INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will discuss how to take advantage of youth interests in these new technology that have been discussed at length in previous chapters by showing how we can turn them into learning and pedagogical technologies, leading to a model for language learning using these media – the Conversational Learning Community. Two main concepts, constructivism (Bodomo 2005b, 2007) and interactivity (Bodomo 2006, 2008, will be highlighted as important concepts in the area of using learning technologies to create good pedagogical environments for teaching issues of linguistics and literacy, and for that matter any other subject. The first study is on constructivism while the second part deals with interactivity.

The empirical basis for this chapter is a series of studies undertaken in the context of a teaching development project at the University of Hong Kong led by me, the author. I will be particularly concerned with how we can achieve interactivity in the learning environment I term Conversational Learning Community (CLC). CLC is based on a constructivist theory I term conversational learning theory (CLT). Interactivity is by far the most important issue when it comes to evolving web-based and distance learning environments. This is because, in most cases, learner and teacher are not in a physical face-to-face environment. It is therefore crucial to
evolve learning materials and learning processes that can capture the attention of the learner, making interaction between instructors and learners as natural as possible to the point of mimicking or even enhancing physical face-to-face learning environments.

After a background information sketch on the actual study, I explain the key issue of constructivism and do a survey of constructivist learning theories before delving into a detailed experimental study of the bulletin board as a constructivist learning environment.

Within the field of education, and in particular educational technology, dominant paradigms of instruction include active, interactive, constructivist and student-centered approaches as opposed to passive and teacher-centered approaches to learning and teaching. There is hardly much argument as to the relevance of such constructivist approaches in the contemporary world. It is no more of a question of whether we have enough information but what critical and analytical skills we need to sift out relevant information from the huge barrage of information churned out of the pervasive Information Communications Technologies (ICTs) of our time and construct meaningful knowledge to enhance human life. Within such constructivist learning environments, digital ICTs are deployed to enhance the best possible methods. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the meaning and theories of constructivism, and to further illustrate the concept with a case study of using online bulletin board in a university undergraduate course.

**WHAT IS CONSTRUCTIVISM**

To construct, literally, means to build or to create something by combining different parts. In the field of education, the idea of constructing knowledge and meaning is highlighted. This philosophy of constructing knowledge and meaning is often called constructivism. The central idea of constructivism is that learners construct their own knowledge of the world. Learning is, therefore, a process of creating meaning by the learners themselves, and the instructor simply serves as a facilitator in this process.

**An Overview of Constructivist Learning Theories**

Theories of learning within education and related fields such as psychology and cognitive science have proliferated over the years. New pedagogical methods based on these theories are turning away from passive methods of teaching which require no action on the part of the student beyond listening and taking notes to interactive delivery methods which enable the student to control and manipulate the instruc-
A Corpus-Based Study of Evaluative That-Clause in Abstracts of Chinese Learners’ Doctoral Dissertations
www.igi-global.com/article/a-corpus-based-study-of-evaluative-that-clause-in-abstracts-of-chinese-learners-doctoral-dissertations/117195?camid=4v1a