

Application of Constructivism Theory in College English Teaching

Chaorun Zhou , Wenying Wang

School of Foreign Languages of Yuxi Normal University, Yuxi, Yunnan, 653100, China

Keywords: Constructivism theory, English language, college teaching.

Abstract: With the deepening of China's higher education reform, traditional college English teaching mode cannot satisfy the current English Language Teaching. Thus, it is of great significance to apply Constructivism Theory to College English Teaching. As a new teaching theory, Constructivism Theory has been more and more important in College English Teaching. Firstly this work presents the outline of Constructivism Teaching Theory, the current situation of College English Teaching and the application of Constructivism Theory in College English Teaching. Then this work analyses the application of Constructivism Theory in College English Teaching.

1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, as a required course in China's colleges and universities, English is quite important for undergraduates. Along with the economic development, China and countries over the whole world intercommunicate more frequently on economic, culture and politics. Therefore, to learn English (the international language) well is considerably important. Constructivism Theory emerges when traditional English teaching method fails to meet the demands of both teachers and students (Chen Hongli, 2014). As a new teaching theory, Constructivism Theory attaches important to students' interest and ability on English learning, which helps to meet the requirements of both students and teachers. Thus, it is important to make full use of Constructivism Theory on college English teaching.

emphasizes more on individual initiative on exploring and discovering. According to this theory, in the teaching process, teachers are guides who instruct students to learn instead of the central figures. In learning, methods explored by students and efforts taken by them determine how much they can learn. Constructivism Theory advocates that students, in the whole learning process, should not only discover and solve problems by their own, but also summarize methods that can enhance their knowledge reserves after solving problems. For traditional teaching, the principal method is memorization. On the contrary, Constructivism Theory firstly requires students to understand and, continuously accumulate knowledge in the process. Based on memorizing vocabulary and grammar, the spoon-feeding traditional teaching method cannot acclimate the current teaching development. While, Constructivism Theory can help students enhance their English language competence in the undergraduate learning process.

2 CONCEPT AND CORE OF CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

2.1 Concept of constructivism theory

Constructivism, as a branch of cognitive psychology, is also called structuralism. The core of Constructivism Theory is that knowledge acquisition relies mainly on individuals' positive actions rather than being taught by others. Compared with traditional teaching method, Constructivism Theory

2.2 Core of Constructivism Theory

The core of Constructivism Theory includes three views, namely knowledge view, learning view and teaching view. The knowledge view is that students should have the ability to use knowledge flexibly and learn from outside information through information processing. In this process, the interaction between the prior knowledge and the new knowledge makes it possible for students to integrate the already learned knowledge. Learning view,

based on the existing knowledge, refers to the process of knowledge acquisition (Jiang Wenjun, 2014). In this process, the task of students is to construct knowledge, handling the prior knowledge and the new knowledge skillfully and shielding the outside effects of instructors and indoctrinators. In addition, in the process of students' constructing learning view, we can never ignore teachers who help students construct knowledge as guides. Knowledge learning has its own relativity. The purpose of teaching view is to help students better understand the inner meaning of knowledge constructing. In the teaching process, teaching view requires that teachers guide students to use the acquired knowledge scientifically and urge them to construct the new knowledge rather than forget the prior knowledge, helping them to better understand the interaction between the prior knowledge and the new knowledge.

3 CURRENT SITUATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

3.1 Emphasis on teachers' teaching and neglect of students' interaction and discussion

Nowadays, in college English teaching classes, teachers lecture with enthusiasm, while students listen with no reaction. Seldom, even no interaction or discussion between them. In the classroom, students only play the supporting roles. However, it is students, the person who needs to learn should be the main characters of classes, and teachers just assist student in learning. For English Language Teaching, interaction is the key point (Li Luan, Zuo Fan, 2014). Without interaction, it is impossible for students to gain interest in learning, let alone the efficiency of learning. If teachers care nothing except the teaching tasks and completely ignore whether students understand or not, teaching and learning will separate from each other. Consequently, it is difficult for teachers to know students' learning level and impossible for class efficiency to be improved.

3.2 Deficiency of students' interest in learning

Interest needs to be stimulated. Teachers could not have deep understanding to students' thoughts, if

students have no interest in English learning and fail to communicate efficiently with teachers. In college English learning, many students have laid good foundations. They are reckoned to be able to get high scores by their own, but in the long run, the communication between students and teachers decreases, which is not conducive to the efficiency of learning.

3.3 Some teachers' misconducts on teaching points

In traditional teaching methods, teaching focus on grammar and words and pay no attention on language use; in vocabulary teaching process, the focus is memorization with no attention on the pronunciation and sentence-making. In the process of college English teaching, with heavy teaching task and small amount of classes, teachers have no option but to focus on the teaching task, thus generating difficulties to estimate teaching quality and effectiveness and resulting in poor learning.

3.4 Rationality deficiency in current teaching evaluation system

For some undergraduate students, the goal of English learning is to take credit. Based on students' scores, universities formulate teaching evaluation system. Teachers reach teaching goal when students achieve high scores. According to the teaching evaluation system, teachers have to adopt corresponding teaching methods, making sure students can get high scores. However, the corresponding traditional methods, sea tactical and spoon-feeding teaching, make students recite rather than learn English, blocking the improvement of students' comprehensive ability.

4 APPLICATION OF CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

In recent years, with Constructivism Theory reform in college English teaching, teachers' role shift from traditional imparters to guides and supervisors. English Language Teaching process is actually the interaction between teachers and students, students and students, which breaks traditional teaching methods and fully shows the due undergraduate education level. Frequent interaction between

teachers and students can not only enhance the effect of English learning, but also improve students' English communication skills. The following four aspects discuss the application of Constructivist Theory in college English teaching.

4.1 Establishment of favorable teaching mood in English classes

Constructivism emphasizes the integration of the prior knowledge and the new knowledge. Through Constructivism Theory, students can understand the relation between the prior knowledge and the new knowledge. In this process, teachers and their effective strategies play crucial roles. Firstly, situational teaching of Constructivism Theory needs to be created in classes. The purpose of situational teaching is to establish links between the prior knowledge and the new knowledge, allowing students to learn the new knowledge, consolidate the prior knowledge and to link them together effectively. But teachers need to note that in this education reform, they should create favorable teaching mood on the basis of actual demands and students' needs. When creating situational teaching, teachers can take advantage of the existing school equipment, which is beneficial to boost students' interest and learning ability. For example, in multimedia classroom, teachers can use the equipment to draw students' attention by abundant illustrations and pictures rather than make students memorize words and texts repeatedly.

Situational teaching of Constructivism Theory is vital for college English teaching, creating a relaxed learning environment for students, stimulating the enthusiasm of students maximally and helping teachers complete teaching goals.

4.2 Subversion of traditional teaching mode and encouragement on cooperation among students

The disadvantages of traditional teacher-centered teaching mode are that students are passive learners and it is impossible to know students' learning level. Another core of Constructivism Theory is student-centered teaching. Different from traditional teaching mode, student-centered teaching make requirements to teachers that they should be guides rather than imparters. Under Constructivism Theory, the relationships between students and teachers, students and students are extremely important for English Language Teaching. In classes, the application of Constructivism Theory make them--

teachers and students, students and students—communicate more. Group teaching method requires students and students, teachers and students to complete the task of teaching and learning together. Cooperation teaching method is of great significant in thoughts sharing and efficiency improving. To apply Constructivism Theory in teaching, firstly students should be divided into groups, then questions and time be distributed respectively, finally each group choose a presenter to show their results. Through discussions, enthusiasm can be inspired, talents, discovered and efficiency, improved, thus making students learn from each other. Well-applied, this method will improve students' English communication skills, broaden their horizons and boost their confidence virtually.

4.3 Adequate use on teachers' guidance in classes

Teachers' guidance is extremely important when applying Constructivism Theory into English Language Teaching. In classes, teachers should guide students to learn on the basis of students' learning conditions, pay attention to students' attitudes, emotions and moods and observe whether students have understood and digested the knowledge or not. The taboo of language learning is learning and using knowledge mechanically, bringing barriers to communication. Students need to be guided to apply their knowledge to practice and construct their own theoretical system. Effective guidance stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning, cultivating students' interest and making their learning more effective. Due to the poor foundation, some undergraduate students learning English with self-abasement. To these students, rational and scientific guidance is needed. For simple questions, general guidance is appropriate; for difficult problems, teachers should guide students in their positions, making students recognize the significance and pleasure of English learning.

4.4 Construction of scientific teaching evaluation system

Any rational and scientific teaching method needs a rational and scientific teaching evaluation system. So does the current education reform. In accordance with students' learning conditions, pertinent and proper evaluations should be made. Correspondingly, teachers should make adjustment on teaching methods, helping students meliorate

learning methods and improve learning efficiency. Teaching evaluation system is not teaching goals, is a teaching tool instead, serving teachers' teaching methods. It is necessary to ensure the rationality and justice of teaching evaluation system. Under Constructivism Theory, teaching evaluation system should be relative, dynamic and sustainable, reflecting strategies of learning and teaching. Another focus of Constructivism Theory is the process of students' knowledge construction. Therefore, under Constructivism Theory, teaching evaluation system should have a comprehensive evaluation on students, including learning emotions and learning attitudes, etc., furthering students' comprehensive development. Separate evaluation cannot ensure the justice of evaluation system. A fair evaluation system needs the mutual evaluation between students and teachers, allowing them to know the deficiency of learning and teaching and making timely corrections, thus ensuring the efficiency of learning and teaching. Teaching evaluation system should change with the advancement of teaching reform and be more rational and scientific constantly. Under Constructivism Theory, diversified evaluation methods for teaching evaluation system is supported and diversified teaching evaluation system can better promote the development of students and teachers.

Jiang Wenjun. Constructivism Teaching Theory Enlightenments on Higher Vocational Colleges English Teaching Reform. *Journal of Education Institute of Jilin Province*. 2014(5):134-135.

Li Luan, Zuo Fan. College English Teaching Reform on Constructivism Learning Theory. *Journal of Hubei University of Economics (Humanities and Social Sciences)*. 2014(8):197-198.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Application of Constructivism Theory in college English teaching makes students recognize the importance of English learning and stimulates students' interest in learning, making it possible to apply their knowledge to practice rather than learn for examinations and credits. Constructivism Theory has been widely applied in English Language Teaching. It is proved that Constructivism Theory makes great contributions to the improvement of students' learning ability and teachers' teaching efficiency. With the all-round development of students and the scientific improvement of teaching methods, more application-oriented talents will be cultivated and more social contributions will be made by them.

REFERENCES

Chen Hongli. English Linguistics Classroom Teaching on Constructivism Theory. *Journal of Lanzhou Institute of Education*. 2014(1):58-59.