

A Study of Multimedia English Classroom Teaching—From the Perspective of Constructivist Learning Theory

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Abstract: With the development of education technology, multimedia-assisted teaching has been gradually gaining an important position in English classroom teaching. Multimedia-assisted teaching can help to realize the people-oriented student view and the all-round-development education view. Yet, multimedia-assisted teaching has demonstrated some limitations in teaching practice. In order to further develop the study of multimedia English classroom teaching, this study, from the perspective of constructivist learning theory, reflects that the multimedia technology is playing an irreplaceable role in English classroom teaching, but its effectiveness in daily multimedia-assisted classroom teaching has not been brought into utmost play, and that, with the continuous development of multimedia technology, some new problems begin to arise in multimedia English classroom teaching. This study, based on the observation of classroom teaching and constructivist learning theory, explores the advantages and disadvantages of multimedia English classroom teaching and puts forward systematic and effective suggestions about teachers' attitude, schools' supports, experts' guidance, and learners' participation so that multimedia English classroom teaching can better meet the necessary requirements for teachers' teaching, students' learning and the requirements to cultivate people of all-round development.

1. Introduction

With the development of the multimedia technology, multimedia classroom teaching has attracted much attention from researchers, and they pay more attention to the advantages and disadvantages of multimedia classroom teaching. The advantages of multimedia classroom teaching in the existing studies can be concluded in two aspects:

Firstly, multimedia classroom teaching as one of the most important elements in language teaching can help teachers to create a good learning environment. Huang Hui mentions that multimedia-assisted teaching can create English teaching environment, in which, students' abilities of reading, listening, speaking and translating can be improved. The teacher as a leader and

participator should create some learning communities on line [1]. In order to provide different texts to students, he also encourages the teacher to create an internet system. In this system, students can choose the text to read based on their reading ability, and then they can chat in the teaching community to exchange their different opinions. It not only trains students' reading and writing but also can develop their critical thinking ability.

Secondly, multimedia classroom teaching can increase learners' awareness in learning and improve their interest in learning. Zhao Guilan believes that multimedia is not only the most efficacious way to optimize the English classroom teaching, but also is the most important way to guide students to learn after class [2]. She gives advice that students should pay more attention to the effectiveness of multimedia using which can help them to learn in the after school time.

As a new technology, multimedia has some disadvantages in classroom teaching. Many researchers have point them out. Through a review of the literature, the disadvantages of multimedia classroom teaching can be summarized in two aspects:

Firstly, teacher in multimedia classroom teaching ignores some details in teaching. Yang Mingyue points out that some teachers pay more attention to design PPT files, but they cannot combine their teaching experience with the contents in multimedia teaching. His suggestion is that teachers should integrate their peculiar charm and teaching experience into PPT files and it is a benefit for learners to understand the knowledge [5].

Secondly, amount of information in multimedia classroom teachings exceeds learners' understanding. Liu Yanqin points out that the large information in multimedia classes is not beneficial to the training of students' thinking ability and their imagination. In some multimedia classes, teachers design countdown. For example, each PPT has six seconds to read. What is more, the some colorful PPT files deviate from the content in the textbook. She gives advice that teachers should explore a new way to integrate multimedia technology with class teaching actively [3].

There is no doubt that although there are many achievements of study in multimedia classroom teaching, there is still a long way to go.

2. Multimedia Teaching and Constructivist Learning Theory

2.1 Multimedia Teaching

What is multimedia technology? It involves hardware and software, and it can be controlled by humans to search for information and it can be used to communicate with others. From it people can get information, and express the information in the form which they choose. It is a system which can present information, share the user's ideas and express their emotions.

What is Multimedia in Teaching? Multimedia in teaching has two meanings. First, a system to combine computer with other teaching equipment, and make sure that it can give interchangeability to other teaching equipment. Second, use computer to ensure the systematicness of information which used to teach in class. It includes texts, sounds, graphs, cartoons, and images. It realizes the interaction of human-machine, human-human.

Multimedia classroom teaching discussed in this paper is that of the second meaning. Multimedia classroom teaching puts different kinds of media into the process of teaching. Teachers should base on teaching objective to analyze and choose information, and then show it on screen. At the end of human-machine interaction, learners can learn new knowledge in a suitable learning environment.

2.2 Constructivist Learning Theory

2.2.1 Constructivist View of Knowledge

The constructivist knowledge view is a big challenge to the traditional curriculum and teaching theory. In one word, the knowledge in textbook is just a reliable explanation for the phenomena and it has no meaning before obtained by individuals. So, knowledge is not the “absolute reference” which can explain the world.

2.2.2 Constructivist View of Learning

Xuan Hongmei emphasizes that Learning is not the process which transfers knowledge from teaches to learners. Actually, it is the process in which learners try to understanding the meaning[4]. It means that each subject’s learning is not painting on a blank paper and learning must connect with learners’ original cognitive structures. In a word, constructivist learning view emphasizes learners’ experience and cognitive structures.

2.2.3 Constructivist View of Teaching

Constructivist teaching view emphasizes the importance of the environment in class teaching. It also emphasizes that knowledge is gained through others’ help by cooperation and communication. So, a good teaching environment must have four elements: situation, cooperation, communication and meaning construction. Actually, the process of cooperation is the process of communication. In this process, the idea comes from different learners can be shared in the learning community. In a word, communication is a main method to teach. Meaning construction is the ultimate goal.

3. The observation of multimedia teaching in English class

3.1 The problem in new word teaching

In English teaching class, we observe that the teacher still uses traditional methods to teach new words. They read the words again and again, correct their pronunciation by way of phonetic symbols, and encourages the students to remember their forms and try to spell them. Although they want to use multimedia to make their teaching enjoyable, in fact, the result is far from their expectation. In this process, the students are like machines to read and spell again and again. Actually, they want to use some interesting ways to remember, recognize and use the words. Based on the teaching objectives, the tasks in word teaching are to help students to understand how to use the words and guide them to remember the pronunciations, forms and meanings of the words. Combining the features of new words teaching with constructivist learning theory, we can easily find that in this teaching process, learning interest and environment play an important role, and multimedia is the most important element in this teaching process.

3.2 The problems with Model Lesson

In different classes, teacher uses different methods to teach. Different classes mean daily classroom teaching and the model lesson. The researcher has observed six model lessons. It is found that there are some differences between daily class teaching and model lesson.

For model lesson, the teacher designs PPT files carefully, uses new techniques such as Chaoxing, Mooc. In the process of teaching, the teacher care about students’ reflection and understanding. Moreover, the teacher also use new methods to make sure their classes are full of innovation. But in

daily teaching, it is hardly to see these new ways. It reflects that teachers have ability to promote the development of students' comprehensive ability and they can help students to construct their knowledge. But in daily teaching, they pay more time on emphasizing the test score. Under the guidance of constructivist learning theory, the teacher should base on students' need to design lesson.

3.3 Problem with the Use of New Technology

The flipped class is a new method to teach. The researcher observes a flipped lesson which as a model lesson. Teacher and students prepare the lesson before class, and all of the learners and teachers log in the teaching and learning APP. At the same time, learners' phone is appearing systematical exercises. Learners need to finish the exercises one by one. When one is finished, the teacher uses teaching system to calculate the rate of right and wrong, and then choose a learner to explain the exercise. In this class, there are few communications between learner and teacher. Learners took most of the time to finish the exercises in phone. Under the guidance of constructivist learning theory, enthusiasm is one of the most important elements for learning. Treicher says that "people can remember 10% of the contents which they read, 20% which they listen, 30% which they see, and 50% which they say in communication." It gives advice that teacher should improve students' interest and guide them to take part in the process of learning. Students should be involved in an environment which can promote them to listen, read, see and communicate with others. There is no doubt that this environment can be created with the help of multimedia.

4. Suggestions for Multimedia English Classroom Teaching

Based on the information from daily classroom teaching, we suggests that multimedia-assisted English classroom teaching should be improved in the following aspects.

4.1 Suggestions for Teachers

4.1.1 To Develop a Correct Attitude to Multimedia-assisted Classroom Teaching

Through the observation, we have found that the teachers have high professional qualities, and each of them can design good classes. In their multimedia-assisted classroom teaching agree well with common views of constructivist learning theory. But in daily teaching practice, teachers do not make full use of the multimedia installations. They still emphasize the role of scores in students' learning. This makes the multimedia machine become a player of their PPT files. So in the process of teaching, teachers should develop a correct attitude to multimedia-assisted teaching, try to shorten and wipe out the gap between model classes and daily classroom teaching. They should make a wise use of the multimedia factor to improve students' interest, and give students opportunities to construct their understanding. The multimedia installations should be used to make the most effective contribution to daily teaching and learning rather than be used just in model classes. Teachers should clearly recognize that daily teaching is the main part of education.

4.1.2 To Cultivate a Correct Attitude to New Multimedia Technology

In order to cultivate a correct attitude to new multimedia technology used in their teaching, teachers should realize that the development of new multimedia technology does not signify that their teaching ability is improving too. It is not only because there are many problems with the new teaching technology, but also because the using of these new methods is not good applied to education. Today, many teachers are busy experimenting with new technology, but they ignore the

appropriate situations or contexts in which the new machines or installations should be used in daily teaching. Some of them just see the effectiveness of new multimedia installations used in model classes, but our observation show that in reality few teacher can use the machines effectively in daily teaching although all of them know how to operate them. So one of the most important task is take full advantage of the existing multimedia technology to improve daily classroom teaching. With the development of education, it needs further development of modern multimedia technology, but all the innovations should be developed in practice. So, for teachers who want to improve their teaching ability, they should set up the attitude that innovations should be developed in practice. They should try to use and improve the technology or methods in daily classroom teaching step by step. In education, teachers should function as practitioners and innovators of daily classroom teaching. Only in this way, can teachers and students improve their ability.

4.2 Suggestions for Schools

4.2.1 Reducing Teachers' Load of Regular Tasks

In our class interviews and observation, more than one teacher say that their heavy load does not come from teaching, but from other tasks, such as term plans, week plans, week diaries, and all kinds of teaching summaries. Most of their time is wasted on these things. Some of them express that the reason why they cannot design each lesson carefully is that they have to spend much time on the trivial things. We find in the observation that this is true. The problem is serious for some teachers so that they seldom have enough time to prepare their daily classes. Therefore, it is necessary for school authorities to free teachers from those tasks. The main job for a teacher is to help his or her students to learn and improve their own ability in teaching. In one word, education should not involve too much regular work on the surface; rather it should encourage teachers to pay more attention to how to use good methods to improve students' comprehensive ability.

4.2.2 Paying More Attention to Open Classes

The main problem with multimedia-assisted English classroom teaching is that multimedia has not been fully used in daily teaching, but in open classes, teachers always make full use of multimedia in their teaching, stimulating students to think and encouraging them to construct their understanding. In open classes, students have more interest in learning, teacher who designs the classes can get some suggestions from experts and their colleagues, and teachers who observe the open classes can learn new teaching methods. So, open classes have many advantages in education, and they also play an important role in teaching innovation. Considering the problem that teachers just use multimedia fully in open classes, school authorities should pay more attention to open classes. They can give more chances to more teachers to design open classes and encourage them to observe other teachers' open classes. This is necessary for the development of multimedia-assisted English classroom teaching.

4.3 Suggestions for Experts

4.3.1 Affirming the Development of Multimedia-assisted Classroom Teaching

In the process of class observation, the researcher finds some problems with multimedia English classroom teaching, but it also find that there are some problems which search from existing literature are disappeared now. It means that students' receptivity and understanding occupy an important place in the classroom. In the process of observing, it is pleasurable for us to find that the multimedia English classroom teaching is improving. So experts should give full affirmation to the

development of multimedia English classroom teaching, and give more confidence to teachers and students who will use multimedia in a better way.

4.3.2 Encouraging Teachers and students to improve their Comprehensive Ability

Through analyzing the problems identified in our observation, we can easily find that experts, teachers, and students have different duties to improve multimedia-assisted classroom teaching. At present, experts play an important role in the development of education technology, and their suggestions will influence teachers and students to some extent. It is necessary to improve teachers' professional ability for teaching and it is good for the development of education, so experts give full affirmation to teachers who like to innovate in their multimedia-assisted classroom teaching, but our interviews show that excessive innovations make teachers pay more attention to their innovations of model lessons, but they ignore their daily classroom teaching. Experts should help teachers to correct their attitude to multimedia English classroom teaching, and emphasize that teachers should use multimedia to help students construct their knowledge and guide them to improve their comprehensive ability. Multimedia is the tool in classroom teaching to help, but it is not a measurement of teachers' performance, so experts should suggest that teachers keep a balance between innovations and teachers' professional developments. Experts should also encourage students to give their advice to teachers, and actively construct their understanding about new knowledge. Experts' attitude and suggestions must play an important role in students' and teachers' comprehensive development.

5. Conclusion

Through the observations in the multimedia classroom teaching, we can easily to find that the multimedia classroom teaching becomes more and more colorful, and it has more advantages than traditional classroom teaching. We can find that in this school, the multimedia equipment can meet the requirements of English teaching, and each teacher has rich teaching experience and they can grasp the main points in the textbooks. What is more, if given enough time, they can make good teaching designs. Besides, it can be seen that some problems which are mentioned in the existing literature have disappeared, but with the development of multimedia English classroom teaching, some new problems arise. Through observing in the multimedia classroom teaching, it can find out about some differences between daily classroom teaching and model lessons. In daily classroom teaching, the teacher still pays much attention to students' scores. Through interviewing teachers, they express that the heavy load makes them have little time to design their multimedia English classroom teaching. What is more, the students still rely on their teachers. They are not used to constructing knowledge by themselves or cooperate with their classmates. So it is necessary for us to pay more attention on daily multimedia classroom teaching.

In one word, with the development of the multimedia technology, we should take full advantage of it and make innovations of the new teaching methods in daily classroom teaching which connect the theory with practice.

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