

Constructivism in Audiovisual and Speaking Teaching of University

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Abstract

According to Constructivism, teaching should emphasize the activity of the students. This paper analyzes the teaching impact on English internet or computer-based examination of Band 4 and Band 6 for local university students. In this paper, we summarize the present situation and difficulties and put forward some suggestion which includes the principles for choosing the video and audio material and so on. It is concluded that listening should be put ahead of the speaking, build internet-based forum for audiovisual teaching, construct a good video module and implement the reform on teaching administration system for the university.

Key words: Constructivism in teaching; Internet-Based Test (IBT) of CET-4 and CET-6; Audiovisual and Speaking Teaching, Video Course

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INTRODUCTION

In 2004, the Ministry of Education (MOE) issued "College English Course Teaching Demand" (2004, henceforth referred to as CECTD), which aims to "develop students' English comprehensive ability for application, especially listening and speaking ability to make them communicate with others freely in oral and writing skills for their future job and social activities; strengthen students' ability in

autonomous learning; improve students' comprehensive cultural attainment to meet the demand for the social development and international exchange. In 2007, MOE issued the revised edition reaffirming this demand. And in 2014, MOE canvasses for each skill specifically in College English Teaching Direction (canvassing manuscript, CETD, 2014). For the listening ability at the primary level, students should understand the simple daily conversation in English; understand audio and video material in slow speed and familiar lecture in English, grasp the main idea and the key point; understand the English course at the corresponding level; understand daily instructions on product and operation about a certain job; employ the basic listening techniques.

In 2008, the Ministry of Education Examination Center instituted Internet-Based Test (IBT) CET-4 and CET-6 (henceforth referred to as IBT-CET) in universities in China as an experiment. In IBT-CET, video and listening part covers 70% and all the items should be finished on a computer which includes the traditional composition item (Jin & Wu, 2009). IBT-CET poses a large challenge to the English teaching for universities which compel universities to moderate some administrative strategies. Simultaneously, there are some problems in our English teaching. "Dumb English" and "Deaf English" is still widespread among our students. So, universities should take action to solve the problem through better course arrangement and teaching method, perfect teacher arrangement and teaching facility and so on.

1. CONSTRUCTIVISM TEACHING THEORY AND IBT-CET OF AUDIO - VISUAL TEACHING

1.1 Constructivism Theory

Constructivism comes from Jean Piaget (a very famous psychologist in Switzerland)'s genetic epistemology

in 1960s. At the beginning of the 1990s constructivist learning theory as a kind of cognitive theory developed and spread into our country.

For over 30 years or so, it has developed into a unique teaching concept. Constructivist learning theory highlights learners' creativity fully (Wang, 2014). Constructionist believes that each of us constructs the meaning or constructs the world or experience from our birth under the influence of our environment. So learners should be the center and focus according to learning theory (Williams & Burden, 2000). Constructionism develops from psychology in behavior and cognitive psychology. Constructive teaching conception advocates student-centered teaching and students' autonomy under teachers' direction. In this sense, the whole teaching process, the teacher plays a role of promoter, organizer and guide, not the provider and feeding person. Students can make good use of all kinds of learning material to construct the knowledge in their own way (Liu & Luan, 2012).

1.2 Characteristics of IBT-CET

IBT-CET accords with constructivist learning theory and draw test approach from TOEFL. The characteristics are as follows:

(a) Listening item emphasizes language application ability and listening ability leading to other skills. Speakers in the IBT-CET have different tones of English, e.g., American, British, Australian and Middle East accent. So our students should get accustomed to different voices. And most of the listening examination material comes from VOA, BBC and CNN from foreign broadcasting media.

(b) IBT-CET employs video material to check and follow-to-read items which are completely new to examinees. In the test, 50 mark items should be finished by reading, writing, follow-to-read, dictation items according to 4-5minutes video material.

(c) Reading comprehension item stresses daily news, interviews and character biography. Writing Item aims to check student's language application by English not only examining whether their viewpoint is true or false.

From the above, we can see that listening play a more important role in IBT-CET and it integrates other skills as well. For example, in section B of IBT-CET, there is an Integrated Test item of a clip for 4-5 minutes of video, after 2 times viewing, examinees should answer 5 related questions in one minute which includes reading, listening and writing activities. If they cannot understand it clearly, it means failure completely. In order to deal with the new examination system and achieve our teaching goal mentioned in CETCD, we should strengthen our teaching reform to improve our students' language comprehensive ability, especially listening ability. For this, we should take measures to optimize our course arrangement and method, build a new teaching module, better teacher arrangement and teaching facility and so on.

2. PERFECTING COURSE ARRANGEMENT AND TEACHING METHOD

2.1 Course Arrangement

As a matter of fact, the College English Teaching Direction (CETD2014) has canvassed to take listening as the basis of reading and writing, and listening should go first. CETD for the high level students says: students should (a) understand broadcasting program of English native speaker, and grasp the main idea and the key point. (b) Understand English speakers in normal speed. (c) Understand professional course and lecture in English. And also IBT-CET characterizes listening on the basis of speaking, reading, writing and translation. For this, we should optimize our course arrangement and improve our teaching method to achieve the high listening teaching goal.

Correspondingly, the old teaching textbook should be changed because it only focuses on listening exercises and cannot adjust to the high demand in IBT-CET. The Book *Learning to speak: an English video course* (Stempleski et al., 2012) is a very good choice which integrates listening, speaking and reading skills into a whole, and aims to develop students' English application ability effectively. This book agrees with the tenet of CETD 2007 which was compiled according to World Link, a video book published abroad. It has long been researched in ten universities and verified many times by many experts and put into use. It incorporates communicative function of English as a kind of language into language topics and language context. Especially, the video material consists of various types and topics of literature, real language material and interesting exercises. Meanwhile, it pays more attention to the devise of pictures and text, together with multimedia material. Especially and specifically it makes good use of internet system to improve the students listening ability first. The video course emphasizes the communicative function and stresses daily oral English communicative ability. It aims to develop not only comprehensive ability but also speaking ability, i.e., make them understand by listening and then speak out. In our video course teaching, we also can take CNN, VOA and BBC as the complementary listening material. We will expatiate this in the following part.

2.2 Teaching Method

Meantime, the old teacher-centered method should be changed into student-centered. In order to do this, teachers should provide more interactive activities for the students, devise more group work to improve every student's positivity and cooperation ability. And also pay more attention to learners' individuality and implement learner autonomous learning strategy. As we all know, constructionist advocates student-centered and

real context teaching. Task-based interactive teaching is a kind of application of Constructivism, which is a good combination between the teaching task and class interaction. In video course class, teacher can devise some research, interview, speech and debate task activity to carry out teaching. Furthermore Flipping Classroom as a very brand-new teaching method arouses our concern increasingly in the world. 2016 Educational Informatization work Essentials¹ mentions that Flipping Classroom and Blending-Learning should be directed and applied in open online courses in universities. Flipping Classroom and Blending Learning combines face-to-face teaching traditional teaching with open online teaching which is much more student-centered. Not only in face-to-face part between student and teachers but also in video self-learning part students could acquire knowledge on their own and internalize conceptions by interaction and communication with teachers and students. In this way video learning takes the place of explanation and impartment from teacher and massive interaction and exchanges deepens students' cognition. Since video course class is characterized by more listening and speaking practice, task-based and Flipping Classroom with Blending-learning is fairly suitable for it. Surely teachers can choose different methods and style to proceed with their video course depending on different conditions.

(a) In order to lead other skills, listening should be combined with related cultural background reading. For example, before we watch the video Obama's Inauguration Speech, historic background, tradition of American election and also the characteristics of formal speech should be introduced briefly. Teachers can give an assignment to students to search relevant information online as a task. Meanwhile, grammatical points cannot be neglected since they can help us to have a good understanding of each sentence quickly and fully. Listening skill is always combined with other three skills together and cannot be separated in teaching. Any skill of four can influence others greatly, so in video course class we should still help students improve other skills while teaching listening and speaking skills.

(b) learning strategies are also very important. Listening more and watching more constantly is the shortcut to reach our goals. In video classes, we can follow the rule of video following audio, audio and video integration, internet-based. While listening, you can take notes if necessary. Dictation, follow-to-read and comprehensive listening is all effective approaches to improve your listening ability. More examples, forecasting, summarizing after listening, listening while reading text and learning vocabulary and expressions after listening can contribute effectively. Learner at different level with different personalities can choose a different

method to employ. Additionally, students should integrate the four skills together and incorporate in class into after class to make much more progress in English application ability.

3. INTERNET-BASED LISTENING MATERIALS

Since CECTD (2007) and IBT demand us to integrate classroom teaching with the internet, that means today's course or class should be internet-based. The above we discussed the course arrangement which mentioned the paper textbook- *Learning to speak: an English video course*. Except the paper textbook, we also have internet textbook. Since it symbolizes the integration of internet technology and English course, we will discuss it specifically. We can take VOA, BBC, and CNN as our complementary audiovisual and speaking textbook for which there are a few optional principles to comply with. These three kinds of English material could provide a great deal of audiovisual and speaking resource. Programs on VOA and BBC; special English on the VOA has been the listening examination resource since the 1980s. VOA is very popular in the world which broadcasts news from around the world and opens a window to American culture. You could have a good understanding of America and make much progress in English level if you could keep on listening. As for CNN, its programs are news from American and world broadcast and have been one of the course data corpuses. These are the advantages and reasons why the National Education Ministry designates these 3 media material as the IBT-CET contents.

Nevertheless VOA, BBC and CNN have their own features. In our English listening classroom, VOA is the optimum for the freshmen of the university. BBC is suitable for the sophomores or the juniors which employs British accent mostly. And CNN is the best choice for seniors. Instructors could choose longer or shorter ones accordingly. Generally speaking, we should choose more audio material from VOA and BBC and more video ones. from CNN, for CNN has more topics about China, with which our students are more familiar and could get to know more native images in the world. Since audiovisual and speaking class at the university connects with internet closely, we instructors should help and direct the students appropriately including searching approach and downloading software and so on.

Actually, we have more choices of web-material to pick up. Some universities build their teaching web on which teachers and students can interact and communicate freely. There students can ask instantly and leave message to anyone freely at any time. Meanwhile, students can search their learning material including audio and video whatever they need almost and learning players to talk and exchange ideas in oral and in writing. Even some

¹ Educational Ministry (EM). (2016). *2016 Educational Informatization work Essentials*.

local universities can share some MOOCs online which are web public courses in big scale. MOOCs can transmit delicate, creative and well-organized course (Chen, 2015). Short video clips with different styles are the main resource of MOOC which is very adaptive for video class as complementary material. And there are more exercises and mass interaction for learners to learn, web forum to participate and evaluate with each other. In 2016, EM will start up 1,500 class hour video course learning resource² which will bring massive benefit for our audiovisual and speaking class.

4. TEACHER ARRANGEMENT AND TEACHING FACILITY

4.1 Teacher Arrangement

In the new century, our government has invested certain amount of capital to implement the university teaching reform. University teaching reform has been carried out for a few years. Some scholars and experts have done much relevant research and published their opinions in such areas. However, the professional teacher resource is lacking. Most of the instructors are suitable for the reading and writing course, and there are no professional instructors for the audiovisual and speaking class. As we know the development of education and teaching starts from the development of teachers. So does video course teaching.

On the one hand our instructors should do more to meet the needs to improve themselves with the learners together. Some scholars once pointed out that the professional development of foreign language teachers is related to the career of more than one hundred thousand foreign language teachers and quality of education in China (Jia, 2005). So today's English teacher, in a university not only possesses professional knowledge and skills in English, but also they should learn to apply network technology in their class, such as internet forums, online message, and web conference and so on. Furthermore, audiovisual and speaking class relates to the network technology much more closely. On the other hand, we need to introduce some professional instructors to take the video class who is good at listening and speaking. Thirdly, university can send instructors as visitors to other famous universities or training organizations to take professional training. And teaching and research should be emphasized separately as well as audiovisual and speaking class. Only by maximizing on everyone's advantage can we benefit greatly. As we know, in some universities, teachers can be divided into different groups according to their own specialty, e.g., research-based type and teaching type. Instructors for audiovisual

and speaking class also can become video-based type experts.

4.2 Teaching Facility

As concerns teaching facility, internet with high speed should be accessed easily in the university. Not only for English video course, IBT-CET, but also students expect high-bandwidth information for other studies. If the university cannot deliver it, it means losing the advantage to compete with other universities. Even one university in the world gave every freshman a free Apple Ipad in order to compensate the inferior internet technology. Teaching facilities with high technology are necessary foundation for a modern university's development. According to different financial conditions, different universities could have their Moodle Platform, BBS and other specific teaching web and self-study platform for audiovisual teaching and interaction. And also they could connect with some certain enterprises to solve capital lack problem to realize win-win cooperation.

In February of 2016, Educational Ministry issued *2016 Educational Informatization work Essentials*³ claims to build and perfect public online courses body and self-administration mechanism, carry out the specification on course construction, application, introduction and implement regulatory management on safety in course forum, circulation and service. Scientific management can ensure the implementation of teaching aim, teaching arrangement and teaching method effectively. Therefore the university authorities should lay down the relevant institutions and regulation to do a good service for audiovisual and speaking teaching including multimedia maintenance, management and technology direction. So we need a group of specific staff with high technical abilities. With their help, teaching facility with high technology could be repaired and upgraded as soon as possible. Additionally, they should do service for technology training to help teacher operate teaching system very well.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, internet with high technology has become more important in English teaching, especially in audiovisual and speaking class. In order to proceed audiovisual and speaking class efficiently and to succeed in IBT-CET, we should integrate class teaching with internet information fully to fulfill our classroom teaching actively, interactively full of interest and knowledge. Also we should encourage our students to learn creatively and autonomously in universities.

² Educational Ministry (EM). (2004). *College English Course Demand*.

³ Educational Ministry (EM). (2016). *2016 Educational Informatization work Essentials*.

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