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On the Applications of Modern Educational Technology in Translation Teaching of Maritime English from the Perspective of Constructivism*

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***Abstract*—Nowadays maritime transportation has become a major modern logistics because of its large capacity and low cost. English plays a leading role in the industry of maritime transportation. It is the most important medium and an indispensable communication tool in international business and global marine industry. Maritime English translation teaching has made some progress in China since 1990s. However, the applications of modern educational technology in translation teaching of maritime English are still at its preliminary stage when compared to its current status abroad. Research on translation teaching of maritime English has been very limited. This has raised a realistic question on current translation teaching of maritime English: how can we improve translation teaching of maritime English depended upon modern educational technology so that more people can be trained to be more competent in international business and trade.**

***Index Terms*—modern educational technology, maritime English, constructivism, maritime transportation, translation teaching**

I. Introduction

The concept of E-teaching is not new to us anymore no matter how it is defined as "internet –based teaching", "online-teaching", "networked-based teaching", "e-moderating" and "web-based teaching". The computers and multimedia have their unique features which mark the distinction between traditional teaching and E-teaching. It is claimed that constructivist paradigm may ultimately offer the most fertile ground for the application of information technology to education. Active and interactive learning is the central idea of constructivism. In translation teaching of maritime English, computers, multimedia and web-enhanced learning bear practical value. In international trade, most of the transactions are done by computers in English. Therefore it is imperative to incorporate computer, multimedia and web into translation teaching of maritime English. So far such teaching has reaped a lot of benefits but it has its drawbacks which can be never neglected by instructors.

In order to promote translation awareness, strategies and competence in translation teaching of maritime English, respective universities and colleges are making great efforts to improve their translation teaching of maritime English. Hard as they have tried, some problems still remain to be handled: teaching model of teacher- centered prevails, there is not much cooperation among learners in present

English teaching, modern English teaching and learning in a mode is a need for English teaching reform nowadays. Learning on the Internet is very compatible with constructivism and social constructivism. The very process of knowledge construction on the Internet is keeping with these paradigms, so study on the application of modern educational technology in translation teaching of maritime English bears some practical value.

II. Basic Concepts for Modern Technology and Translation Teaching of Maritime English

In translation teaching of maritime English, modern educational technology includes computers, multimedia and Internet, etc. The definition of educational technology is described as that "educational technology is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources." namely: digitalization, internetization and informationalization. Modern educational technology is based on modern educational theories which entail cognitivism, behaviorism and constructivism. The characteristics can reflect the development of educational theories.

In accordance with STCW78/95 convention made by IMO, the seafarers are required to be competent in using English for professional purposes. Translation teaching of maritime English falls into the category of ESP (English for Specific Purpose). Maritime English and translation teaching of maritime English are to satisfy the need of seafarers. Therefore it has its own characteristics.

Computers have been used for language learning and teaching abroad since the 1960s. In recent years, constructivism

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has taken much ground which views learners as active meaning constructors. In other words, based on their prior experience, learners actively construct their knowledge through active participation in problem-solving and critical thinking in learning activities.

It is reported that in 1998, the Teaching Guidance Committee of Marine English was established and 4 important conferences on maritime English teaching were held in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Qingdao and Wuhan respectively. Some teaching reforms concerning translation teaching of maritime English have been suggested by various colleges. But nowadays, it was found that original materials and audio & video material are far from enough. The urgent need of the implementation of CALL has been echoed in many published articles. In other countries, CALL has been carried out smoothly. The typical example is the International Maritime Language Program designed by Peter C. Vankliujven at Rotterdam Shipping & Transport College. Therefore, compared with foreign countries, the implementation of CALL in translation teaching of maritime English in our country only takes the initial steps. That's much room to be improved.

III. A Constructivist Classroom in Translation Teaching of Maritime English

To deal with the Implementation of Constructivism in translation teaching of maritime English integrates four elements of constructivism: "context", "collaboration", "conversation" and "construction". Obviously, the characteristics and functions of multimedia technology and Internet can help fully demonstrate the four elements, and multimedia is the most efficient tool to create real-world environment. To develop an efficient course, however, teachers need to select appropriate materials, teaching method and to set relevant tasks and activities which will develop the learners' motivation for the purpose of achieving the learning objectives.

Students in colleges or universities will have obtained their knowledge of English and linguistic abilities largely from teachers and books and, as a result, such knowledge will be incomplete and theoretical rather than practical. In fact, how to set the teaching objectives employs very important functions in the typical teaching method. And in the constructivist teaching process, the role of teacher is changed for the need of learning who sometimes is a designer, an organizer, a guide, a facilitator, even an assessor attempting to design teaching activities based on Constructivism for creating real-life context by using authentic materials, taking the following into consideration: A. the source of the materials and the role of the materials; B. the materials should attract students' attention, C. learning resources must be used by individual learner to construct knowledge for solving the problems; and plan a developmentally appropriate curriculum that enhances their students' logical and conceptual growth; emphasize the critical role that experiences--or interactions with the surrounding environment--play in student learning, learn to start with the issues around which students are actively trying to construct meaning, create real-world situations and provide the connection between new knowledge and the students' prior knowledge, and finally to promote collaborative learning, raising appropriate questions for students to ponder and lead the students to deeper understanding of the knowledge to learn. Help them to evaluate their learning.

IV. Changes in the Presentation of the Instruction

Traditionally, the presentation of knowledge in class is realized by books, chalk and blackboard. In translation teaching of maritime English, it is far from enough to use these to demonstrate how to operate the devices. The use of modern educational technology certainly eliminates several deficiencies and problems encountered in the traditional education and training process of translation teaching of maritime English. It has been found that modern technology introduces a new and active approach to education and training, and which can shorten the learning process and facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge and practical competences in translating and understanding of the operational principles of different kinds of devices.

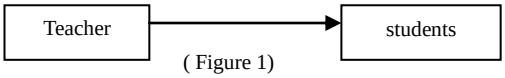
Maritime English is a kind of professional English. It is necessary to create vivid and authentic environment for teaching if we want to increase the teaching and learning proficiency. Multimedia and Internet can create real-world environment for interpreting and translating, provide vivid 3-dimensional pictures which can arouse students' interest and facilitates their understanding in translation procedure, criteria and strategies. Combined with classroom face-to-face instructions and the guidance from teachers, students can choose the materials, the time and the place well suited to their needs and get feedback from the multimedia and Internet soon. Therefore, individualized teaching is realized with the help of computers and networks.

Meanwhile, Constructivist environments supported by modern technology can supply learners with opportunities to construct new knowledge surely. Learners are encouraged to confront translation problems full of meanings. In solving these problems, learners are facilitated to explore possibilities, invent alternative solutions, collaborate with others, try out ideas and hypotheses, revise their thinking mode, check up the equivalence between English and Chinese, and finally present the best solution to translation practice. The characteristics are as follows.

- Students change from the so-called "empty vessel" to those who engage in active meaning construction.
- Students participate in problem-solving activities rather than just memorizing what the teacher says, learning to work in groups to solve a realistic and authentic problem, thus gaining collaborative learning experience.
- More emphasis on students as autonomous, independent learner who are responsible for their learning and practice. And give more emphasis on knowledge use instead of rote recall.

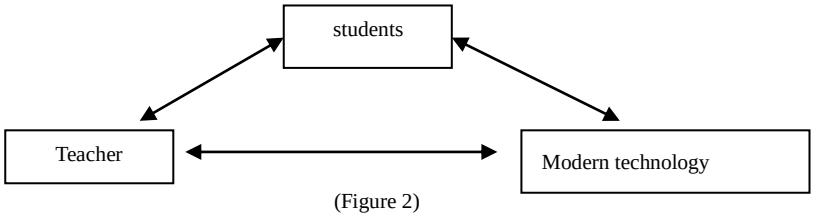
● Students learn to take advantages of modern technology to help them solve translation problems.

Of course, the role of teachers will be changed largely. In a traditional classroom, the relationship of a teacher and the students can be summed up as follows:



(Figure 1)

Seen from Figure 1 above, we can see that the teacher-students relationship is linear. The teacher holds the position of authority passing knowledge to passive students and getting no feedback.



(Figure 2)

However, from Figure 2, we can see clearly that the linear relation has changed into a triangle relationship. In this triangle, with the students in the center, teachers get feedback from the students and they are helped by modern technology.

Computer and information technologies have the potential to transform how and what students learn throughout their lives. Effective teachers in the new century, with the help of computer and information technologies, can serve as a "valuable source of feedback, guidance and answers to questions" (Felix, 2001: 349), and not just disseminators of information. No matter how powerful the modern technology is, they can never replace the teachers. When coming across any problems, the students will turn to their teachers through BBS, e-mail, MSN etc. Then the teachers can help the students to solve the problems in translation of maritime English with their rich teaching experience. With the help and encouragement from the instructors, the students will go further in their self-study and get more familiarity in translation teaching of maritime English.

As a result, the modern technology has made great demands on both parts of an instructor and a student. For a teacher who is not familiar with computers, in practice a lot of time in a computer lesson often goes on setting up programs, getting students into them and then solving problems with moving from one stage, or one program, to another. But for teachers who are skillful in using computers it will be invaluable for preparing materials such as worksheets or tests. In fact, “teacher perceptions of learning technologies are likely to be key factors in the successful integration of learning technologies” (Cope & Ward, 2002, p 72). Based on constructivism, a teacher is a helper, an assistant, a facilitator in the process of the students’ meaning construction. The leading role of a teacher should not be reduced. On the contrary, the role of a teacher should be strengthened. Taking advantages of traditional teaching and modern technology to achieve the best result, a teacher should know how to design wonderful PPT to attract the attention of the students rather than become an operator who can only play pieces of boring slides. Last but not the least, a teacher should direct a student how to manipulate modern technology in translation teaching of maritime English anyway. Facing modern technology, sometime students will be perplexed. At this moment, it is the job of a teacher to guide students. That is, to teach them how to get information, how to analyze and process information, how to explore and think with the help of modern technology in translation practice of maritime English. Without knowledge of computers, one can never browse vast ocean of information, let alone interacting with others and improving translation competences. So a student should learn some basic skills in undergoing translation of maritime English, such as how to operate computers, how to use BBS, e-mail, MSN, etc.

As the saying goes, “It’s never too old to learn”. In traditional classroom, knowledge is seen inert while in constructivist classroom, learning is viewed as dynamic ever changing with our experiences. With our experiences increasing, our knowledge will be enriched. But there is no end. This process recurs again and again, so we should never stop our learning and practicing in mastering the strategies for translation in maritime English. What’s more, the modern technology changes rapidly and the world changes at a finger’s clip, modern technology has changed people’s concept of learning.

V. Conclusion

Constructivism, a theory of learning now in the limelight among educators, represents a radical departure from traditional notions of learning.

Although Internet users still encounter some barriers such as a lack of learning skills, a lack of training, and higher costs for accessing the Internet, using instructional technologies, especially the Internet, in education in part or whole has become inevitable, rapid advances in computer and Internet technologies provide new opportunities to support teaching and learning in language skills acquired. An Internet-based education environment facilitates students learning

without the constraints of time and distance, gives students more opportunities to control their own learning. This type of learning is usually leaner-centered and supports knowledge construction and meaningful learning. And to great extent, through the meaningful learning in translation teaching of maritime English, it would promote students' abilities of autonomic learning and increase their comprehensive competence relevantly, such as strengthening and combining their sense of maritime major and translation training with real situations, rising their cognitive levels and practical standards of translation in some ESP fields as maritime and shipping, and optimizing their thinking patterns and gathering their resolutions to both knowledge and ability construction upon the integration of modern educational technology, which will make great contributions to students' future employment.

The author always believes that there remains much further study for translation teaching of maritime English in a modern technological way. First and uttermost, how to combine the great advantages of traditional teaching approaches with the modern educational technology to create a suitable and real-life environment for students' learning in translation of maritime English; and how to conduct well the experimental study and field study in the light of the present study so that to meet the need of maritime English teaching and learning are the final goals of having the study on the thesis.

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