

Zhouxing Shi

9/25/2020

ENG 1121

Unit 1 Writing Assignment

Word Count: 1335

### **Two-way communication**

Dear teachers and students,

I am a graduate of Newcomers High School in 2017, and I am honored to return to my alma mater today to give a speech on communication and discourse community.

When we see DC, we usually think of Washington, D.C., the capital of the United States, but the DC that I want to introduce today is a new concept in communication--- Discourse Community. “A discourse community is a group of people who share a set of discourses, understood as basic values and assumptions, and ways of communicating about their goals.”(Swales, 3) Students learn through communication together, in order to complete high school studies and successfully enter the ideal university as the goal. However, I found that there are some communication problems in the DC of Newcomers high school. So now I will talk about the communication problems here and how to solve them with my experience.

Most of the students at Newcomers high school came to the United States as immigrants. You came from all over the world, with different cultures, education,

languages and religions. As a result, students are more willing to communicate with people from the same place or with similar backgrounds. This led to the emergence of many small groups in the large group of Newcomers high school. The lack of communication among small groups is the biggest problem of the Newcomers high school DC.

I came to Newcomers high school in September 2014. I am a new immigrant like you. When I came to the United States at the age of 16, everything here surprised and excited me. But the new high school life made me feel depressed. The biggest challenge for me in American high schools is the language barrier. When I was just entering high school, I could only understand half of English. I could only speak a few simple words, hardly writing a complete sentence. I am also very confused, because in China, English is one of the required subjects for the college entrance examination. I have been learning English since the third grade of elementary school for seven years, but I still cannot communicate with teachers and classmates in English. I think the English I learned in China is only used for exams. After I came to the United States, I found that the biggest function of language is communication. Today I am here to introduce you to the concept of Discourse Community, but more important is to convince everyone to bravely step out of the small group. The best way to understand the diverse cultures of the United States and get used to American life is to communicate more.

Language is the soul of communication, and it is one of the striking differences between humans and animals. Animals howl, but only for warning or mate hunting. Primitive human beings hunted together through oral communication, which enabled human beings to survive against powerful creatures. Later, human beings invented words, which made great breakthroughs in civilization, and human history and knowledge could be continued. The lesson we have now is the accumulation of human culture for thousands of years. According to the Bible “Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.”(Genesis, 11:1) and “Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”(Genesis, 11:7). When humans had only one language, the process of building the tower of Babylon to heaven was very successful. God disrupted the work by confusing the language of the workers, so that they could no longer understand one another. This has led to the different languages in our world, resulting in communication barriers, disputes and even wars. In any case, language is the symbol of each country's culture. “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.”(Wittgenstein, 1922) Some students may wish that they were born in the United States, so that they don't have to worry about learning English, but I want to say that the mastering a variety of languages is your most precious treasure , and we should be proud of our language and culture.

Newcomers High School has opened bilingual courses in order to allow us new immigrants to adapt to American high schools. The teacher of the bilingual course can

speaking the language of your country, but the teacher will encourage everyone to practice English during the course. I remember that on the first day I went to high school, all the classes were difficult to understand. Suddenly I heard people around me were speaking Chinese. It was so familiar that relieved my tense emotions throughout the day. I learned Traditional Chinese Characters through my Mandarin class because what I have always used is Simplified Chinese when I grew up. I think the bilingual classes offered by the school are very successful, which allows students to enhance their mother tongue while also understanding and practicing English better. The school will hold a Parents Teachers Conference at the end of each semester. Because many students' parents do not speak English, they cannot communicate with teachers. The school allows students to sign up for translation voluntarily to help teachers and parents. When I volunteered in translation, I realized the benefits of mastering two languages for the first time. In future, students will often encounter this situation. For example, in subways and shopping malls, if there are people who need help because they do not understand English, we can take the initiative to help others solve problems. Language is a key to helping others.

“Mechanisms of intercommunication” is one of the defining characteristics in the discourse community. We come from different countries. Although some countries also speak English, such as India, Pakistan, South Africa and other countries, there are great differences in the pronunciation of English. “When in Rome, do as the Romans

do”. Try to use the American pronunciation that everyone is familiar with. Because everyone's English proficiency is different. I encourage students to speak out loud, and do not be afraid of having an accent. Language is only a tool for communication, and the most important thing is that we can express ourselves and understand each other.

We usually have group work in our class. However, a situation sometimes arises during group activities. For example, three people in a group of four speak Spanish and one speaks Arabic. At this time, most of the three people will use their familiar Spanish to communicate tasks and ignore another student who doesn't speak Spanish. I think this is extremely disrespectful to that student, and this behavior is impolite. Therefore, I hope that students will consider other people's feelings in similar situations. Allowing everyone to participate is in line with the “participation mechanism” and “feedback” of the discourse community.

There are many DCs in one's life. Some of them are short-term, such as basketball teams in high school or a course in college. Some discourse communities exist for a long time, such as our family or a stable job. We do different things in different DCs. What we have achieved or learned from diverse DCs is the greatest significance of Discourse Community. One of our common DC is Newcomers high school. The biggest advantage of our members is to master two or more languages. Everyone knows that when we are driving, we can only move forward if we are on the

One-way, but if we are on Two-way, we can make a U-turn to reach our destination faster and easier. I hope today's speech can help you learn Two-way communication, and trust me it will be very useful in your future life.

Thank you all!

### **Bibliography**

*New International Version*. Bible Gateway, [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

John M. Swales, "Reflections on the concept of discourse community", *ASp*, 69, 7/19/2016. Web. <https://journals.openedition.org/asp/4774?lang=en>

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus". London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922. Print.