

Reform and Practice of Oral English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges in the Blended Teaching Mode

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Abstract: With the development of information technology and the wide application of educational technology, English teaching has experienced great changes. However, higher vocational college students can not meet the requirements of oral communication under the teaching mode of emphasizing scores over communication in high school. Therefore, higher vocational oral teaching is in urgent need of reform. This paper researches how to carry out oral English teaching reform under the background of development of information technology and the rise of blended teaching.

1. Introduction

With the development of the international information industry, great changes are taking place in the field of education in China. First of all, a large number of high-quality educational resources can be used for free on the Internet, and teachers have more and more diversified teaching resources besides textbooks. Online sources, online courses and MOOCs of many famous universities have saved costs for the dissemination of learning resources, which makes online learning a useful supplement to traditional teaching. First of all, With the continuous development of online learning, blended learning is emerging gradually. According to the report of New Media Consortium, Mobile learning, cooperative learning and blended learning will become the development trend of higher education in the future. From this point of view, we can also study this model and combine it with our national conditions and students' learning conditions to carry out blended teaching. What's more, educational informatization is an important part of national informatization strategy in China. According to the "Ten-year development plan of Education Informatization", we should promote the deep integration of information technology and higher education, and promote the modernization of teaching content, teaching media and teaching methods. Therefore, we should conform to the trend of the new era and development of reform, and also consider the integration of information technology and teaching to build a blended English teaching model. Only by this, can we improve students' language communication skill. Finally, from the perspective of students, most college students now have a certain level of information ability. A large number of mobile electronic products have entered the campus, and students like to use the network and mobile devices to study and search for information. Therefore, we can use mobile tools, social software and learning APP to carry out oral English blended teaching.

2. Present Situation of Oral English Learning of Higher Vocational College Students

Because of the admission of low scores in entrance examination, English foundation of the students in higher vocational college is very weak. Most students' English learning is limited to written form, and speaking and listening are the parts that they are most afraid of. Lots of students really have difficulty in speaking and listening. This is because for a long time, middle school education only pursues scores while neglecting students' language application ability. Students only pay more attention to doing exercises for exams without spending enough time to practice their oral English, which makes them almost unable to carry out daily communication in English. In addition, because of the lack of language environment, most students can not get enough opportunities to practice oral English. When coming to college, students are aware of the importance of oral English, but they have formed the habit of being lazy and shy of speaking in English, so it is difficult to make them communicate and carry out oral English activities in class. In such circumstance, the reform of how to adapt to the characteristics of students to create language application environment, help students to overcome thinking barriers, and encourage students to speak in English becomes imminent.

3. The Design and Implementation of Oral English Teaching under the Blended Teaching Mode

3.1 Design of Teaching

Blended teaching is an information-based teaching innovation, which organically integrates face-to-face teaching and online learning, and mixes various teaching methods, teaching resources and technical means to achieve an optimized and integrated effect. Blended teaching mode is a mainstream and promising teaching mode under the current information education background, which can be applied to English teaching in higher vocational colleges. In teaching, we use mobile devices to expand oral English teaching to the outside of classroom, breaking the traditional teaching mode. Human-machine interaction can enrich the form of activities after class and enhance the interest of learning; Online resources can supplement the content of textbooks and greatly stimulate the enthusiasm of students. The teaching process designed in this study includes three links: pre-class, in-class and after-class. Before class, teachers share learning resources related to oral English activities in class through the teaching platform or class QQ group. These resources mainly include short videos, micro lessons and relevant website links. Students can know the main class tasks of the next period in advance through learning these resources. Secondly, teachers will also assign some preview tasks, such as reading after sentences, retelling sentences or commenting on the videos that they watched, and students will send their ideas to the platform after completing them. Teachers can adjust teaching strategies according to the situation of students' task completion. In class, first of all, the teacher evaluates the students' speech before class and gives a feedback to the students. After that, in-class activities should be organized according to the content of the textbook. In-class exercises should be student-centered and the leading role of the teacher should be given full play. After class, on the one hand, teachers should continue to communicate and exchange ideas with students online, and arrange some extended topics for online discussion. On the other hand, students' self-study and oral practice should be strengthened. We usually use some English learning APPs. Because language output depends on a large amount of input, so students use WeChat, English Fun Dubbing, Speak English Fluently and other software for language input after class. Students like to practice oral English with the help of software very much. First of all, these software breaks the traditional learning mode and use the form of playing games to unify and concentrate oral English practicing, which stimulate students' interest and makes them spend less time on oral English training. It is convenient for users to use the fragmented time to study and practice oral English anytime and anywhere. This way of leaning English is full of fun for college

students. Secondly, through the preliminary survey of the users and statistical analysis of learning data, the learning software can provide appropriate English dialogues, English articles and other learning materials everyday according to learners' interests and hobbies. By this way, learners' interest in oral training can be greatly improved. For online learning outside the classroom, the teacher can give suggestions on the learning content, but the time of learning and pace of learning are completely decided by the students themselves.

3.2 Implementation of Teaching

The paper takes Unit 7 “Have some fun in festivals” in the textbook as an example to illustrate how the oral English class is conducted in blended teaching. Before class, the teacher uploaded two videos on the teaching platform, which are named “Chinese Traditional Festivals” and “Western Festivals” respectively, and then asked the students to preview them. After preview, students were required to give a brief introduction of one of their favorite festivals, and send voice messages to the QQ group, the purpose of doing this is to let the students to warm up for the in-class activities. In class, the teacher showed outstanding speech made by students and evaluated their performance, and then organized the students to carry out the first in-class activity: list some special food and their related festivals in China. This activity is both a review of what students have watched before class and a preparation for the more difficult tasks followed. Then, the teacher asked the students to complete the second task: matching exercises. The left column shows some celebrations, and the right column shows some festivals, and the students were required to match each celebration with the corresponding festival. After the preparation work was finished, the teacher assigned the students a third task: group discussion. The groups will discuss Chinese traditional festivals and elect a representative to make a speech after the discussion. Each group will discuss different festivals, such as Spring Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival and Lantern Festival. It is much easier for students to finish language output exercises after they have learned related words and sentences. Students in each group should choose representative to make presentations, and the other students should enjoy their performance carefully. It is necessary for all the students to evaluate and score the presentations of each group, so as to make all of them participate in class activities actively. In the process of teaching, in order to fully enliven class atmosphere, teachers can ask the students to sign in through the teaching platform and conduct QQ voting to mobilize the enthusiasm of students and also improve the passion of learning. For introverted students who are afraid to speak in public, we can ask them to finish the discussion by sending voice messages on the platform first, and gradually encourage them to speak in front of their classmates. In-class tasks should be designed with increasing difficulty, that is to say later tasks should be more difficult than previous ones. After completing the three tasks, the teacher initiated the fourth task, and asked the students to continue to work in groups to complete the introduction of major western festivals. Since the students had already previewed the videos, they just need to continue to search for some information online and enrich their speech content. After preparation, the representatives should give a presentation on behalf of their group. At the end of the class, the teacher should summarize and evaluate all the in-class activities of the students and assign after-class tasks. The end of a class does not mean the end of oral practice, on the contrary, students are required to finish more challenging expansion tasks. As for this unit, there was a task as following: Suppose one student is from China and the other is from America. They are talking about their favorite festivals. After this task is completed, students can take a video of their presentation and share it in the class QQ group or WeChat. When students are doing their daily practice of oral English, they are also taking full advantage of the Internet and various learning software. As we mentioned above, there are a lot of interesting learning resources on the Internet, which can make

up for the lack of an English learning environment. In addition, QQ, WeChat and other software with the function of “clock-in learning” can make the oral training atmosphere spread to the greatest extent in the circle of their friends, which is also helpful for the students to overcome their laziness in practicing oral English and develop good learning habits.

4. Teaching Effect and Reflection

4.1 Teaching Effect

After one year’s teaching practice, the author believes that the blended teaching model has obvious effects on oral English teaching. Firstly, students’ learning autonomy is significantly improved. The active completion of pre-class tasks is an autonomous learning process in which students try to study by themselves, analyze problems, discover problems and solve problems, which is conducive to further improving their understanding of in-class topics and related materials. Secondly, students’ class participation is greatly improved. Blended teaching mode integrates online teaching platform into traditional classroom, supplemented by different learning software and websites, which enriches learning resources. Therefore, students’ enthusiasm and interest in learning are significantly improved, and they are more active in participating in various in-class activities. Thirdly, the achievement of teaching objectives is significantly improved. This teaching mode uses micro-class, videos, learning software and other information methods to assist teaching. Through the setting of each teaching link, the teaching process is developing gradually, so that the teaching process is centered on the target, the activity is closely related to the target, and the practice strengthens the target. The results of students’ in-class participation, group discussion and homework completion show that the teaching goals including knowledge, ability and quality have been achieved. At last, students’ oral communication ability has been greatly improved. In a simple classroom environment, students sometimes feel bored with oral practice. This kind of blended teaching adds online practice and learning to traditional learning, which creates a more interesting learning environment for students. Teachers and other students can interact with each other, and students can practice speaking English with friends outside the school. So students are more willing to speak in English.

4.2 Teaching Reflection

First of all, some students have very poor autonomy and learning motivation, so they will not complete the preview tasks assigned by teachers before class, and they seldom watch the videos and other learning materials released by the teacher. For this kind of students, teachers have to make efforts to encourage them or use some policies like adding scores to stimulate their learning. Secondly, some students’ English foundation is weak, they would give up learning when they have difficulties in understanding materials. For example, some students complain that the videos that teacher provided is without Chinese subtitles, so they can’t learn them independently. Some of the activities in the class are based on pre-class preparation tasks, and once a section is missed, students can easily fall behind in the class. Therefore, when choosing learning materials, teachers should take the needs of students with different foundations into full consideration and give learning suggestions. Finally, students’ are lack of self-discipline. Some higher vocational students are unable to restrain themselves and they still rely on teachers’ discipline and supervision. They said that it is easy to get distracted when studying on mobile phones, and sometimes they want to watch entertaining videos or movies, play games or do other things that are unrelated with study. Therefore, it is also a challenge for teachers who use mobile tools to teach. Every coin has two sides. The teacher should care about the students from the thought, restrain the students from the methods

of evaluation, provide them with the guidance of learning strategies, and help them build up the confidence to learn spoken English well. In addition to the factors of students, the problems encountered in the current blended teaching are partly caused by the lack of information ability of teachers. Teachers play a leading role in teaching, and if their own technical ability is not up to the requirements of applying the professional platform in teaching, they will certainly not willing to try the blended teaching in oral English reform. Therefore, the school management should regularly organize technical training for teachers, including common computer operation technology, software application technology and operation methods of different teaching platform. Secondly, the workload of English teachers is rather large in colleges, and to carry out blended teaching, blended courses need to be built on the platform first. Moreover, teachers often have to answer questions and interact with students online, and a lot of time is needed to develop appropriate teaching resources. Therefore, many teachers find it time-consuming to carry out blended teaching. Therefore, the school should introduce supporting policies to encourage teachers, such as considering giving some funding to teachers, encouraging teachers to set up teaching teams to build high-quality courses, and developing teaching resources suitable for the vocational students.

5. Conclusion

Blended teaching, which fully integrate information technology and oral English teaching in higher vocational colleges, has changed teachers' teaching ideas, enriched teaching resources, realized the innovation of teaching methods, and enhanced enthusiasm and initiative in learning of students. Blended teaching conforms to the development trend of the era and is certainly one of the most effective teaching modes that teachers would like to choose. Although this new teaching mode poses new challenges to teachers' teaching methods and informationization ability, as long as they can make use of effective technical means, develop teaching resources with proper difficulty, design effective in-class activities and make full use of both online and real teaching environments, they will certainly improve the efficiency of oral English teaching, change the situation that students cannot communicate smoothly, and achieve the goal of talent cultivation.

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