

Applying Multimedia Technology to the Teaching and Learning of College English in China: Problems and Solutions

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Abstract- This study focuses on the problems and solutions regarding the application of multimedia technology to the teaching and learning of College English in China. At first, this study points out the existing problems in the teaching and learning of College English in China, mainly including excessive dependence on multimedia technology, the lack of proper capacities among teachers, the lack of the real integration of multimedia technology into the classroom teaching, inappropriate design of the teaching courseware, a large gap between the potentials of multimedia technology and teachers and students' understanding and proficiency, the insufficiency of students' awareness and ability of autonomous learning, the lack of good management and maintenance of the multimedia facilities, and the outdated system of teaching evaluation and management. Later, this paper puts forward some suggestions on solving these problems, namely, strengthening College English teachers' education and professional development, triggering students' learning potentials and initiatives, integrating multimedia teaching into traditional classroom teaching, and working out a practical and effective system of College English teaching evaluation and management.

Keywords- *Multimedia Technology; Teaching and Learning of College English; Classroom Teaching*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development and wide application of multimedia technology makes great influence on the teaching and learning of College English in China. A brand-new teaching and learning model is coming into being accordingly. The application of multimedia and internet technology in foreign language teaching makes it possible to provide a great amount of information of various kinds and fields at the same time, which can help to create a more authentic language learning environment, enrich the teaching contents and integrate the training of such language skills as speaking, writing, reading, listening and translating at one time (Zhou & Gong, 2010: 101-102). In this way, visualized multi-dimensional information can be understood and appreciated easier and attract students' attention, stir up their enthusiasm of learning foreign languages, expand their scope of knowledge and help them to get through the transition from teacher-taught learning to master-inspired

learning. What's more, due to the college enrolment expansion plan, the problem of the lack of sufficient qualified teachers is ubiquitous in China's colleges. Multimedia computer aided foreign language teaching model can relieve such kind of pressure to a certain extent and enable both teachers and students to be free from the constraints of time and place by setting up an online teaching and learning platform (Zhuang & Wang & Li, 20¹cec93@163.com; ²jenny0542@sina.com 07: 22-23).

The application of multimedia technology is a new momentum for modern foreign language education as it creates a rather ideal teaching environment for carrying out the quality education of foreign languages, which contributes a lot to improving students' English language capacities in all ways. It is generally accepted that multimedia teaching has such advantages as helping construct the student-centred teaching model, attracting and arousing students' learning interest so as to make teaching process more lively by making full use of students' initials and activeness, constructing a live and interesting language learning environment so as to improve teaching efficiency by enriching teaching contents and giving extra information, helping upgrade teachers' and authorities' teaching belief and concept, and helping better teachers' quality, especially their information quality (Huang, 2000: 32-37).

However, some problems concerning the application of multimedia technology to the teaching and learning of College English in China cannot be ignored. It is of great significance to make a study on the above problems by looking into the real causes and offering solutions to these problems.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF NETWORK AND MULTI-MEDIA-BASED FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Network and multimedia-based foreign language teaching and learning differs from traditional classroom teaching and learning in such aspects as resources, means, modes, and environments (Shen and Cheng, 2008:23-28). For one thing, the organic integration of network and multimedia technology into foreign language teaching and learning enriches and diversifies the resources of foreign language teaching and learning to a great extent, which makes favourable conditions for learners' active learning. For another, network and multimedia technology provides

new means of foreign language teaching and learning for both teachers and learners, and these means make foreign language teaching and learning more flexible, more convenient, more visualized, more interesting, and more efficient, which makes modern teaching and learning methods like discovery learning, exploration learning, and experiential learning possible, hence broadening learners' scope of knowledge and developing learners' intercultural communication competence. Moreover, network and multimedia technology upgrades and diversifies foreign language teaching and learning modes, such as Self-driven Model, Multi-dimensional Info-input Model, Electronic Interactive Model, Competition-cooperation Inquiry Model, Culture-awareness Cultivation Model, and Learning Style-strategy Accommodation Model. Still, network and multimedia technology can construct a more authentic and open learning environment for learners, which creates more and better opportunities for communication and language application.

III. PROBLEMS AMONG THE APPLICATION OF MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF COLLEGE ENGLISH IN CHINA

However, many problems are brought forth simultaneously as a computer-aided foreign language teaching and learning model springs up in China's colleges and universities, ranging from excessive dependence on multimedia technology to the lack of proper capacities among teachers and inappropriate design of the teaching courseware.

A. Excessive Dependence on Multimedia Technology

In the class, many teachers become so dependent on the teaching courseware that they neglect their teacher role as an evaluator, facilitator, constructor, and consultant (Jin & Li, 2010: 65). The role of the multimedia is magnified (Meng, 2006: 10). The teaching courseware is far more utility than a book, thus, some teachers even simplified the process of preparing lessons and turn themselves into a machine operator rather than a teacher. Standing behind the machine, the teachers often fail to accept proper feedbacks from their students and the interactive activities and affective interaction are decreased to a great extent too. In consequence, the teaching effectiveness and quality can not be enhanced as expected and the student-centred teaching model will come to naught in the end.

B. Lack of Proper Capacities among Teachers

Although multi-media technology has been applied in foreign language teaching for quite a long time, many problems regarding teachers still exist (Huang & Zou, 1999:5-7), calling for urgent solutions. It is presented in the following forms: their teaching concepts and teaching methods are not up-to-date with the computer-assisted instruction model, their multimedia operational capacity is far from satisfactory, some of them are even unable to make a teaching courseware by themselves, and traditional

teacher-centred teaching model is replaced by multimedia-centred teaching model in some areas.

C. The Potentials of Multimedia Technology Fail to be Put into Full Use

Due to the failure of highlighting the character of each subject and course, it becomes harder for students to have a good command of the important and difficult parts or points of the lecture as too much information is introduced by the teaching courseware presented at classroom (Cui & Tang, 2010: 66-69). Also, teachers' inadequate multimedia operational capacity holds back the full use of the potentials of multimedia technology.

D. Insufficiency of Autonomous Learning Awareness

Students' activeness is weakened to some degree because they are likely to be too dependent on the computer and teaching courseware. Without definite and clear learning purpose, plan, and necessary capacity of using computer and internet, students can easily get lost in the information ocean, which can destroy their confidence, waste their time, lower their learning efficiency and reduce their learning enthusiasm in the long run. The learning strategies formed in the teacher-centred teaching model also need to be adjusted timely so as to adapt to the new computer-assisted instruction model.

E. Inappropriate Design of the Teaching Courseware

The quality of the teaching courseware fails to meet the demand in practice, which is another big problem in the multimedia computer-aided College English teaching and learning in China. The contents of the teaching courseware do not match well with the required teaching materials or conform to the teaching syllabus. Some of them simply repeat what the text books say while others contain too much unnecessary information which is not only of no good to the language learning but also wasting the precious time in the class. In addition, too much information introduced in a courseware at one time brings about more difficulties for students to identify the important or core points, and the quick shift of the slides pages leaves insufficient time for the students to take notes, let alone to absorb and reflect on the teaching and learning materials presented in the courseware. Moreover, excessive use of pictures and images can easily distract students' attention and the application of uniform supporting teaching CDs in some colleges fails to reflect the teachers' personal character.

F. Interactive Language Activities are Decreased

Another phenomenon deserves our attention is that both the interactive language activities between teachers and students and students' activeness and initials are weakened to some extent because classroom teaching is too dependent on or even controlled by the teaching courseware (Wang & Zheng, 2005:76-78), which is to the contrary of the goals of the teaching and learning of College English.

G. Management and Maintenance of Multimedia Facilities

Most college authorities fail to attach enough importance to the management and maintenance of the multimedia

facilities and other electronic equipments. The unreasonable use of the multimedia facilities and unclear division of labour can lead to a huge waste of the equipments and human resources. In addition, the system of teaching evaluation and management regarding the application of multi-media technology in the teaching and learning of College English is left far behind.

IV. SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS

As for solutions to these problems mentioned above regarding the application of multimedia technology to the teaching and learning of College English in China, the following suggestions deserve considering: strengthening College English teachers' education and professional development, triggering students' learning potentials and initiatives, integrating multimedia teaching into traditional classroom teaching, and working out a practical and effective system of College English teaching evaluation and management.

First and foremost, as teachers are the key to the success of College English teaching reform undergoing in China, it will be of great significance to strengthen College English teachers' education and professional development by various means, such as increasing the number of opportunities of teachers' communication and further education (Wang & Zheng, 2005:76-78), attending high-level seminars concerning foreign language methodology, forming teaching and research teams, and facilitating peer collaboration and co-operation. In this way can teachers be able to transform their teaching beliefs and concepts so as to help them to adapt to their new roles, improve their teaching methods accordingly, strengthen their multimedia operational capacities and cultivate their abilities to make and modify the teaching courseware based on their personalized needs.

Secondly, for students, in order to achieve an ideal result of College English teaching and learning with the help of multi-media technology, it is advisable to enhance the interaction between teaching courseware and students, make teaching courseware reflect teachers' personal character, and use different ways or means to present multimedia teaching in class (Mao, 2010: 68-70). In the meantime, they need to have a good understanding of multi-media teaching, including its characters, advantages and disadvantages, and the differences from the traditional classroom teaching so that they can adapt themselves to the new teaching and learning style and model. In other words, necessary education should be given to the students with the purpose to help them have a full understanding of the new computer-assisted instruction model and therefore develop their new learning strategies, cultivate their autonomous learning awareness and abilities, teach them how to make good use of the multimedia technology and the internet platform to learn more efficiently and effectively and cooperate with their classmates in and out of the classroom, and eliminate adverse psychological factors against the new computer-assisted instruction model. Furthermore, awareness of supervision and management of the students' learning process in the internet platform should be enhanced

to guarantee the effectiveness of the students' learning out of the class.

Thirdly, it is beneficial to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of College English by integrating and matching the multi-media teaching and traditional classroom teaching so as to make full use of their respective advantages. It pays to try different ways to better the teaching courseware, enhance the frequency and intensity of interactive activities between the teachers and the students, and, encourage the exchange of self-made multimedia courseware and teaching experience among peer colleagues. Also, it is urgent for the college authorities to set up a practical and effective system of teaching evaluation and management for ensuring the smooth transformation of the teaching and learning of College English from the traditional one to the multi-media teaching model.

Fourthly, a practical and effective system of College English teaching evaluation and management needs being worked out and carried out. A sound evaluation and management system is a must in any teaching and learning practice, the multimedia-technology-based College English teaching in China is no exception. This system can serve as a stimulus to explore all the potentials of teachers' teaching and students' learning of English. Only by doing this can the efficiency of multimedia-technology-based College English teaching be improved as expected.

V. CONCLUSION

The introduction of multimedia technology to the teaching and learning of College English is for meeting the needs of the new tendency of social development, there is still a long way to go to put its potentials to full play as it has caused a lot of difficulties regarding teaching methods and learning styles. Suggestions on making the bright prospect come true involve attaching more importance to teachers' education and development, triggering students' learning potentials and initiatives, integrating multimedia teaching into traditional classroom teaching, shifting from the traditional teaching, and setting up a practical and effective system of teaching evaluation and management.

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