Application of Web and Multimodality to Linguistics Teaching

Liu Yu[1, a], Ma Yan[2,b]

[1]Chengnan Road No. 800, English Department of Yuanpei College, Shaoxing City Zhengjiang Province, China

[2]Chengnan Road No. 800, English Department of Shaoxing University, Shaoxing City Zhengjiang Province, China

[a]liuyuwsn@163.com, [b]20384350@qq.com

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Abstract. Kress pointed out the multimodality theory on the base of Halliday's Functional System Grammar. Through the aid of web multimodality teaching method may increase the teaching result by stimulating students' auditory sense, the visual sense by color, sound and many other symbolic sources.

Introduction

Linguistics teaching is a kind of theoretical in-class teaching, it is a little technical in some places. So the traditional teaching method sometimes couldn't reach a good teaching result by the tedious vocal lectures. In order to arouse students' interests and make the abstract theories more meaningful to students, greater and greater amount number of scholars begins to employ multimodality teaching method in linguistics teaching.

Multimodality and Multimodal Teaching Method.

People may communicate or transmit information with each other in the way of face to face, which is called direct communication. They also can do so by communicative tools, which are called indirect communication. That is to say the indirect communication is always done by people through many kinds of channels and modalities to exchange information and communicate. Each modality is a symbolic source, so it may function to meaning generation.

In general idea multimodality (communication in and across a range of semiotic modes - verbal, visual, and aural) is considered a particularly important ongoing project, given the importance of the visual mode in contemporary communication. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In the research field of linguistics social semiotics pays much attention to social meaning-making practices of many types, including visual, verbal or aural in nature (Thibault, 1991). Those different systems for meaning-making, or possible "channels" (e.g. speech, writing, images) are widely known as semiotic modes. Semiotic modes can include visual, verbal, written, gestural and musical resources for communication. They also include various "multimodal" ensembles of any of these modes (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). Then we can find that in linguistics people see the semiotic modes more important than modalities themselves. And many scholars try to put the idea into practice of teaching under the framework of system functional linguistics.

The system functional linguistics itself can be the theory framework of multimodal pedagogy without any modification. This framework mainly consists of multimodal discourse systems at five levels: (1) The level of context of culture, (2) the level of context of situation, (3) the semantic level, (4) the formal level and (5) the level of media (substance). (Zhang, 2009)

The Construction of Multimodality Teaching Method to Linguistics Teaching under the Aid of Web.

Multimodal Pedagogy. Multimodality seamlessly combines graphics, text and audio output with speech, text, and touch input to deliver a dramatically enhanced end user experience. When compared

to a single-mode of interface in which the user can only use either voice/ audio or visual modes, multimodal applications gives them multiple options for inputting and receiving information. This makes the service application much easier to use or more intuitive.

Multimodal teaching method under the discourse analysis theory promotes to stimulate the various feeling organs of listeners in order to make the feeling organs operate with each other harmoniously so that the students may have a deeper impression of the knowledge as well as strengthen the understanding of theory. Then teachers may increase the efficiency of teaching. Multimodal pedagogies in diverse classrooms.

It is very common to apply multimodal pedagogy in teaching both in China and in the classes of the western countries. There is a long history of teachers to adopt slide, body languages and many other modes to stimulate organs of students in order to get a better teaching result. But one thing we should concern is that the method that time is considered as a teaching habit or the application of modern technology, not as a fixed teaching system with the supporting of a certain framework. So the multimodal pedagogy did not get enough attention. Nowadays with the enlargement of research fields of modern linguistics and the generation of multimedia discourse, people began to realize its importance little by little recently. Scholars represented by Kress began to discuss many problems including what is the relation between language and the way the images to express meaning. From then on the research of multimodality arouses the widely concern of people as an independent field.

Application of Multimodal Pedagogy. In linguistics class, its aim is to teach students to explore the general principles on which all the languages are constructed and used as systems of communication in the societies in which they are used, as well as recognize the systems and the common features of languages. The difficulties to achieve the aim exist among most students, although the students who are English majors are skillful at least two languages. We know that language is a natural human creation, and language is not as precise as mathematics, so no one would like to cost so much effort to differ the tenor, field and mode when they are communicating. In class teachers are responsible to enlighten students to apply the knowledge they learn into the real discourse in daily communication. Halliday pointed: "the more informal talk goes on between teacher and learner around the concept, relating to it obliquely through all the modes of learning that are available in the context, the more help the learner is getting in mastering it." (Halliday, 2007:202, Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press) It is high time for us to choose a pedagogy which is close to the informal talk most to aid teaching. Obviously as everyone can see that in daily communication people always choose different modalities unconsciously to help expression, so the various modalities still can help teaching much.

Aid of Web to Multimodal Linguistics Teaching. The platform of web can offer the teaching source with sound, letters, pictures, images and different colors and letterforms, so we say that the platform of web is multimodal. In linguistics class the information imputed to students is multimodal, teachers can fully excite the students to obtain the accepted knowledge by way of shifting kinds of modalities. Yet we may see that the way to transfer information is the traditional face-to-face one. Under this way the times of repeating are so limited, and if students misunderstand the knowledge point in class and they are greatly likely to miss the chance to correct it because the teaching time for this point has passed. It is rather difficult for students to listen to the same content for a second time. An old Chinese saying says that students should gain new insights through restudying old material. Under the aid of web teachers can upload the lecture tape to the web after they finish the video of their lectures. Then students may choose the lecture video of any content any time and learn for a second time on the condition that the web is available. That is to say the process of giving lectures can be stored and can be used for many times on lines. So the linguistics class with the aid of web is not only convenient for students to review the content, but also a new multimodal media to give lectures.

The accepting multi-channel information can not only emphasize the memory of knowledge, internalize knowledge and establish the foundation of students to output their fulfillment of knowledge consciously with the aid of web. Thereby an orderly circle is formed. The web form and traditional classroom form can replenish each other and both of them are functional to students to

cultivate a studying habit to accept and obtain information consciously and automatically. Besides that this orderly circle may help students perfect their cognized ability and simplify the study mode. Under the aid of web students still feel its satisfaction to the supplement and a great amount of information relative to linguistics the web supply.

The Existing Problems in Further Research

Multimodal teaching pedagogy formed as a new teaching method, which existing many problems worth the further research.

Overemphasis of Language Media. We know that there are two main forms to realize the propagation of meaning: sound symbols which are transmitted by sound wave and written symbols which are written by pens. These two media are the major two forms of language to transmit information. Yet with the development of information technology many technologies began to be used to transmit language information, such as computer letter imputing, etc, but the final media are still sound or letters. We cannot deny that the media forms of language are functional to the language expression. And they are the great supplementary of language expression which can function as emphasize. （Zhang Delu, 2009）

Nowadays in many economy developed areas in China, the primary schools and middle schools are equipped with computer, OVH and many other facilities in classroom. These facilities are the material foundation of multimodality appliance, yet whether they can promote study or not is controversy. The utility of technical media aims to realize the teaching goal with the appropriate aid of technology. But the aid of technology under the old teaching idea can not function as greatly as people imagine. The appliance of new technology in class does not mean the appliance of new teaching mode. The appliance of new technology in class only needs teachers to grasp a certain skill of computer besides the traditional oral expression. Yet what they teach and how they teach in class are still in the old form. Students always listen to the lectures and accept knowledge in a passive way. And the center of the class is still teacher who can not work as a guide to lead the way in the study although the auxiliary equipments sometimes may serve the function to stimulate students' attention. The problem we are facing is how teachers should design an interesting class to realize the teaching aim at the aid of technology.

Compatibility of Each Modality. During the teaching proceed teachers should play a role of a guide. In a multimodal class teachers should not only increase their own skill in using the new technology but also cultivate students to make good use of web source. Teachers also are responsible to make the cohesion of each modality automatically so that we can make good use of the advantages of multimodality. In addition, teachers should not forget that a good communication between teachers and students in class is an efficient way to better teaching and learning.

The Systematicness of Content. In class time there is a lack of communication between teachers and students, moreover, the display of content disappears soon after teacher's explanation. These two reasons cause the difficulties to students in understanding the knowledge. Combined with the specific situation of linguistics, each chapter is written focused on one aspect of linguistics, it is hard for students to form a system of the whole content of linguistic. Teachers may choose different modalities according to the content, the personal style and individual interests, so the use of different modalities without system causes the hardness to form systematic knowledge to students in a certain degree.

The Percentage of Each Modality. We know that the appliance of multimodality in linguistics is a new attempt in teaching revolution. The choice of modality should fully consider the teaching content relative to the field, including style and details of the chapter; the teaching content relative to the tenor, including the main characters both of teachers and students, their present knowledge structure, interests, capability and educational condition and the place condition to give lectures; and the teaching content relative to the mode, such as equipment condition, transmitting channel, etc. How to deal with the relationship among so many modalities well is a problem we should consider. Many scholars have noticed that many modalities do not work cooperatively, yet they always discriminate or counteract each other. This phenomenon is not deliberate, active, but passive and

unavoidable. （Zhang Delu,2009）For example: in class teachers would explain the difference between semantics and pragmatics by showing students a segment of a movie. Through the comparison of the two concepts by analyzing the dialog of the movie, the teacher may have students understand the difference in a lively way. Yet the attention of students is shifted from the dialog to the actors who are famous for their anecdote. Then this design or the cooperation of multimodality failed.

Summary

Multimodality is a social semiotic approach used for communication. The relationship between teaching and learning sometimes is a special communication. In linguistics class language system and image, sound, color, space structure and many other symbolic systems give the discourse full explanation. They also play a very important role in disseminating knowledge and acquiring professional knowledge. The potential and advantages of these modalities are fit for the major two rules (openness and flexibility) of English theoretical class. The study of multimodality can promote learners to apperceive knowledge more comprehensive and precise so as to realize the educational objects.

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