

# Situational Teaching of College English from the Perspective of Constructivism

Hui Zhang\*

Dalian Jiaotong University, Dalian 116000, Liaoning Province, China

\*Corresponding author: Hui Zhang, dawaizhanghui@163.com

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**Abstract:** From the perspective of constructivism, the concept of situational teaching of College English has changed significantly. It emphasizes student-centered and guides students to use the accumulated knowledge to actively construct an understanding of English knowledge. Teachers create teaching situations that are consistent with the actual situation by combining online and offline methods, such as simulating workplace exchanges and foreign tourism scenes, to stimulate students' interest and participation in learning. Situational teaching mode can better stimulate students' interest in learning, improve students' autonomous learning ability, students' autonomous exploration, cooperation, and communication in the situation, improve their language useability and communicative ability, help to cultivate their innovative thinking, and create a good atmosphere for better mastering college English knowledge and skills.

**Keywords:** Constructivism perspective; University; English; Situational teaching

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## 1. Introduction

The theory of Constructivism mainly emphasizes the initiative of knowledge acceptance, which is obtained using meaning construction under the guidance of teachers in corresponding situations. As a language discipline, college English situational creation is very important. Appropriate situations can stimulate students' interest and enable them to actively participate in learning, such as simulated workplace interviews, English short play performances, and other situations, so that students have the opportunity to use knowledge in real interaction. This study will elaborate on how to build multiple English situations based on constructivism, analyze the role of improving students' language ability and thinking quality, and strive to open up a new path to improve the quality of college English teaching, help students' English comprehensive quality development, and add bricks to the reform of English teaching.

## **2. The internal relationship between constructivism theory and college English situational teaching**

In the era of rapid globalization, college English teaching is facing the urgent task of cultivating students' comprehensive language ability. Constructivism theory provides a new perspective for this challenge, which is closely connected with situational teaching of college English and reshapes the new model of English teaching.

Constructivism theory emphasizes that learners actively construct a knowledge system, rather than passively accept information<sup>[1]</sup>. Based on Piaget's cognitive development theory and Vygotsky's social and cultural theory, it believes that knowledge is gradually formed through interaction and cooperation with others in specific situations based on individual experience. Learners bring their existing knowledge "schema" into the learning environment, and the new information and old schema collide and fuse with each other, contributing to the internalization and updating of knowledge.

Situational teaching of college English is just the fertile soil for the implementation of Constructivism<sup>[2]</sup>. In college English classes, the situations created by teachers provide students with real or simulated language use scenarios, such as business negotiations, academic discussions, daily social gatherings, and other situational simulations. These situations activate the students' life experience and language reserve in their minds and make the abstract grammar and vocabulary knowledge have attachment points. Taking business English teaching as an example, teachers show business negotiation situations and introduce common vocabulary in the workplace through multimedia. Students feel as if they are in it. Practical English expressions such as business collaboration and negotiation are no longer just words on paper, but naturally "emerge" due to the needs of the situation, and language knowledge is smoothly embedded into students' existing cognitive structure driven by the situation.

The internal relationship between the two is also deeply reflected in the reshaping of the roles of teachers and students<sup>[3]</sup>. Under Constructivism, teachers change from knowledge indoctrinators to guides and promoters. In college English situational teaching, teachers carefully design the situational framework to guide students to explore language rules. For example, in the creation of an English drama performance situation, teachers help students understand the script background and role emotion, and students independently assign roles and guess lines. During this period, teachers constantly make mistakes and correct them. Teachers only inspire students at the key points, so that students can feel the charm of language like native speakers of English, and independently build language application ability.

The social interaction dimension is the manifestation of the close relationship between the two. Constructivism attaches importance to the role of the learning community in knowledge construction. Situational teaching of college English is often carried out in the form of group cooperation. In the task of cross-cultural communication situation, the students discuss the differences of etiquette in different cultures in groups, simulate communication scenes, share their views with each other, correct language errors, broaden the language vision, deepen the understanding of English cultural connotation, and cooperate to complete knowledge construction in the process of multiple thinking collision and frequent verbal communication.

From the perspective of constructivism, situational teaching of college English is the key to opening the door to efficient English teaching. It breaks the traditional dull classroom, makes the knowledge fresh and active, makes English learning a knowledge construction journey for students' exploration, creation, and growth, paves a solid path for cultivating interdisciplinary talents to meet the needs of international exchanges, and promotes college English teaching to a new height.

### **3. The far-reaching significance of constructivism theory in enabling college English situational teaching**

In the wave of college English education reform, constructivism theory is like a lamp, illuminating the way forward of situational teaching and injecting vitality into it. The integration of the two is of great significance.

From the perspective of stimulating learning motivation, constructivism has broken the limitations of traditional college English teaching and changed the old indoctrination teaching method <sup>[4]</sup>. Traditionally, teachers teach, students listen passively, and knowledge is difficult to retain. Nowadays, situational teaching based on Constructivism introduces fresh scenes into the classroom, such as the simulation of the United Nations Conference situation. Students feel the transformation between different identities through role-play, and debate and negotiate for their own “national” interests. This immersive feeling awakened the students’ enthusiasm for participation. English is no longer a cold character in books, but a powerful tool to solve “international disputes” and show diplomatic style. The strong role substitution prompted them to actively participate in language learning, explore expression skills to accurately convey their views, and greatly released their internal drive for learning <sup>[5]</sup>.

From the perspective of knowledge internalization, constructivism emphasizes the individual construction of knowledge. In college English situational teaching, students will interpret information according to their own experience when they are in a situation. Taking the situation of English film appreciation as an example, students with different growth backgrounds and film-watching experiences have different understandings of the same film. When discussing the emotions of the characters and the moral of the story, they call the reserved vocabulary and grammar knowledge to explain their views, and the new language expressions are constantly colliding and integrating with the old knowledge. Like metaphors and idioms in the film, students can analyze and understand them in combination with pictures and plots, which is not only better than the boring classroom teaching effect but also can stimulate students to generate new inspiration in the group discussion and in-depth interpretation of the learning connotation of different situations. In this way, language knowledge is deeply rooted in the cognitive system and transformed into the ability to be flexibly used.

Focusing on the cultivation of intercultural communicative competence, constructivism attaches importance to learning community and social interaction <sup>[6]</sup>. The college English classroom is constructed with multicultural situations, such as the simulation activities of the International Cultural Festival. Students are grouped to prepare booths in different countries to introduce cultural characteristics and folk customs. During this period, the group exchanges collided with thinking sparks, understood the cultural taboos and social etiquette differences of different countries, and learned to properly express respect and tolerance in English communication. Members correct language errors, optimize expression, and gradually improve cross-cultural communication literacy from simple greetings to in-depth cultural discussions to meet the needs of global communication.

From the perspective of teacher development, this integration promotes the transformation of teachers’ roles <sup>[7]</sup>. In traditional teaching, teachers are the “authority” of knowledge. Now in constructivism-oriented situational teaching, teachers incarnate as guides and designers. When designing situational tasks, it is necessary to dig deep into textbooks, integrate resources, and consider the differences in students’ cognitive levels; Pay close attention to students’ interaction in the classroom, timely inspiration, and precise instruction, such as organizing English drama rehearsals. Teachers guide students to grasp the characters and the background of the times and help them shape their characters. This process not only improves the creativity of teachers’ curriculum design, but also tempers the ability of classroom control and guidance, and promotes teachers’ professional growth.

#### **4. Analysis of the current situation of college English situational teaching from the perspective of Constructivism**

In recent years, the practice of situational teaching of college English under the guidance of constructivism has become increasingly extensive and has achieved initial results, but it also exposes some problems to be solved<sup>[8]</sup>.

On the positive side, more and more college teachers recognize the concept of constructivism and try to integrate it into situational teaching. In the classroom, multimedia resources are fully utilized, and video and audio create a colorful English atmosphere. For example, in the oral class, the teacher plays clips of popular American dramas and asks the students to imitate the role dialogue after the pause, so that the students can be exposed to the authentic language situation and the oral expression is more natural and fluent. At the same time, the number of role plays, group discussions, and other activities has increased. Students are grouped to simulate business negotiations and international academic exchanges, build language knowledge in interaction and cooperation, and improve their team cooperation and communication skills. In addition, some schools have also set up virtual situation platforms to enable students to communicate with foreign partners through the Internet, broaden their international vision, and truly feel the cross-cultural communication situation.

However, there are also many practical difficulties. On the one hand, the authenticity of situation creation is still lacking. The situation designed by some teachers is too idealistic and simple, which is divorced from the needs of real life and the workplace<sup>[9]</sup>. For example, in workplace English teaching, the simulated interview scene does not keep pace with the times, the questions are old and the process is formalized, which cannot let students experience the competitive pressure and strain requirements of the real workplace, making it difficult to apply what they have learned. On the other hand, teachers' guidance ability is uneven. Some teachers lack control over students' independent exploration and group cooperation. Group discussions tend to be biased and become small talk, which makes it difficult for teachers to guide them back to the focus in time. Some teachers cannot accurately inspire students when they encounter difficulties in knowledge construction, which weakens students' enthusiasm<sup>[10]</sup>.

#### **5. Analysis of college English situational teaching path from the perspective of Constructivism**

The core of constructivism theory is that learners actively construct knowledge. It breaks the traditional one-way knowledge transmission mode and regards learning as a dynamic process in which individuals continuously construct cognition in interactive situations by existing experience<sup>[11]</sup>.

In terms of situational teaching in college English, the primary strategy is to accurately create situations. Make use of modern educational technology, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), to create an immersive English learning space for students. Taking tourism English teaching as an example, with the help of VR technology, students feel as if they are in a hot spot in a foreign country, facing street signs, communicating with local people to ask for directions, and buying souvenirs. In realistic situations, they are familiar with common tourism English vocabulary, to improve students' oral communication ability and knowledge reserve. At the same time, introduce current events and cultural trends to create situations. When telling English news reporting skills, select global real-time hot news such as international sports events and major scientific and technological breakthroughs, and let students simulate reporters to report and interview, to master the professional vocabulary and sentence structure of news English in fresh situations<sup>[12]</sup>.

Stimulating students' spirit of independent exploration is the key to promoting. In college English situational teaching, the role of teachers has changed from the former leader to the leader. Open questions are designed to

guide students' in-depth thinking. In the context of studying English literary works, teachers raised questions such as "How do metaphors in works reflect social reality" and "The Enlightenment of the growth path of the protagonists to contemporary youth", which prompted students to study the text, consult materials, and explore the deep meaning of the works, rather than passively accept the existing interpretation<sup>[13]</sup>. Students are encouraged to independently create English content, such as writing a collection of campus stories and making short English videos. From the creative idea to the presentation of the finished product, English is used throughout the whole process to stimulate creative potential and deepen language understanding and application.

Strengthen the construction of a cooperative learning mechanism. In the process of teaching, teachers can form a multi-ability group to ensure that the members complement each other. In the simulation of English business projects, students who are good at oral communication, copywriting, and data analysis are included to jointly complete market research, business plan writing, and project reporting. Regularly organize group discussions. For the difficulties in English translation, each group discusses the translation strategies of different sentence patterns and vocabulary, shares cultural background knowledge, solves problems with collective wisdom, and promotes knowledge sharing and construction. Build an online and offline hybrid cooperation platform, use the learning management system online to carry out data sharing and group discussion, and organize face-to-face communication and display activities offline to expand the time and space of cooperation. Teachers' guidance and collaboration skills are essential. At the initial stage, students are trained to listen, respect others' views, take turns to speak, and avoid discourse monopoly. Set up group "observers" to regularly feedback on cooperation issues, such as discussion deviation from the theme and uneven participation of members, to promote the group to continuously optimize the interaction mode and improve the cooperation efficiency.

Pay attention to dynamic feedback in the learning process. Teachers continuously observe students' performance in situational learning and give timely affirmation and suggestions. When students' body language is vivid but their English pronunciation is wrong in the context of English drama performance, the teacher first affirms the enthusiasm and expressiveness of the performance, and then provides precise guidance for pronunciation, to strengthen students' self-confidence and guide continuous improvement. At the same time, students are encouraged to make self-evaluations and mutual evaluations. After the group English writing task, members review each other, score, and make suggestions from the aspects of grammatical accuracy, content logic, language style, and so on, and examine the works from multiple perspectives to broaden their knowledge<sup>[14]</sup>.

In the situational teaching of college English, problem guidance is very important. Problem design should start from the reality of life. For example, with the theme of "campus environmental protection", questions such as "How to introduce the campus waste classification measures to international friends in English" and "What are the English points of writing the campus environmental protection proposal" are thrown out, which are not only related to students' daily life, but also need the use of English knowledge to drive students to actively consult information and organize language. Layer by layer progressive problem chain to guide in-depth thinking. When analyzing English scientific and technological literature, first ask the "main idea of the literature", then go deep into the "core research methods and steps", and finally discuss the "impact of research on the future of the industry." Students gradually explore the problems, build a systematic knowledge framework, and improve their reading comprehension, logical thinking, and English academic writing ability<sup>[15]</sup>.

When constructing situations, teachers should have a clear positioning of their own identity. Teachers are guides, designers, and good teachers and friends on students' learning paths. Teachers should investigate students' interests and professional needs based on the specific reality and learning situation of students in this class,

integrate resources, and create appropriate situations, such as customizing the “tour guide English actual situation” for the tourism management major, covering the equivalent modules of scenic spot explanation and tourist emergency response, to meet the demands of career development. In the process of learning, teachers incarnate as “scaffolding.” When students encounter complex English grammar problems and cross-cultural communication barriers, teachers timely intervene to provide knowledge clues and strategic suggestions to help students break through the bottleneck, and gradually retire when students can solve problems independently to cultivate their independent learning ability.

## 6. Conclusion

As an important language subject, college English is the necessary language knowledge ability for students to enter society and the workplace. Only by constantly consolidating the foundation of the English language and broadening the scope of English knowledge, can it stand firm in future development. From the perspective of constructivism, college English situational teaching shows its unique charm. This teaching theory breaks the limitations of traditional English teaching, and through the creation of practical situations, it can better stimulate students’ interest in learning, and students change from passive recipients of knowledge to active constructors. Therefore, educational researchers should explore deeply to help this model shine more brightly in college English teaching and promote the development of teaching to a new height.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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