



Study on the Computer and Internet Assisted Adult English Teaching

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Abstract. English is a foreign language rather than a second language in the mainland of China; therefore, lack of real life environment for English learning is an inevitably realistic limitation. The development of the technology provides a language environment which is more real than the traditional teaching environment for English learners. This essay probes into the theoretical foundation, practical significance and problems of the computer and Internet assisted adult English teaching. Teaching adults English based on computer and Internet aims to promote the sound development of adult English teaching.

Key words: Adult English Teaching; Computer and Internet

1. Introduction

The general objective for language learning is not only to improve the ability of the students in using language correctly and canonically, but also to teach the students to use the language appropriately, effectively and successfully. Adult English teaching based on computer and Internet is not only a change in the teaching methods, but also a change in the teaching ideology. It changes the teaching pattern, in which the teachers are the center and they just teach language knowledge and language skill, into the teaching pattern, in which the teachers not only teach the knowledge and skill, but also cultivate the students' ability of using language and self-directed learning.

2. Characteristics of Adult English Learning

Adults have fully developed brain and relatively mature thinking method. Compared with children and teenagers, adults can deal with the complex linguistic form and language contents more easily, so they are superior in grasping reading and writing of a foreign language. One common point of adult English learners is that they have a clear objective in their language learning. They understand clearly that learning English is of vital importance in improving their professional quality and promoting their personal development, and they are eager to learn English well. They are conscious of their own English level and have a clear plan for their learning. But, compared with children and teenagers, adults don't have advantages in the imitation and correction of pronunciation, in catching the audio materials, etc. Fossilization appears more in the adults' foreign language learning. The negative transfer of mother tongue is more easily found in adult learners as well.

In mainland of China, generally speaking, the basic knowledge of English of the adult language learners is weak and the basic skill of English of them is poor. Adults are shy in speaking English and feel ashamed if they don't speak well. They are likely to have anxiety about their learning (Brown, 2001). As stated by Oxford (1999), language anxiety is not the anxiety in general, but a fear which is generated by using the target language. Many factors may affect the language learning and language anxiety is the major factor among them. In order to maintain their self-images and avoid language anxiety, adults may refuse to finish the task. In this way, the English learning is badly affected and a vicious circle is caused correspondently.

3. Theoretical Foundation

Modern learning theories consist of cognitive learning theory, humanistic learning theory and constructive learning theory.

3.1 Cognitive approach was initiated by American psychologist Carroll in the middle of 1960s. Cognitive learning theory regards the learning as a positive

mind activity to obtain, memorize and use knowledge. In essence, self-directed learning refers to that learners have the ability of independently setting their learning goal, choosing their learning contents and learning methods and establishing an evaluation system (Little D, 1997). Adult English learners have the desire and the potential to learn by themselves.

3.2 The rise of humanistic psychology occurred in the 1960s and humanistic learning theory is based on humanistic psychology. As stated by Carl Rogers (1984), learning is not the mechanical connection between stimulus and response, but a psychological process of meaning, because people with different experiences have different responses to the same thing when they deal with the thing. The core of Rogers' statements concerning learning is to make the learners learn freely and independently. The English level of the adult English learners is various; so, it is necessary for them to learn freely and independently in reality.

3.3 Constructive learning theory rose in the 1990s and it was initiated by Swiss scholar J.Piaget. In terms of modern learning theory, after the behaviorism and cognitivism, constructivism developed and it had a great influence on the Internet assisted teaching and learning. The teaching pattern under the guidance of constructivism is that teaching centers on students, the teachers are the organizers and instructors, context, collaboration and conversation are taken into consideration by the teachers to develop the initiative and pioneering spirit of the students, the goal of making the students construct the knowledge network based on what they have learned will be achieved in the end. Constructivism emphasizes the great importance of context creation and collaboration to the construction of meaning and pays much attention to various information resources. *College English Curriculum Requirements* announced by the Ministry of Education of China have requirements on the teaching pattern under the circumstance of modern information technology; these specific requirements are interpreted comprehensively by the constructivism. Constructivism lays a solid theory foundation for the requirements. Constructivism emphasizes that learners should have positive and meaningful experience in a real environment.

Multimedia teaching pattern can set or simulate a learning environment which is similar to the real and complex world, which make it possible to improve the English learning ability of the students effectively.

4. Practical Significance

Teaching pattern refers to a stable pattern which is guided by certain educational ideology, teaching theory and learning theory, which is formed through the interaction of four factors including teachers, students, teaching contents and teaching media. It reflects the dynamic characteristics and overall characteristics of the whole teaching system in the teaching process.

College English Curriculum Requirements of China points out that the new teaching pattern should be assisted by the modern information technology, especially the Internet technology, the individualization of English teaching and learning should be developed, the positive learning without the limitation of time and place should be developed. Traditional learning pattern ignores the individual differences of the students; in contrast, self-directed learning shows enough respect to the individual differences during learning process. Through the self study of the learning contents, students may grasp the contents more consciously, more profoundly, may improve their ability of self-learning and may develop their positivity. Adult English teaching based on computer and Internet requires the students to arrange their time of learning independently, use the assigned multimedia courseware, choose materials suitable for them and make study plan by themselves.

Computer networking appeared in 1990s and it was used for continuing education, adult education or life-long education; however, it was used for foreign language education just in recent years. It developed mainly around the characteristic of foreign language learning and computer network teaching. One major disadvantage for English learners in China is that they lack the natural English environment. According to the memory durability experiment conducted by experimental psychologist Treicher, people generally can remember 10% of

what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they both hear and see, 70% of what they say in the communication. Computer and Internet make us can both hear and see the teaching contents. The external stimulus for the students is not single, but comprehensive. The stimulus with various senses not only benefits the gain of the knowledge, but also benefits the maintenance of the knowledge.

In light of the reality that the English learners in China are lack of the language input environment, teaching adults English based on computer and Internet occurs and meets the need of the learners. Compared with traditional teaching classroom, computer and Internet provide abundant resources. The resources and various links in the teaching software enormously make up for the disadvantages of the traditional textbooks concerning the contents and forms. It provides a broad learning environment for the students and increase the language input.

5. Problems

Adult English teaching based on computer and Internet has its advantages over traditional teaching. The students are dominant in their study. The teaching style is flexible. Students can interact with the computers. The teaching materials are abundant. However, this new teaching method faces some problems in the reality.

In terms of the students, they are required to know something about information technology when they take part in the adult English teaching based on computer and Internet. The proficiency of the students in computer directly affects the learning efficiency, so, the computer skills of the students must be taken into account. Adults take part in the learning process consciously, but, whether they can spend necessary time in learning English must be taken into account. Adult students have their own learning habits, so, whether they can adapt to the web-based learning must be taken into account and they should be guided to adjust themselves to the change of the learning method.

In terms of teachers, they need to update their teaching ideology and emphasize

on training the self learning ability and comprehensive language application ability of the students. Teachers need to learn and improve their computer skills to keep up with the development of the society as well.

Emphasizing on the training of the students and teachers was proposed by Gardner and Miller (1999). Changing the roles between the teachers and students is beneficial to the learning and teaching in reality.

6. Conclusion

At present, the adult English teaching in mainland of China is a teaching system which has the English language knowledge, application skill, learning strategy and cross-cultural communication as the main contents, has foreign language teaching theories as the guidance and incorporates various teaching methods and teaching means. English is a foreign language rather than a second language in mainland of China; therefore, it is difficult to provide the real language environment. The development of the technology provides a language environment which is more real than the traditional teaching environment for English learners. Changing the teaching methods to adapt to the environment may make the teaching most effectively. Therefore, it is necessary to teach English based on computer and Internet in reality, but, how to make good use of the technology in the real teaching process to promote the adult English teaching needs to be further explored by the college English teachers in their classroom.

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