. Their utterances have no informal vocabulary, and no abbreviated expressions though they are short. Hence, Assignment 1 is delivered in a very formal and firm style and, therefore, it does not show any intimacy to readers. The narrator "I" employs the third person as a potential provider of information, which shows the objective modality of the narrator "I". In this way, readers are positioned recipients of information, which is the intention of the narrator "I " and also is the author's. In Assignment 1, the interlocutor "he" initiates the first turn, and the other interlocutor "his father" uses a declarative with a tag "too" to position himself in a role of response and support. At the same time, sentence (5) is chosen to reconstruct the special relationship between the son and the father. This represents the narrator's intention to realize the subject matter "Love Class".

In Assignment 2, the dialogue is not only single declaratives, but interrogatives and imperatives. Sentence (2) as a turn is initiated (Sacks, H., et al., 1974：50/696-735.) and "Oh" is the discourse marker, the purpose of which is to break the ice between the other two interlocutors "he" –Joel, one of the students of the narrator "I", and "she"—the lonely woman in a nursing home. And in the interrogatives "Are you a relative?", we can see the opposite movement of information, and the interlocutor "she" expects to receive an answer (yes/no) from this listener or interlocutor "Joe". This shows that the former "Joe" is a recipient of information, and the latter "She" is a (potential) provider of information. Finally, in the imperatives, the other interlocutor "Joe" gains or demands the information (or goods & services). And sentence 7 as an imperative indicates the power of the interlocutor "She" and the success of Love Assignment. Thus, the author realizes his writing purpose via the discourse of the interlocutor "Joe"

In Assignment 3, there is a preset in this dialogue, and it is just in sentence 1 "I'd like to meet the chef," so here the narrator "I" uses the tactful expression "would like to" to show his respect for the chef. We know, though it is a declarative, it exactly conveys a kind of request and command. Sentence 5 is an elliptical sentence, which is colloquial and casual or informal. It shows that the relation between the narrator "I" and

the interlocutor "the chef" is intimate. This is the preset (Levinson, S. C. 1983) of the narrator's giving of

Love. Therefore, sentence 8 is a declarative which is affirming, and the narrator "I" is positioned the provider of information and enjoys the authoritative power. Furthermore, in sentence 10 the interlocutor "the chef" chooses an interrogative which is formal and polite, which shows the interlocutor "the chef" gains the information (or goods & services). Namely, this is another success of Love assignment.

3.3 From monologues to one-way dialogues: the author's effort or endeavor to realize the writing purpose

Text 1: Liani was 22 years old! And her God-given uniqueness was gone forever.

Text 2: "what are we doing?" I asked a colleague. "we are so busy teaching *things*. What's the value of teaching Liani to read, write, do arithmetic, if we taught her nothing of what she truly needed to know: how to live in joy, how to have a sense of person worth and dignity?"

Text 3: "Love has a need to be expressed physically," I responded. "I feel fortunate to have grown up in a

passionate, hugging Italian family. I associate hugging with a more universal kind of love. But if you are afraid of being misunderstood, verbalize your feelings to the person you're hugging. And for people who are really uncomfortable about being embraced, a warm, two-handed handshake will satisfy the need to be touched."

Text 4: I wish Liani were here today. I would hold her in my arms and say, "Many people helped me learn about love, but you gave me the impetus. Thank you. I love you."

In Section 4.3, Text 1 is used the third person to describe the death of Liani's and her personality charm, and the two sentences are declarative and two relational processes are chosen, which shows the author positions himself not only the loyal provider of information but also a complicated psychic struggle. This is the function of narrator "I" or the author's monologue, which forms the communicative tension and the preset of the narrator's following one-way dialogues. The rest three texts choose the first person, which is a literary composition in the form of a soliloquy. The narrator of Text 2 provides questions or demanding services but no reply left that cause all readers as well as the narrator and his colleagues to attentively think over. This is another preset of the narrator's Love Class. Therefore, in Text 3 and 4, all are declarative that are affirming statements, which is also a solid answer to readers after given questions in Text 2. Even more importantly, the subjunctive mood is used in Text 4 which indicates an uncanny ability to have dialogues with spirits of Liani has been left. This ability is just the endeavor from the narrator, even the author, of the reconstruction of the discourse and relationship with Liani. Even though Liani has died, love will be permanent. The author attempts to tell readers the realization of the love assignments can be successfully perceptible. From monologues to one-way dialogues, the author has made a great effort or endeavor to realize the writing purpose

3.4 Result

From the analysis above, we determine the discourse in different contexts based on the different meaning of discourse interaction. Naught discourse first from Liani gives people warmth and encouragement. That is to say, in such interpersonal communication, even without utterances, the body language shows Liani's personality charm. However, the lack of discourse also exposes a flaw in her character. Because of no interaction with others, or interaction with others but no response, she is unable to feel the warmth of the world, which is the cause of her death. Namely, in this stage only Liani provides information, but no one accepts her expression of love. In the second stage, the author assigns three assignments for his students to start his Love Class to establish the discourse channels between students and students, between students and their parents, and between students and others around them. First of all students as information providers, provide information (here is also to goods or services, or Love) through verbal and nonverbal dialogues. The use of a large number of common and oral questions in the session activates the discourse among the students and between the students and their parents, which shows the author succeeds in achieving the instructional goal that is to educate his students to express love to each other, and also the success of the course only through communication. In the third stage, the author goes back to his monologue, and from the monologue to the dialogues with the individuals, the intention of the writing has been realized. At the same time, the author at this stage chooses formal but non verbal words to construct the discourse channel between him and readers or listeners. In this way, the relationship between all the interlocutors becomes intimate.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on 9 groups of texts analyzed which all reflect the interaction between the interlocutors, we can come to a conclusion that there are differences from the perspective of semantics. First of all, the positioning of the interlocutors in the conversation discourse is different.

In the texts of the first stage, there is a one-way communication channel between the narrator and readers or listeners including Liani's naught utterances and her lack of discourse, which clarifies that the narrator is the information provider while readers or listeners are information recipients. In the texts of the second stage, the dialogues happen among the students and between the students and their parents or others, and they build a to-and-fro communication channel, which suggests that, the other is recipient of information when one interlocutor is the person who expresses and transfers love, and vice versa. That's to say, the interpersonal meaning has been reconstructed with dynamic positioning. In the texts of the third stage, the narrator, who is also the author, covers Liani's event by means of intertextuality(Zeng, 2011: 91-95) to rebuild a unity and amalgamation from the narrator's monologue back to the one-way mutual communication channels, namely, this is the communication between the author and the readers or listeners, and the author as a narrator is the provider of information while readers or listeners are recipients of goods or services. Second, the choice of words and the grammatical structures are different. In the texts of the first stage, the choice of the words is more formal, which hints the relationship either between Liani and the people around her or between the narrator and readers or listeners. In the second and third stage, more informal words including interjections and more modals and many grammatical structures like declaratives, interrogatives and imperatives have been used in the dialogues, which suggests these words will makes the relationship between interlocutors become intimate. Finally, there is a difference concerning how to realize the writing intention through discourse reconstruction. Namely, there is just one topic "the expression and transmission of love" in three different stages, but each process is different. The first stage is about Liani's good qualities and her flaws of character by means of description, which explores the indifferent human world.

The second stage focuses on a success in trying love expression and transmission from one to another through mutual dialogue channels. The third stage is a special mutual communication channels between the author and readers or listeners, whose purpose is to educate all readers or listeners to express and transfer the information of love and try to be the information provider of love. Therefore, language is an oral or written communication tool. Through the careful choice of words and grammatical structures, it should be interactive from one person to another when people express feelings, ideas, facts, etc.. In order   to understand each other in conversations or discourses, the condition of semantics and context help learners develop language, and reconstruct the interpersonal relationship between interlocutors through discourse interaction. It is in this way that our students or learners can not only appreciate the discourse better and understand the real writing intention of the author's---the popularity on love education, but life classroom can simultaneously be reconstructed well through the successful dialogue education.

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