

The Dialogic Ethical Triggering of Fusion of Horizons: Shadowing in English News Listening Classes at NEU

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Dialogue and fusion of horizons are two important concepts of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which falls into the pedagogical category of teaching English News Listening Classes. The course of English News Listening is one of the most fundamental and difficult courses in the curriculum for college students who are English majors. The simultaneous interpreting training method of shadowing is used in English News Listening Classes in helping students improve their language skill of listening and speaking. In fulfilling a teacher's pedagogical performance of dialoguing and fusion of horizons, still one thing is important, i.e., solidarity triggered between students and teacher, which is the good or the ethical choice between students and teacher. In English News Listening Classes, “道” or “the way (Dao)” is shadowing. In teaching English News Listening, a “dialogue” of shadowing could be achieved between students and teacher is even more significant than that of other courses. This paper intends to present the dialogic ethical triggering of fusion of horizons in class. In another word, students' knowing could be guided by teacher's dialogic ethical triggering in English News classes. In voicing out the language, knowing in listening and speaking could help students have confidence in not only their language skills but in conquering their difficulties in their life. Teaching English News Listening at Northeastern University (NEU) in this way since 2013 has turned out to be good for students' growth and maturation in life.

Keywords: dialogic construction, Gadamer, fusion of horizons, English News Listening Classes

Introduction

Both dialogue and fusion of horizons are part of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which are two important concepts. And they are so important in teaching English News Listening Classes. The course of English News Listening is one of the most fundamental and difficult courses in the curriculum for college students who are English majors. The simultaneous interpreting training method of shadowing is used in English News Listening Classes in helping students improve their language skill of listening and speaking. In fulfilling a teacher's pedagogical performance of dialoguing and fusion of horizons, still one thing is important, i.e.,

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This paper intends to present a teacher’s pedagogical performance in English News Listening Classes at Northeastern University (NEU) from the perspective of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. In achieving language understanding between students and teacher, the dialogic ethical triggering of fusion of horizons is all the endeavour that a teacher should make embracing his/her pedagogical idea and responsibility in the traditional sense of being a teacher being endorsed with the responsibility for handing knowledge down, teaching method/way of fishing rather than giving fish, and dispelling confusion, i.e., in Chinese, “师者，传道授业解惑也”. The English version of “师者，传道授业解惑也” could be “A mentor should transmit “the way (Dao)”, instruct in knowledge, and dispel confusion” or “A mentor should impart wisdom, teach skills/knowledge, and resolve doubts”. As a matter of fact, skills/techne in Greek philosophy is something that could be taught while knowing/knowledge is not (Gadamer, 2013, p. 325). In classes like English News Listening Classes for English majors who are sophomores embracing both techne/language skills like shadowing and knowing/knowledge triggering fusion of horizons.

Gadamer’s Dialogue and Fusion of Horizons

Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics presents us two main concepts: dialogue and fusion of horizons regarding a teacher’s pedagogical performance in English News Listening Classes.

Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics is the very philosophy concerning human practice of language understanding and human ethical being in the world, which reflects human beings’ ontological value in terms of ethics (Ren, 2023; Wachterhauser, 1999). Language understanding is an ethical understanding (Smith, 1991, p. xv). An ethical understanding involves self and other. As for an ethical understanding, it involves people and people’s ethical choices when dialoguing with others. In every dialogue, there involves language understanding or ethical choices to be made in understanding others. Language understanding could by no means be achieved by speaker’s concentrating on his/her own and ignoring listener’s receiving the messages conveyed or not. In a dialogue, a bidirectional activity is the core of any language understanding concerned.

Dialogue is a so common term and thing in our daily life. Dialogue is one’s ethical being in the world, in which one is sure to be involved with others. It is of great ontological importance for Dasein to live in the world to fulfil one’s Misen with others. An ethical choice is made in any dialogue (Ren, 2023, pp. 75-77, 129). Dialogue involves self and other. Dialogue involves two parties: speaker and listener, a kind of I-Thou relationship (Gadamer, 2013, p. 235) regarding self and other (Vilhauer, 2023, p. 86). According to Gadamer, dialogue is an other-oriented path for self to take for one’s whole life, and other is a path for one’s self-understanding (Gadamer & Dutt, 2018). A dialogue is by no means possible if the speaker cares self or ego only. In a pedagogical dialogue between students and teacher, students need to be taken as the core or the centre, that is, the other as the path for teacher’s self-understanding. A class dialogue is sure to be students-oriented path for teacher.

Fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*) is put forward by Gadamer (2013). Fusion of horizons is by no means something that could be constructed because no one knows what might occur in a dialogue and language understanding between the speaker and listening. However, fusion of horizons might be triggered. Fusion does not mean that the horizons become identical but that they influence and enrich each other, leading to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding.

Fusion of horizons in terms of language understanding presents a formulation of “ $1 + 1 = 3$ ”. Both one’s fusion of horizons and understanding in a dialogue with others present new horizons and language understanding between one and the other falling into the formulation of “ $1 + 1 = 3$ ” instead of a formulation of “ $1 + 1 = 2$ ” (Ren, 2023). One’s own horizon involves his/her preconceptions, biases, cultural background, and historical context, which definitely shape how one perceives and interprets the world. This unknown “3” is very part for a teacher to make every endeavour of his or hers to help students form in terms of knowing or knowledge.

In other words, teacher could teach in a class; of course, he/she cannot decide his/her students’ fusion of horizons after his/her teaching. Ethical choices or the good chosen in class are surely part of a pedagogical dialogue which could be achieved and students’ fusion of horizons could be triggered by a teacher’s pedagogical performance in one way or another.

Dialogic and Ethical Triggering of Fusion of Horizons

In English News Listening Classes at NEU, the good of the teaching lies in helping students conquer linguistic difficulties in listening and speaking. BBC news and China daily news including Present Xi’s Speeches on different occasion are chosen as pedagogical materials. In solving problems like difficulty in listening and speaking, following steps are followed.

Step 1, listen to the news to determine words, phrases/chunks that are unfollowed. Students do not read the text of the news, i.e., “blind” listening. After the listening in a blind way, difficulty in listening to the news could be clear for the students. Step 2, read the difficult words, phrases/chunks for a number of times in order to make one’s tongue, mouth, and mind familiar with the word/phrase/chunk first, and then a segment/clause/sentence. In this way, a pronunciation could be pronounced fluently. Liaisons are pronounced little by little. A speaker could voice out a word or sentence in a fluent way physically and spiritually. That muscles/organs could be familiar with the act of voicing out is the fundamental step for speaking and shadowing. In classes like English News Listening, shadowing is both “the way” or “Dao” for teacher to take and the dialogic ethical construction means for his/her teaching. Step 3, as long as students could read after the source recording at the same speed, then shadowing is possible.

Shadowing makes it possible for students and teacher to make a dialogue in English News classes. Since shadowing is a trigger that could help students out of their difficulty in listening to a piece of news. Namely, if one cannot shadow a piece of news, one could by no means understand the news item. By shadowing news items together with students at the same speed, a basis is made for students and teacher to have similar horizons of understanding the news item. Students helped out of the listening difficulty could reach the possible fusion of horizons together with teacher in shadowing or speaking at a new level. Such a progress could lead students to a new level of language understanding in students and teacher’s chasing the good. In such a progress or process, what choices both students and teacher have made are ethical choices of looking toward the good, according to Gadamer.

Shadowing: Means of Solidarity Between Students and Teacher

The good is the axis of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. The good is always related to concrete human existence (Gadamer, 1986, p. 112). "If man always encounters the good in the form of the particular practical situation in which he finds himself, the task of moral knowledge to determine what the concrete situation in light of what is asked of him in general". Moral relevance is involved. "In contrast to the theory of the good based on Plato's doctrine of ideas, Aristotle emphasizes that it is impossible for ethics to achieve the extreme exactitude of mathematics" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 323). According to Gadamer, in Plato's thinking about the ideas, the good carries weight. "Knowledge of the good cannot be understood using *techne* as a model" (Gadamer, 1986, p. 34). The good could be seen in one's daily life.

Shadowing falls into the category of knowledge of the good. In encountering the good in our everyday life, in practical situations, one has to use his more knowledge to determine or to make ethical choices. As to the good of English News Listening Classes, shadowing is the very good, which could help students improve language skills of speaking, listening, and interpreting.

Shadowing of Chunks

The knowing of chunks is vital for all interpreters (Li & Halverson, 2024) and shadowing-doers. When shadowing, a sentence is segmented into chunks first. When shadowing a text, students have their own horizons, which hold their own set of preconceptions, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. Every text has its own "horizon", which is the context, assumptions, and worldview from which it emerges. For instance, when shadowing "Cultural Confidence" (Xi, 2017, p. 378), what might be triggered is students' cultural confidence in Chinese culture and national dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In texts like cultural confidence or the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, chunks like cultural confidence and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation are elementary for students to shadow first.

Dialogue in English News Listening means that language understanding of chunks like cultural confidence and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation occurs through a dialogical process while students engage with shadowing. Students' openness to the text's horizon and a willingness to question revise their own horizons. Distance could be an obstacle to understanding, but it can also be a productive element of space in fusion of horizons, which allows for the emergence of new meanings and interpretations to come into existence. Fusion of horizons in students' mind experiences a process where the horizons interact and merge, in which a reconstruction of the past is created on the basis of the insights gained to the present. It always involves a practical dimension where the taught meaning in the shadowing is relevant to the students' current situation.

Shadowing: Solidarity Means

Shadowing achieved in English News Listening Classes makes solidarity as a means to make students and teacher to communicate in dialogic classes with better fusion of horizons possible.

Nowadays, with smartphones, iPads and computers commonly used by students, it is difficult for teachers to attract students' attention to concentrate on what is being taught by teachers in class. In classes like English News Listening, shadowing could make students make the ethical choices of the good to follow the teacher to enhance their language skills. Solidarity could be possible only when students could make substantiated progress like shadowing.

Solidarity is an ethical choice to be made by students and teacher in English News Listening classes. In a relationship of solidarity by means of shadowing. The essence of dialogic and ethical triggering of fusion of horizons in English News Listening classes is that teacher could make shadowing come true.

Conclusion

Gadamer contributed all his academic life to practicing one's self-understanding journey which is an other-oriented path for Dasein to live in this world and the existential ethical way of being in the world. In fulfilling a teacher's pedagogical performance of dialoguing and fusion of horizons, still one thing is important, i.e., solidarity triggered between students and teacher, which is the good or the ethical choice between students and teacher. In English News Listening Classes, “道” or “the way (Dao)” is shadowing. How to achieve the good is by means of shadowing.

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