



Reform and Practice of English Speech Teaching in Art Colleges Based on Social Constructivism

Man Guo^(✉)

Department of Public Courses, Shandong University of Art and Design, Jinan, China
guoman@sdada.edu.cn

Abstract. Oral communication has always been the main task of English learning, and is also the ability that art students must have when participating in foreign professional communication. Public speech is an effective form of oral English teaching, but is not easy for art college students to complete with appropriate language and meaningful content. Social Constructivism theory has a strong guiding significance for public speech and can be introduced into speech teaching. This paper designs a teaching model composed of four modules: theory introduction, pre-class preparation, speech release and after class reflection. It introduces Social Constructivism theory into speech teaching, so that students can complete speech tasks efficiently and improve their oral English communication level.

Keywords: Higher education · English speech · Social Constructivism · College English · Art Colleges

1 Introduction

In College English curriculum, the importance of oral English cannot be ignored. When using a foreign language, people need to communicate in oral English most of the time. Due to their professional needs, art college students often face international communications, which have high requirements for oral English ability. They need not only the ability of daily English communication, but also the ability of professional content introduction and academic discussion. Furthermore, they also need to understand and respect foreign culture and accurately convey Chinese culture. Therefore, oral English is very important for art college students. In art colleges, English curriculum belongs to public courses. Because of large classes and short class hours, public speech has become an important form of college oral English teaching with its unique advantages.

Art students are generally not good at foreign language learning and usually underestimate the importance of oral English. In this paper, the problems to be solved in the reform of oral English teaching are as follows: (1) how to improve the teaching effect of oral English; (2) how to improve the oral ability of art college students; (3) how to use Social Constructivism theory to guide public speech.

1.1 Related Studies

In [1], Huang et al. advocated that the English public speech teaching of simulated meeting conforms to the learning process of Constructivism, can more effectively improve the authenticity, effectiveness and appropriateness of students' speech, and help students deeply understand the communicative essence of speech. In [2], Zhang advocated that the English public speech teaching model based on Constructivism is conducive to students' knowledge construction in the learning process and is of great help to the development and improvement of students' pragmatic language ability and social pragmatic ability. In [3], Jia believed that it is necessary to popularize English speech courses in universities, which can comprehensively cultivate students' listening, speaking, writing and cross-cultural communication skills. In [4], Zhang believed that in the network environment, speech teaching realizes the interactive mode of students, teachers, classroom and network. Li [5] advocated improving students' oral English through reporting exercises, role playing, oral task group cooperation and other forms. Gao [6] mentioned that only after being examined and judged by others can published knowledge be reformed and become objective knowledge accepted by people.

1.2 Our Contributions

Although existing studies have shown that the relevant theories of Constructivism play a good guiding role in public speaking, most studies focus on the improvement of students' oral expression and the full expression of their own views from a macro perspective, and rarely discuss the process of social circulation, internalization and reconstruction of knowledge in speeches. Therefore, students' opinions are often lack of value or too extreme. Their interaction with the audience is poor, or their logical and dialectical thinking has not been significantly improved. In this paper, I took 415 sophomore students in our college as the research object, and carry out a series of reforms in English speech teaching. The main contributions are as follows: (1) By designing a practical teaching model, this paper closely combines the Social Constructivism theory with the whole process of speech teaching. (2) Students verify the way of thinking of the theory in practice, so that they can not only learn specific English knowledge, but also learn how to learn.

2 The Idea of Speech Teaching Based on Social Constructivism

2.1 Social Constructivism Theory

Theory of Psychological Development of Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) laid the foundation of Social Constructivism. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of “activity” and “language” in cognitive interaction, and put forward the “intermediary theory” and “internalization theory” of psychology development. Social Constructivism based on Vygotsky's theory holds that knowledge cognition can be improved in the cycle of social construction through individual activities and exchanges. This theory focuses on the research of knowledge dissemination process, which has a strong guiding significance for public communication behaviour of speech.

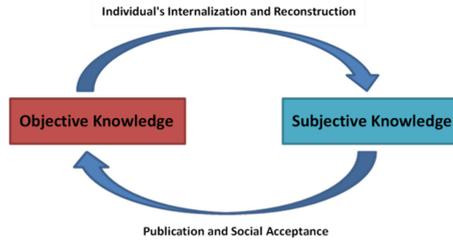


Fig. 1. The Circular Process of Social Construction of Knowledge

2.2 The Circular Process of Social Construction of Knowledge

Gao [6] believes that the social construction cycle of knowledge is as follows: Objective knowledge is combined with individual's existing subjective knowledge to produce new subjective knowledge, which is transformed into new objective knowledge after publication and social acceptance, and then transformed into other individuals' subjective knowledge through internalization and reconstruction. Then other individuals continue to extend the social construction cycle of knowledge. Every time a social cycle is completed, the individuals involved contribute to the knowledge with their existing subjective knowledge and play a positive role in the development of social cognition of this knowledge. Through individual communication, internalization and reconstruction, the social cognition of this knowledge is continuously improved. Sang [7] believes that the evaluation of learning should be comprehensively measured by the degree of learners' active participation in the learning process, the ability and contribution of collaborative learning, the level of meaning construction and other factors (Fig. 1).

2.3 Social Construction Process of Knowledge in Speech

In speeches, the speaker should not only covet the quantity of information, but also pay attention to the acceptance and participation of the audience. The speaker needs to grasp the audience's attention in a short time, awaken their awareness of a problem, mobilize their value comparison, and then make them take an action. The speaker must closely combine the information he/she wants to convey with the needs of the audience, and devote himself/herself to full expression and the audience's meaning construction. Speech is meaningful only if it meets these two requirements.

3 A New Method of English Speech Teaching Based on Social Constructivism

3.1 Teaching Reflection

The traditional speech teaching method without theoretical guidance has the following problems: (1) Students lack scientific theoretical and methodological guidance and it is difficult to improve their speeches qualitatively. (2) When teachers guide students, they lack of systematic and effective teaching methods. (3) Whether as listeners or

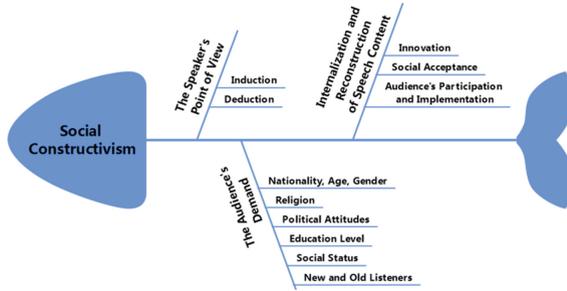


Fig. 2. English Speech Teaching Based on Social Constructivism

speakers, students lack objective and comprehensive standards to measure the knowledge dissemination effect of speeches. Before assigning the speech task, the teacher shows the guiding role of Social Constructivism theory in speech teaching from three aspects: (1) How to select, expand and fully express the speaker's views. (2) The speech's satisfaction with the audience's demands. (3) Internalization and reconstruction of speech content (Fig. 2).

3.2 The Speaker's Point of View

A speech is a publication of personal views on a topic. Speakers can use deductive techniques to capture the inspiration of the theme from the specific events they are familiar with or feel deeply. They can also use inductive techniques to excavate the views they want to express from a wide range of materials, expand and deepen, and finally determine the theme. No matter which way to determine the theme, the speaker's research and learning on the theme is essential. The speaker must pay attention to accuracy and timeliness in collecting relevant information on themes. Professional books and works can help speakers systematically study a topic. Professional journals can ensure the timeliness of information. The Internet can not only solve the materials that students can't access in the library, but also provide students with a broader vision of information. In the speech, speakers should faithfully express themselves and allow different opinions.

3.3 The Audience's Demand

In a speech, the speaker should fully consider the audience's interests, needs and cognitive level. He [8] thinks that the content of a speech should be closely related to real life. It should put forward and solve the problems that people care about and need to solve. Therefore, it is necessary for the speaker to study the composition of the audience, including nationality, age, gender, religion, political attitudes, education level, social status, new and old listeners and many other factors. With the diversified development of society, the composition of the audience is becoming more and more complex and even people with the same social conditions may hold different views. Although the grasp of the audience's demands may not be completely accurate, it must be considered in this regard.

3.4 Internalization and Reconstruction of Speech Content

First of all, the content of the speech must be innovative. Only when it is innovative can the theme arouse the interest of the audience. Crane [9] thinks that the speaker either gives the audience something new that they didn't know, or give them a new way to look at what they do know: new information or a new perspective. Secondly, the clarity of the structure and the depth of the content directly affect the social acceptance effect of the theme. A clear structure helps the audience to examine the theme and the depth of the content is closely related to the composition of the audience, time, place and purpose of the speech. Thirdly, the speaker needs to know that fully mobilizing the participation of the audience is the starting point for a successful speech. To achieve this, a speech must express a firm position, provide conclusive evidence, have appropriate psychological incentives, and provide specific and feasible implementation rules if necessary, so that the audience can think independently after the speech.

4 Design and Evaluation of English Speech Teaching Based on Social Constructivism

4.1 Teaching Design

After the teacher teaches students the basic principles of Social Constructivism theory and its guiding role in a speech, they enter the preparation link before class. Pre-class preparation includes several steps, such as selecting topics, finding materials, analyzing audience demands, writing speeches, group discussion and communication, revising speeches and finalizing them.

Large class teaching and limited class hours are the objective limitations in art college English speech teaching. Therefore, the speech task is completed by a group and delivered by one person. In order to avoid uneven division of labor within the group and some members slack off and escape, the teacher subdivides the tasks into "theme selection", "material organization", "audience survey", "language modification", "speech release" and "feedback summary". Each link is in the charge of one group member. All links, except "speech release", need to submit written instructions in English to ensure that each student participates in the task.

After the speech, except that the task team members need to write their own link reports as required, other non-task teams should write the sentences and opinions that touch them most in the speech. This task urges non-task teams to actively participate in the speech process and produce social communication of information.

4.2 Teaching Evaluation

At the end of the semester, the teacher makes a comprehensive evaluation of this teaching reform through the combination of questionnaire and classroom performance. Through the data analysis of the questionnaire survey, combined with the teaching ideas of Social Constructivism theory, teachers can get the following teaching effect feedback (Table 1).

Table 1. Teaching Effect Feedback

Teaching Goals	Progress	Existing Problems
Oral Expression	In order to fully express themselves, students have taught themselves a lot of English words, phrases and expressions.	Limited by personal English level, students still fail to fully express their views.
Speaker's Views	Students clearly know how to explore inspiration, find information, consider the psychology of the audience, and select supporting materials. The idea of topic selection is clearer.	Due to the limitation of personal thinking, students are easy to miss potential topics, or the supporting materials are not relevant enough; The expansion of the theme is lack of organization or with poor innovation.
Audience Acceptance	The audience has more resonance with the speaker and feels that the speech content is more interesting.	Some speeches are unrealistic in inferring the demands of the audience, and the speaker takes it for granted.
Internalization and Reconstruction of Knowledge	Some speeches can arouse the audience's reflection, and the content of the speech is of great significance.	Some speeches are not innovative and the solutions given are not convincing.

5 Conclusion

Social Constructivism theory can be used to rationally control almost all links of a speech and improve students' oral expression ability. This paper records the practical process of applying Social Constructivism theory to college English speech teaching in an art college. Practice has proved that when students understand the circular process of knowledge exchange and dissemination in the society, it is easier for them to find a breakthrough to solve the problems in the speech process. The focus of future research is to continuously train students' thinking and expand students' cognition under the guidance of Social Constructivism theory, so that students can skilfully apply theory to practice.

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