

# Research on the Application of Microlecture Teaching Pattern: Taking *College English Audio-Visual-Oral Course* as an Example

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## Abstract

This paper firstly introduces microlectures and the basic situation of teaching patterns from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, and then analyzes and summarizes the characteristics of teaching patterns before establishing the microlecture teaching pattern that is based on microlectures and targeted at construction acquisition, in the hope that the establishment and application of such pattern can continuously integrate cognitive linguistics theories and modern information technologies with the reform of college English teaching, thus providing reference for deepening the reform of college English teaching and realizing the innovation of teaching patterns.

**Keywords:** cognitive linguistics, microlecture, college English, teaching pattern

## 1. Introduction

Concepts like cognitive linguistics, microlecture, and reform of college English teaching have a strong sense of contemporaneity. The humanistic cognitive linguistics is at the forefront of language research, microlectures are the key to the deep integration of modern information technologies with higher education, and the reform of college English teaching guarantees the internationalization of higher education. Then what is the connotative logical connection among these three concepts? Against the backdrop of the reform of college English teaching, this paper makes use of the idea of microlecture, analyzes and summarizes the characteristics of teaching patterns from the perspective of cognitive linguistics to establish the microlecture teaching pattern that is based on microlectures and targeted at construction acquisition, hoping the establishment and application of the pattern can continuously deepen the integration of linguistics theories, modern information technologies with the reform of college English teaching, achieve breakthroughs and innovations in teaching patterns, and constantly improve the quality of college English teaching. This research is about to answer two questions: What is the microlecture teaching pattern from the perspective of cognitive linguistics? How is the pattern applied to the audio-visual-oral teaching of college English?

## 2. Concept Definition

### 2.1 Definition and Characteristics of Microlectures

In 2008, David Penrose from San Juan College, New Mexico, USA officially proposed the concept of microlecture. According to Penrose, microlectures are 60 second courses made by audio or video recording which take constructivism as guiding ideology, online or mobile learning as purpose, and a specific theme or key concept as teaching content (as cited in Wen, 2011, p. 14). The first proposer of the concept in China, Hu (2011, pp. 63-67) defined microlecture as “a teaching video that reflects the organic combination of various teaching resources employed by the teacher during classroom teaching to conduct teaching and learning activities for a certain knowledge point or teaching link according to the requirements of new curriculum standards and teaching practice.” Wang (2014, pp. 17-22) gave an in-depth explanation of microlectures from four dimensions, i.e., connotation, characteristics, applicable audiences and application fields before classifying them into three types: micro-video resources, microlectures, and microlecture teaching. Given that the third type—microlecture teaching—is planned, organized and systematic and mainly specific to currently enrolled students, in conventional classroom teaching, the teacher may carry out the formal teaching consistent with formal education by integrating microlecture video resources as a part of formal course, so the microlectures discussed in this

research are “microlecture teaching”. Microlecture construction aims at communication and application, and its value is manifested only when microlectures are shared and put into practice (Hu, 2013, pp. 19-22). In the U.S., microlectures have been applied to classroom teaching and favorable teaching results have been achieved. Moreover, the corresponding teaching pattern has also become a research hotspot among foreign educators regarding the application of microlectures. In China, however, microlectures still stay at the stage of collection and selection and are rarely applied to daily teaching, and the relevant research on application is scarce as well. Few researchers incorporated microlectures into college English teaching, but only to the extent of feasibility analysis. The information technologies in education are after all technologies and means, and the developing information technologies can never replace classroom teaching itself. Nonetheless, it is worth discussing how to incorporate modern educational technology, microlectures in this case, into traditional classroom teaching patterns.

### *2.2 Model of the Teaching Pattern from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics*

Cognitive linguistics provides the most correct, systematic, and complete language models (Taylor, 2008, pp. 37-66). The teaching view of cognitive linguistics underscores the role of context and language use, attaches importance to the communicative function of language, and advocates designing communicative tasks of escalating difficulty in teaching to offer a great number of input and output opportunities for the learner so that the learner acquires the form-meaning constructions while completing the communicative tasks on the one hand, and gains access to underlying social and cultural information on the other hand (Holme, 2011, p. 23). Therefore, the second language teaching based on cognitive linguistics can give due consideration to the form, meaning and function of language at the same time, and combine with the advantages of traditional teaching methods to improve teaching results.

The foreign language teaching view of cognitive linguistics comes down to the following three basic teaching ideas. First, take construction acquisition as teaching objective, and drive the teaching process with motivations; second, take asymmetric frequency input as teaching content, and promote teaching efficiency with explicit teaching; third, take embodied and communicative activities as main teaching activities (Wen, 2013, p. 37). Based on the embodiment principle, lexicon-grammar continuum principle, conceptualization principle and use-based principle of language, Holme (2012, pp. 6-29) established the classroom teaching pattern from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. To be specific, the pattern is the cyclic development of four links, which are the embodied activities based on rules and repetitive training based on template, image schema formation and concept construction, construction acquisition, and discourse output respectively. The establishment of the pattern takes a solid step towards applying cognitive linguistics theories to foreign language teaching.

### *2.3 Status Analysis of Listening and Speaking Teaching in the Reform of College English Teaching*

The *College English Curriculum Requirements* (2007) promulgated by the Ministry of Education (here in after referred to as the *Requirements*) takes it seriously to cultivate the listening and speaking abilities of students. Due to the deep-rooted concept of reforming college English teaching, the listening and speaking abilities of college students have been notably enhanced (Wang & Wang, 2011, pp. 4-11). However, while the international MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are actively promoting the popularization of high-quality higher education resources and educational fairness, enhancing the quality of education and reducing the cost of education, many college students in China haven't met the language requirements for taking international MOOCs although they finish learning college English courses (some are still learning such courses). As indicated by survey findings, language barrier is the main cause that prevents 55% of students from completing the study of MOOCs (Ma & Hu, 2014, pp. 48-54). Therefore, it is necessary and urgent to continue to help students enhance their English listening and speaking abilities. The reform of college English teaching is mainly manifested in multiple aspects such as teaching objectives and teaching methods. In respect of teaching objectives, the *Requirements* explicitly puts forward the teaching objective of developing students' language competence, namely to convert language knowledge into language competence. Foreign language learning is not equal to understanding and memorizing vocabulary, grammar and discourse; more importantly students are supposed to be able to use the language they are learning. The particularity of language learning lies in the fact that, besides mastering knowledge, students also need to enhance their skills. Learning English is also a process of mastering skills, and repetitive practice is required (Wang & Wang, 2011, pp. 4-11). In terms of teaching methods, the college English teaching software that has been developed offers technical support for the training that requires repetitive practice. With the technology that realizes real time or non-real time interaction beyond the limits of space, students have the opportunities to carry out massive language interactions. The process of repetitive practice runs through students' interactive experience and cognitive processing of the real world, rather than their one-way understanding and mechanical memory of language knowledge. Since this is in full accord

with the core principle of cognitive linguistics, it is feasible to delve into the reform of college English teaching from the perspective of cognitive linguistics.

### 3. Establishment and Characteristics of Microlecture Teaching Pattern from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

At present, colleges are still exploring the application of microlectures despite their abundance. Among the numerous microlectures created by colleges, few have been put into practice (Hu & Zhou, 2014, pp. 5-13). Regardless of the different teaching systems in foreign and Chinese colleges, the successful experience of foreign colleges in applying microlectures to classroom teaching can be used for reference, and the curriculum standards of college English subjects in China can be combined to explore a new classroom teaching pattern of college English under the guidance of cognitive linguistic theories, so as to promote the extensive use of digital foreign language teaching resources in teaching practice and to further improve the quality of college English teaching.

#### 3.1 Establishment of Microlecture Teaching Pattern from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

The microlecture teaching pattern from the perspective of cognitive linguistics is based on microlectures and targeted at construction acquisition, and guides students to have independent learning and individualized learning in the three teaching links of college English courses, namely pre-class preview, in-class practice, and post-class consolidation. In this pattern, students learn and apply new knowledge by previewing lessons, raising questions, experiencing activities, constructing concepts, acquiring constructions, outputting discourse, and displaying achievements, while the teacher organizes the classroom teaching by designing experience activities, answering questions, conducting explicit teaching of constructions, creating language communication situations, dividing students into groups for collaboration, and giving evaluative feedback. The teaching philosophy that regards students as main body and the teacher as leader is implemented throughout the teaching process (as shown in Figure 1).

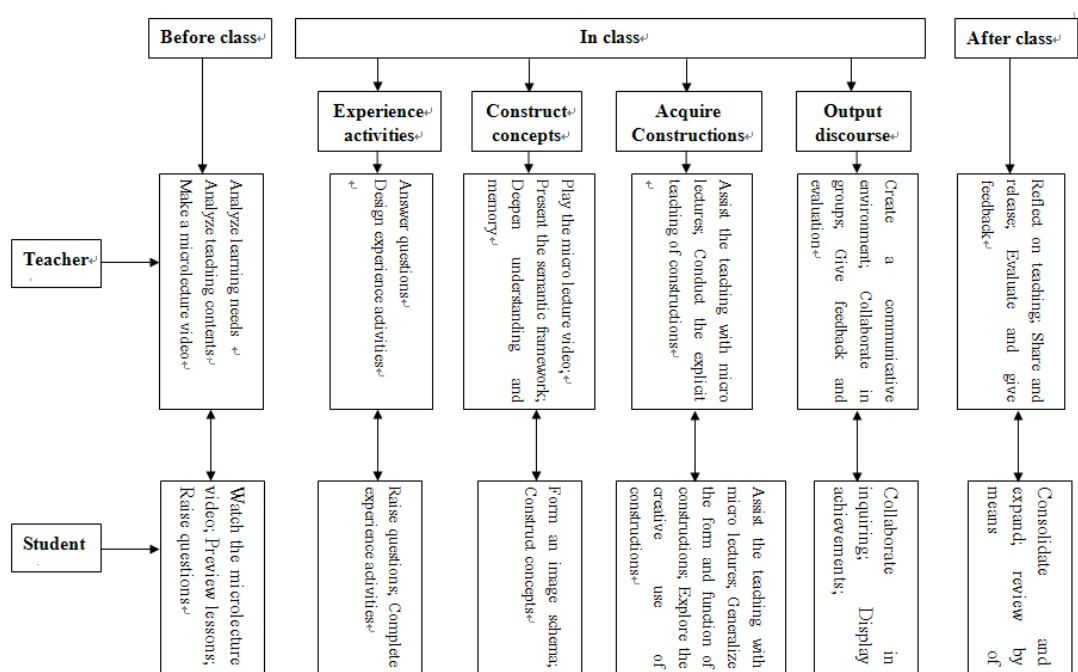


Figure 1. Model of the microlecture teaching pattern from the perspective of cognitive linguistics

#### 3.1.1 Function of Pre-class Microlecture Teaching Pattern and Role Definition of Teacher and Students

Before class, after analyzing learning needs and teaching contents, the teacher needs to prepare traditional lesson plans and courseware, and to make a microlecture video or select one from network database. On the other hand, after previewing the textbook contents, students watch the microlecture video to learn new knowledge, understand background knowledge and the key and difficult points, and write down the questions encountered

during preview and their own thoughts. It can be seen that before class, the teacher plays a leading role in teaching by making a microlecture video after analyzing learning needs and teaching contents, while students act as the main body of learning when they preview the basic contents of classroom learning based on textbooks and by use of the microlecture video.

### 3.1.2 Function of In-class Microlecture Teaching Pattern and Role Definition of Teacher and Students

According to the embodiment principle, conceptualization principle, lexicon-grammar continuum principle, and use-based principle of language, college English courses are divided into four steps in class: experience activities, concept construction, construction acquisition, and discourse output. The teacher firstly asks students to raise the questions they encountered during preview, then designs and assigns embodied learning tasks in allusion to the common problems of students, to guide students to experience the way of language conceptualization by gestures or other body movements and to deeply perceive how meaning comes into being systematically. The embodied learning tasks could be real experience or virtual experience in class (Holme, 2011, pp. 6-29). Virtual experience means the teacher uses tools like charts and pictures to explain the forming process of meaning, and it can be realized by playing a microlecture video. The teacher can also make use of microlecture videos to display concept-related semantic framework to students, helping them deepen their understanding and memory of meaning. Since the language view and acquisition view of cognitive linguistics consider construction as the basic unit of language, foreign language teaching should be targeted at construction acquisition. The teacher helps students acquire constructions more efficiently by adjusting the input frequency, distribution, and sequence of constructions, and contributes to the acquisition of low-frequency constructions through explicit training. Based on the graphical and productive characters of constructions, the teacher creates language communication situations in class, designs output tasks that take discourse as the basic unit, asks students to complete the tasks in groups, trains students' ability to generalize, abstract and creatively use constructions, and gives timely feedback and evaluation on the achievements presented by students. After stating their thinking and questions relating to the new teaching contents they preview, in embodied activities students take the initiative to explore, conclude, analyze, and construct a semantic network system, and summarize the motivations of the connections of meaning to form an image schema and construct concepts. On this basis, students watch the microlecture video to further generalize the form and function of constructions, and to explore the creative use of constructions. Besides, students complete the discourse output tasks assigned by the teacher through cooperation and communication, display the achievements, and realize knowledge internalization and innovation. In the link of classroom teaching, the in-depth explanation and creative use of key and difficult points are the common concerns of both the teacher and students.

### 3.1.3 Function of Post-class Microlecture Teaching Pattern and Role Definition of Teacher and Students

After class, the teacher needs to reflect on teaching, communicate with students via network communication platforms (QQ group, WeChat group, etc.), share the excellent works of students, give timely feedback on new questions and offer suggestions, summarize teaching results, and exchange ideas on existing defects and improvement methods. On the other hand, students need to rethink their learning gains and existing doubts, and utilize the microlecture video to review and consolidate key and difficult knowledge points. Learning ability varies from student to student. For students with a strong learning ability, microlectures for the purpose of expansion can be provided for their independent learning and improvement after class. Students with a weak learning ability can go over and consolidate what has been taught by watching the microlecture video repeatedly. In the link of after-school review, the teacher and students jointly complete the learning process of consolidation and expansion. The microlecture teaching pattern from the perspective of cognitive linguistics takes construction acquisition as teaching objective and bases on microlectures to run through the pre-class, in-class and post-class links. Before class, students learn new knowledge and discover questions; in class, the pattern mainly focuses on the understanding and application of key and difficult points; after class, it is dominated by review, consolidation, internalization, and expansion.

## 3.2 Characteristics of the Microlecture Teaching Pattern from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

The microlecture teaching pattern from the perspective of cognitive linguistics has the following characteristics. First, it drives the teaching process with the motivations of cognitive linguistics, takes construction acquisition as teaching objective, conducts optimized input and explicit teaching of constructions, and designs embodied and communicative output tasks to improve teaching efficiency. Second, it develops and extends the application scope of microlecture teaching. Microlecture videos can be employed to organize teaching activities throughout the three teaching links, i.e., pre-class preview, in-class practice, and post-class review. Third, it saves the time of the teacher and students in and out of class, improves the efficiency of classroom teaching, and develops

students' ability to learn and inquire by themselves, work together, and think creatively.

#### 4. Application of the Microlecture Teaching Pattern from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics to College English Audio-Visual-Oral Course

The reform of college English teaching has enhanced students' comprehensive proficiency in applying English and especially their listening and speaking abilities. After giving adequate consideration to the requirements of developing listening and speaking abilities, course systems in various colleges grant sufficient periods and credits to the listening and speaking training of English (Wang, 2008, p. 83). Therefore, in the "micro age", it is more necessary to seek a teaching pattern consistent with the new technological development for the audio-visual-oral teaching of college English to elevate teaching results. *College English Audio-Visual-Oral Course* includes such teaching links as reading, listening, speaking, and writing, which are shown in Figure 2. The key and difficult points of teaching contents can be displayed to students by use of microlecture videos. In the following part, the author will take the theme Success in Unit 6, Volume IV of the new edition of *College English Audio-Visual-Oral Course* to introduce the application of microlecture teaching pattern.

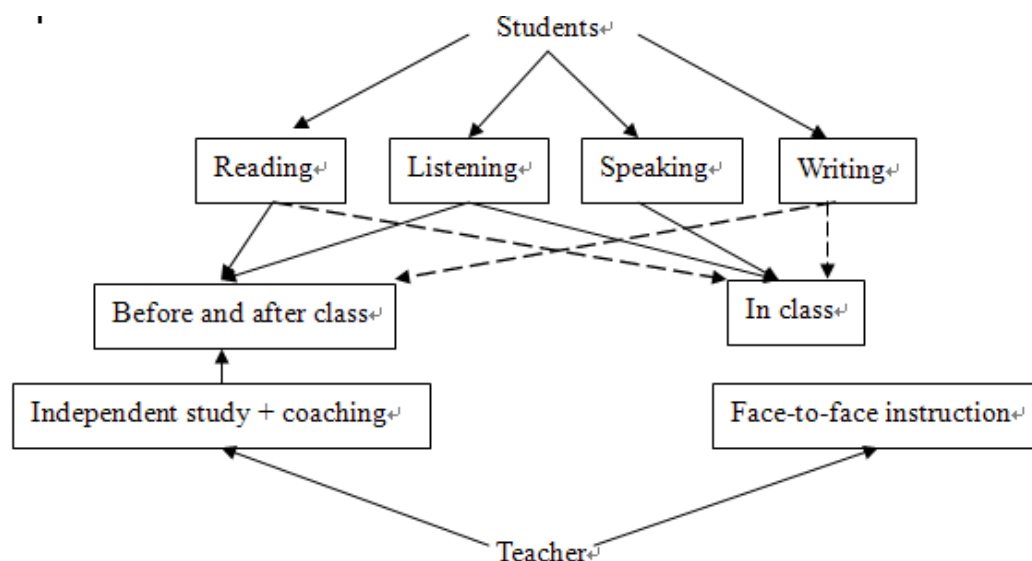


Figure 2. Teaching links of the Audio-Visual-Oral course

##### 4.1 Before Class: Teacher Prepare Lessons While Students Preview Lessons

The teacher analyzes the learning situation of students according to the contents of the theme Success before adopting task-driven, question-guided and expansion approaches to guide students to know the learning objectives of the unit and conduct efficient, independent learning. Specifically speaking, the teacher designs two tasks, raises three questions, and supplements one video. Task One: Listen to the audio material in Section B of the unit for three times, and write a summary. Task Two: Listen to the audio material in Section C for three times while making notes, and record the summary as an audio document according to the notes. Students are asked to think about three questions: What is success in the story of Section B? What is success in the story of Section C? What's your definition of success? After that, the teacher plays a TED speech video named *Living beyond limits* to students. The supplementary video can help students expand their thinking on the third question in both breadth and depth. In the end, students record their answers as an audio document that should be no less than 3 minutes in length.

Microlecture videos are mainly used to summarize and comment on the embodied activities in class, and to help students generalize constructions from the specific to the general and expand constructions from the general to the specific, and enhance their ability to make creative use of constructions. Students listen to the audio materials in Section B and Section C and watch the TED speech video as required by the teacher before writing and recording the summary, respectively. After thinking about the three questions, students record what they thought as an audio document. Before class, students are supposed to submit one written summary and two audio documents so that the teacher has a more concrete analysis of how students learn the unit before classroom

teaching.

#### *4.2 In Class: Teacher Creates an Environment While Students Discuss and Inquire*

The teacher creates a language communication environment for students. First of all, the teacher invites a group representative to verbally report the difficulties and problems encountered during preview, and then designs and assigns embodied tasks specific to key and difficult points. In the case of 4.1, the teacher, under the guidance of explicit teaching, leads students to explore the formal features, conceptual basis, and productivity of constructions in sentences. After students exchange ideas and discuss in groups, the teacher plays the microlecture video recorded before class, and analyzes the conceptual metaphor in sample sentences in a diagrammatic way. Afterwards, the teacher provides students with the text of the audio material and encourages students to find more constructions. Based on the independent exploration and summarization of students, the teacher utilizes the microlecture video for explicit guidance and feedback, helping students summarize the rules they cannot summarize by themselves. Then, the teacher assigns the same output task as that during preview, but coupled with a new requirement, namely students need to use as many as possible the constructions they have acquired from Section B, C and the supplemented TED speech video, discuss in groups of 3 or 4, and select one group representative (not the same as the one in the preview report link) to display achievements in class. After that, another representative (not the same as the two in the preview report and achievement display links) is selected to give comments and suggestions on the achievements of other groups. Finally, the teacher comments on each group as a part of formative evaluation.

#### *4.3 After Class: Teacher Reflects and Communicates While Students Consolidate and Expand*

After class, the teacher reflects on and summarizes how students use the newly-acquired constructions, finds out the imperfections of microlecture video for improvement, evaluates the audio document submitted by each student, and encourages students to submit more audio documents for the same oral output task so as to facilitate the internalization and creative use of the newly-acquired constructions. Besides, the teacher releases the excellent works and comments of students through network communication platforms such as QQ group and WeChat group, and makes full use of such platforms to interact with students after class and communicate with students of different personalities, styles, and levels, give proper advice on learning, and recommend the relevant expansion microlectures and speech videos. On the other hand, students make use of microlecture videos to review and consolidate the newly-acquired constructions. Competent students watch expansion videos on their own, keep amending and perfecting their oral output task, record audio documents and submit them to the teacher, and compare and analyze different editions of audio documents before and after class to reflect on their learning gains and doubts of the unit.

As indicated above, the microlectures made under the guidance of cognitive linguistics theories run through the pre-class, in-class and post-class teaching links, helping students in an all-dimensional manner to preview before class, practice in class, and review after class. Moreover, microlectures also assist the teacher in organizing classroom teaching, improving teaching efficiency, and realizing the breakthrough and innovation of microlecture-based teaching pattern.

### **5. Conclusion**

The research on cognitive linguistics is developing rapidly. The reform of college English teaching should be based more on the theoretical research results of cognitive linguistics, and the core principles and achievements of cognitive science and cognitive linguistics should be utilized to take a new look at and delve into the practical reform of college English teaching. In the meanwhile, the development history of microlectures should be figured out to actively promote the extensive application of digital foreign language teaching resources in teaching practice. Under the guidance of cognitive linguistics theories, this research attempts to explore the new teaching pattern based on microlectures and targeted at construction acquisition for providing reference for the breakthrough and innovation of teaching patterns during the reform of college English teaching. How to design and construct a library of microlecture teaching resources and better incorporate such resources into college English teaching under the guidance of cognitive linguistics theories is still a topic to be focused on and studied by foreign language educators.

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