The Interactive Use of Multimedia Network in Interpretation Course

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Abstract: This paper explores the teaching model reform on the course of interpretation to combat the problem of interpretation on Chinese National College campus where there is no English speaking environment, and a lack of realistic interpretation practice. With the help of multimedia network, the teacher designed a system and learning projects to create a lively atmosphere whilst practicing teaching English-Chinese oral interpretation. Under the teacher’s guidance students, will be more active and flexible to practice interpretation both inside and outside the classroom.

Key words: multimedia network, interpretation, teaching model reform

1 Introduction

Students are usually excited and have high expectations at the beginning of interpretation-teaching class. However, they soon become bored because lack of interaction and the boring materials. Teachers may also spend most of their teaching hours talking about interpretation techniques and skills. Under this traditional teaching method, the students are immersed in note-taking and purely accept the teachers’ knowledge and experience. They are not given enough opportunities to practice their interpreting skills in realistic situations. To develop the students’ competence in interpreting, it is necessary to employ multimedia network to reform the teaching model of interpretation course. Compared with the traditional teaching method, the new teaching method has the following advantages:

1) It facilitates students to talk in English, obtaining practical experience in bilingual translation.
2) It will help students enlarge their English vocabulary and boost their competence in interpretation as well as communication.

2 Features and Shortcomings of Traditional Interpretation Course

Interpretation is a kind of cognitive activities; it is also a communicative tool which needs practice and skills. It is necessary to talk about some essential theories and skills in class, however, most of the teaching hours shoed be left for students. Currently, interpretation has been taught in language laboratory, but it is common practice that teachers read materials or play tapes or VCD for students, the students interpret one by one. Then teachers evaluate the performance of each students. This teaching model may have its merits such as every student can have access to practice and teachers can easily control the class. But some weaknesses still deserve attention. Namely, three of them are prominent:

1) Generally, Students are passively involved in interpreting activities as they follow the instructions of their teachers.
2) Students are easily absent minded because they have few opportunities in the class.
3) Students may feel dull and uninteresting due to the lack of interaction between students and teachers as well as that between students.

The development of multimedia network and its application to English teaching presents enormous opportunities for the teaching of interpretation. It is convenient and enjoys abundant teaching resources which will provide realistic environment for interpretation practice. It facilitates real interaction between teachers and students. Thus, students may be easily attracted by this teaching method and study according to their own situations.

3 Taking Advantage of Multimedia Network, Constructing New Interpretation Teaching Model
An interpreter must have depth and breadth of language in order to interpret. However, language proficiency needs practice. Therefore, in the new oral interpretation teaching, the writer discards the traditional teacher-centered method, introducing the task-based, students-centered method of tutoring by employing the technology of multimedia network. The material used in the class is diversified as there are various resources available such as video, ppt, films, etc. Hence, a real teaching and practicing environment can provide a platform for communication in the class. This method is able to arouse the interests of the students and they will study actively both inside and outside the classroom. The new interpretation teaching model resolves some of the difficulties of traditional teaching because materials are more easily obtained and updated. It creates a lively atmosphere for the students so that they will have strong desire to practice. It is multifaceted and appealing.

3.1 The Structure of the New Interpretation Teaching Model

3.1.1 The theoretical basis of the teaching reform
Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the idea that knowledge is constructed by the knower based on mental activity. Learners use prior understandings in concert with current experiences to construct, elaborate or restructure their knowledge. In this process, he or she generates his or her own “rules” and “mental models,” which are used to make sense of their experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting their mental models to accommodate new experiences. The teacher’s role is to support that active process through exploration and dialogue (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, and Windschitl, 2002). One of the guiding principles of constructivism is that learning is a search for meaning. Therefore, learning must start with the issues around which students are actively trying to construct meaning.

As constructivist argues that learning is a process that learners construct their knowledge, it suggests that learners are not just passively receive stimulus, they don’t simply memorize what they heard, instead, they process and select the outside information on the basis of their existing knowledge. Thus, constructivism requires that teaching process should be student-centered, that is, students should be actively involved in studying rather than passively receive knowledge. The role of teachers in this teaching model is to help and encourage students to do so.

Collaborative learning, is another important principle in constructivist learning theory, it is an important instruction mode for open and distance learning systems. Through collaborative learning, students can greatly improve their creativity, exploration capability, and social cooperation. Furthermore, web-based learning systems are one of the most interesting topics in the area of the application of computers to education. Above mentioned is the theoretical foundation of our teaching reforms.

3.1.2 The content of new interpretation teaching model
The content of interpretation course can be classified as two: knowledge and skills. Knowledge include language knowledge, background information and so on. Skills refer to the right way and specific requirements in understanding the materials in the process of interpreting, information transformation, note taking, etc.

It is true that interpretation needs practice, but it is more than practice. Compared with listening training, interpretation is more demanding in listening and understanding ability. In listening training, it may be enough to get the major information, interpretation, however, is a multitask. Students have to improve both their listening and interpreting ability as well as their ability in transform information. Therefore, the right way in understanding materials, note taking skills and information transformation constitute the major parts in interpretation teaching.

3.1.3 The design of new interpretation teaching model
This teaching model facilitates students to explore, to find, to think because it makes students as the center of teaching process. It is a good way for innovation and it is also the purpose of the reform. The teacher should be a guider, helper and promoter. It requires that teachers employ modern technology such as computers, multimedia and network to design a new teaching process that push students to think, explore and find what they want.
The theories mentioned above have communication at their center, and they are based on interactive models of learner and teacher engagement in inquiry around activities such as design and real problem solving, rather than the dominant didactic model of the teacher as a “delivery” agent of knowledge through curriculum materials. Based on these foundations, we first depict a vision that establishes the kinds of multimedia network designs that appear from research to offer promising improvements. A major consequence of this communication emphasis is the special need for rich communication technologies to support highly interactive teaching and learning activities both inside and outside a classroom or school. The emphasis of the new teaching model will be on students-centered and telecommunication-centered. It creates a harmonious atmosphere in which students are encouraged to imitate authentic English language and cultivate their language sense. This is basically the goal that the teachers of interpretation course want to achieve. Most teachers need real language materials and environments in their teaching process. The application of multimedia network can meet the demands of their class because it provides multimedia learning environments which extend the teaching, learning, and material resources beyond individual classrooms. We use real-time data types such as sound, animations, and video, in applications such as computer voice mail, desktop video production, and document preparation. By using multimedia network, teachers are able to create a real language environment where students can practice and communicate. The features of this method are that there are sufficient languages input and standard pronunciation. It is interesting and timesaving, each student has enough time to practice and teachers can monitor their performance at his will. The challenge in this model lies in that the teacher should shift his role from a lecturer to a guider, an organizer, and a decision maker. He must organize and coordinate in the class. Furthermore, he also needs to evaluate and feedback the performance of students. It is also desirable to give each students advice which help them to find the best way for them to study. Last but not least is that technology itself can not be the major target in teaching. Teachers should be cautious that technology does not equal to teaching. The most important part in this method is still human: teachers and students.

3.2 The Practice of the New Interpretation Teaching Model

It is meaningful to clarify the importance of interpreting for students so that they may dedicate to learning. The act of interpreting makes government, courts, medical services, social services, law enforcement, education, and business accessible to limited and non-English speaking persons, and vice versa. For this reason, interpreting is a noble profession that requires dedication to excellence and commitment. It is hard work, but very beneficial work. This will help students to take initiatives in studying.

As we have noticed, learning is fundamentally built up through highly interactive conversations, involving the creation of communications and efforts to interpret communications. Teachers have long recognized the need to give students first-hand experience with people, places, professions, and cultures remote from their normal experience. Hence, in the new teaching model, students are the focus of teaching and teaching activities are designed to inspire them. Teachers should guarantee that each student have enough time and opportunities to practice. The teacher assigns specific tasks to each students, he guides and monitors, occasionally, offers advice to complete the tasks. Most of the students who attend the class are motivated by and enjoy the exercises. “Motivation to acquire a language as a means for attaining instrumental goals: furthering a career,, reading technical material, translating and so on.” (Gao,1998:63) In practicing interpretation, various patterns can be deployed such as pair-drill, group-drill, simulator-drill, sentence-drill, paragraph-drill, paraphrase, Q&A, group discussion, recitation, etc. In setting up the exercises, the teacher must consider carefully the language level and individual involvement of students. Feedback including the positive and the negative aspects are necessary. It can be given by the teacher as well as students as they actively participate in teaching activities. The materials used in class should be carefully chosen before class to meet the needs of teaching. With the internet, it is possible for the teacher to find diversified, update materials.
At the same time, it is strongly recommended that skill-based training and topic-based training be combined. Multimedia network technology is the right tool to meet this goal. For example, numeral interpretation can be integrated into economic, trading materials practice. Idioms can be practiced in culture materials.

In this kind of interesting, challenging and attractive class, students can not only improve their language proficiency and interpretation capabilities but also cultivate their integral qualities. They will fully take advantage of their strong points in future development.

4 Conclusion

Multimedia network assisted interpretation teaching method stimulates the students motivation to learn. The oral interpretation competence of the trainees at our college has been improved greatly. Students claimed that they have the confidence to do ordinary interpreting tasks and satisfied with their performance.

This new teaching method develops students’ abilities in a comprehensive way. It serves to enrich the capabilities of participants in a communication to express what they are thinking about, to capture traces of that thought in new forms of representation, and to jointly work to create new artifacts or to learn. Students are more active and flexible in interpreting skill training and language study. They also cultivate their abilities in obtaining, information, analyzing problems as well as resolving problems. We argue that interpretation course is more than a course which simply tells students skills about interpretation. Nor are teachers simply broadcasters of the information available in a curriculum.

With new thinking about education that highlights highly of interaction, it has often been conceived of in education as a transmission of information from the curriculum to the mind of the learner. Multimedia technologies have been developed to foster and allow for the expansion of these transformational capacities of human communication.

References


