

The Application of Flipped Classroom in College English Teaching

Yan QIN

General English Department, Haikou University of Economics, Haikou, Hainan 571127, China

ABSTRACT. With the wide application of network and information technology in the field of education and teaching, flipped classroom has been gradually applied to college English teaching. This paper studies the origin and development of flipped classroom, taking the characteristic of traditional teaching mode and cultivation of college students' autonomous learning ability in English learning as a starting point. This paper also discusses the effects and problems of the application of college English flipped classroom in order to construct a systematic and efficient teaching model of college English flipped classroom.

KEYWORDS: Flipped classroom, College english, Autonomous learning, Classroom teaching

1. Introduction

The Flipped Classroom is a significant change in the field of educational technology in the 21st century, which is originated from an American teacher Salman Khan. The teacher uploads self-recorded teaching videos to YouTube. Students watch them at home, then finish their homework and discuss.^[1] This model stated above has been widely applied in the field of education. In the flipped classroom, teachers transferred fragmented knowledge into digital resources such as teaching videos, while students choose materials according to their knowledge level and study online independently to make progress. In the process of learning, teachers and students interact in the form of homework guidance and learning discussions. The flipped classroom teaching model has many advantages, such as the full play of students' autonomous learning ability, high-utilization of new technology, abundant teaching resources and so on, and has been widely used in the classroom teaching of various disciplines in colleges and universities. This paper, based on the author's own practice, will discuss the effects and problems of the application of flipped classroom teaching model in college English classroom teaching.

2. Problems Existing in the Traditional Model of College English Classroom Teaching

2.1 Limitations of the Traditional College English Classroom Teaching Model

First of all, in the traditional college English classroom teaching mode, the communication and interaction between teachers and students are constrained in the classroom. Moreover, the class size and teaching time limitations can afford little time and opportunities for language skills training, and students are lack of adequate language learning environment. Secondly, the after-class teachers-students interactivity is limited to the completion of the exercises arranged by teachers, with students not having targeted learning resources to carry out active learning, lacking an effective language environment to improve their language communicative competence. Thirdly, the students enduring learning motivation cannot be sustained as teachers are short of time to check and guide the completion of students' tasks, failing to offer positive feedback of learning effect, and assessing learning effects.

In recent years, colleges and universities have been well-equipped with college English teaching resources, and multimedia but under the traditional teaching model, these resources have not been utilized sufficiently, teachers only explaining language points for students, without providing them with systematic autonomous learning strategies. As a result, students can not organize the learning resources provided by the school and use them correctly for self-study after class, which also causes a certain degree of waste of resources and reduces the effect of College English teaching.^[2]

2.2 Limitations of Students' Autonomous Learning Ability Training

Self-regulated learning ability refers to the ability that learners allocate time and energy independently and manage themselves scientifically in the process of learning. It represents that learners have the ability to explore knowledge independently, thinking, processing, and reconstructing the knowledge system in the process of learning. The traditional education in our country has always been dominated by teachers in classroom teaching, and the extensive management of education mode is not conducive to the cultivation of students' autonomous learning ability. Especially in the examination-oriented education environment, a large number of students who have just entered the university do not have the consciousness of self-management and self-education, that is, the ability of self-learning is not strong, which is manifested in the classroom of waiting for teachers to inculcate knowledge, and they are completely at a loss after completing their homework after class.

In the process of college English learning, learners should take the initiative to use various learning resources and create a language environment for learning, if they want to master language skills well. In the traditional teaching mode, college students lacking the guidance of autonomous learning are in a passive state to complete the exercise task, whether in class or after class. The absence of autonomous learning failed them in organization of learning resources systematically and scientific allocation of time and energy. They are in the position of being at a disadvantage in English learning, which are all factors affecting college students' English obtaining.

3. The Formation and Development of the Flipped Classroom Model

3.1 The Origin of the Flipped Classroom Model

The Flipped Classroom got its start in 2006 when Khan Academy in the United States launched an online teaching service. The Khan Academy website offers much free math and science educational videos for high school students to watch at home. Students complete their homework in school the next day, and ask teachers and classmates questions as they go. Salman Khan, the founder of the Academy, name the model as "reversed classroom", which is just the opposite to the traditional teaching mode of "students listening to teachers in the classroom during the day and doing homework of the evening". Teachers offer recorded video lectures for teaching activities outside the classroom, so as to spend more time in the classroom with students for practice and interactions. Later, Woodland Park High School, Colorado, USA. found that students who were not absent from class were happy to use the teaching videos which had been recorded and uploaded for those who were absent. Teachers therefore carried out the "flipping the classroom" experiment to ensure students to watch teaching videos at home before class, and assigned some targeted exercise tasks. Meanwhile, students doing homework in class changes the interaction between teachers and students. As a result, it is welcomed by students and parents, and ultimately improves students' interest in learning and performance. Since then, the research and practice of flipped classroom in the educational circles have gradually expanded.

3.2 Development of Flipped Classroom Theory

Salman Khan and his Khan Academy have played a great role in the dissemination of the concept of flipped classroom teaching and the promotion of teaching mode, which has made the flipped classroom widely concerned and rapidly promoted in the United States. Eric Mazur, a physics professor at Harvard University, believes that learning can be divided into "knowledge transfer" stage and "absorption and internalization" stage. In the current environment of highly developed modern educational technology, knowledge transfer can be easily solved by technical means, and teachers are free from knowledge-teaching tasks with their role changing from an active lecturer to a guide, mainly focusing on guiding students to learn independently and promoting students' knowledge absorption and internalization.

Since 2011, China has gradually carried out the practice and theoretical research of flipped classrooms. The traditional classroom teaching in our country is also based on teachers' lecture, which does not attach importance to students' individual differences and personal needs. In addition, the lack of interaction, discussion and questioning, to a large extent, inhibits the cultivation of students' exploratory ability and critical thinking. The flipped classroom model allows students to control their learning progress according to their acceptance ability, independently allocate energy and time for learning, repeatedly learn difficult points as well. Additionally, online communication means enable them to form learning groups, discussing with teachers and classmates at any time. Accordingly, student's ability in self-management, cooperation and exploration has been prompted to become the domination in learning activities.

Following the primary and secondary school classroom, the research and application of flipped classroom in the field of higher education has also been expanded rapidly with colleges and universities having built a network for autonomous learning of college students by utilizing the advantages of rich teaching resources. In classroom teaching period, teachers and students mainly discuss questions, complete interactivities, and students are trained to implement autonomous study, cooperative learning. Comparatively, time before class and after class are respectively utilized by students for obtaining, consolidation and expansion of knowledge.

Under the guidance of instructional design theory and constructivism theory, with the help of educational information technology, the roles of teachers and students and relation between them in the traditional teaching process has been changed from teacher-oriented to students-oriented. Knowledge absorption and internalization of students has been focused to enhance students' independence and innovation.

4. The Change of College English Teaching Concept and the Application of Flipped Classroom

4.1 Change of College English Teaching Concept

For a long time, the traditional concept of English teaching is still dominant, and it is still controversial whether colleges and universities should pay attention to basic English teaching or specialized English teaching, and the “foundation theory” of English teaching insists that college English teaching should pay attention to the foundation, under the guidance of this idea, the curriculum and training orientation of college English teaching in China has always been basic English. Until the release of College English Curriculum Requirements in 2004, it was still stipulated that College English courses should “try to ensure that 10% of the total credits in undergraduate courses”. In the process of college learning, it is necessary to provide enough basic English courses for students with poor foundation and follow the traditional English classroom teaching mode, while for those students who have laid a solid foundation in English and have strong autonomous learning ability in middle school, it is necessary to apply a more flexible teaching mode that can mobilize their autonomous learning ability. Comparatively, with the improvement of the quality of basic education in China, college students' basic English level and autonomous learning ability have been improved accordingly, so the reform of college English teaching mode is imperative.

Since the beginning of this century, computer network and digital information technology have provided a new direction for the reform of higher education and teaching. In order to seize the opportunities brought by the information age, China formulated the Outline of the National Plan for Medium-and Long-Term Education Reform and Development(2010-2020) in 2010.It clearly points out that the informatization of higher education is an effective way to promote the innovation and quality of educational reform. The Latest College English Curriculum Requirements put forward that multimedia and network technology should be fully applied in the process of college English teaching, and put forward the concept of “improving students' autonomous ability”, and various new teaching concepts and methods should be gradually applied in the process of college education and teaching reform. The teaching mode of flipped classroom has been introduced into college English classroom teaching.

4.2 Change of the Roles of Teachers and Students in English Classroom Teaching Mode

The application of flipped classroom is inseparable from the development of multimedia and network information technology, and various online classes, including micro-classes and MOOC, which are the key to achieve classroom flipping and teacher role transformation. College English teachers upload all kinds of good listening, speaking, reading and writing teaching resources to the network teaching platform, which include detailed knowledge explanations, provide adequate language practice environment, and formulate clear learning strategies. Meanwhile, students carry out autonomous learning before class according to the requirements of teachers. They can choose to learn repeatedly according to their own cognitive ability, or those students with sufficient ability can also have sufficient resources for extended learning. Activities such as practice, review and learning communication, which were originally put into extra-curricular activities, are now integrated into the classroom.

In the traditional classroom teaching mode, teachers dominate the class while students are passive learners. In contrast, a flipped classroom mode transfer students from a passive learner to self-managers of learning, who have greater autonomy in learning and allocate their time and energy more autonomously for self-learning. Meanwhile, the role of teachers is an instructor to provide students with systematic learning resources and scientific learning strategies. The classroom has become a place where teachers and students have more time for language interaction, knowledge consolidation and evaluation. Accordingly, teachers can solve the problems that can not be solved in pre-class learning for students. In the process of the change of teaching mode, teachers and students have sufficient time to interact in the classroom and solve the problems encountered in learning. Furthermore, students' critical thinking and knowledge self-construction ability are also exercised in the process of self-learning before and after class.

5. The Key Points and Problems in the Application of Flipped Classroom in College English Classroom Teaching

5.1 The Application of Flipped Classroom in College English Teaching

First of all, we believe that the feature of college students is to have a self-control ability and a certain degree of autonomous learning ability. Consequently, college English learning should be mainly self-study, supplemented by teacher guidance. On one hand, students are encouraged to study and discuss outside the classroom, and in the classroom should focus on solving problems in the learning process through teacher-student interaction. As college students' cognitive ability and personality form and develop rapidly, English teachers should fully consider their personality and professional characteristics, formulating different autonomous learning strategies for different types of students. For example, students with poor learning level and weak foundation are required to repeatedly study the audio-visual materials provided by teachers before class to complete the exercise tasks, while those with solid English foundation and strong self-management ability are encouraged to read for expanding knowledge, form collaborative learning groups with poor students, and enhance communication and expression in mutual assistance and cooperation. When encountering problems, they can seek help and guidance from teachers through the network.

Secondly, we should set up learning objectives scientifically, and make teaching objectives clear in different scenarios, such as decomposing the objectives of learning content such as vocabulary, grammar and text translation, so that students can learn and master it repeatedly through a diversity of audio and video resources. When it comes to difficult contents such as difficult analysis and scene application, such content will be arranged in class. At the same time, practice in English context should be arranged as much as possible in class. After class, the learning discussion group will summarize and give feedback. On a whole, levels of learning objectives should be arranged in different learning environments, so as to cultivate college students' comprehensive English application ability.

5.2 Problems in the Application of Flipped Classroom in College English Classroom Teaching

The application of Flipped Classroom has been attached great importance, which is consistent with the orientation of quality education, but the application effect of Flipped Classroom in College English classroom teaching is also limited by many conditions.

First of all, not all the course content is suitable for flipping. The teaching content of English course covers multi-disciplinary field, especially the reading and writing part involving such aspects as history, philosophy, society, science and technology, as well as the exchange of ideas and the debate of opinions. The learning effect would be reduced if it is pushed to students as video resources without the presentation of teachers through body language, emotional communication and personal charm,

Secondly, the lack of teachers' professional ability will limit the effect of flipped classroom teaching. Flipping teaching has high requirements for teachers' educational and teaching theory level, curriculum design ability and modern educational technology literacy. In contrast, in the traditional college English classroom teaching mode, teachers can be competent for the giving lectures as long as their English level is too high and they can deliver the knowledge points. Otherwise, if teachers do not have the ability of teaching design and can not effectively organize the interaction between classroom and after-class learning, then the teaching of flipped classroom can not be implemented.

Thirdly, the lack of objective facilities will surely restrict the development of flipped classroom. Teachers should take advantage of multimedia equipment to produce video and audio materials. Students are supposed to use teaching resources to carry out autonomous learning with the network environment and information equipment. The number of the school language lab, the ease of use of the network environment will affect the effectiveness of students' autonomous learning and the teaching effect of flipped classroom.

Finally, the teaching practice proves that class size in the flipped classroom teaching have large impact on the outcome of English teaching. When using the flipped classroom teaching method in small class, students have sufficient time and space to practice language in English context, communicate and interact with teachers and learning partners, and achieve the best learning effect. Consequently, the class size of college English flipped classroom teaching should be small ones, and at present, some colleges and universities have the problem of insufficient teachers, which can not be solved.

6. Conclusion

The flipped classroom has brought new ideas to the reform of college English teaching. In the process of adopting Flipped Classroom in college English classroom teaching, we should not only deeply study the theory of Flipped Classroom teaching, deeply grasp the real connotation of Flipped Classroom teaching, but also combine it with constant practice and find out the teaching methods that are suitable for the actual scenarios, so as to give full play to the advantages of Flipped Classroom in college English classroom teaching.

References

- [1] Khan Academy. <http://www.khanacademy.org>.
- [2] Zhou Zhilian, Long Xiang, Zhao Ming. Key Issues of Flipped Classroom in College English Teaching. *Journal of Wuhan Institute of Metallurgical Management*, vol.24, no. 3, pp. 80-83, 2014.
- [3] Peng Jinding. A Study of Learner Autonomy in College English Teaching. *Foreign Language Circles*, no. 3, pp. 15-19+46, 2002.
- [4] How the Flipped Classroom is Radically Transforming Learning, by Jon Bergmarm, Aaron Sams[EB/OL]<<http://www.thedailyriff.com/articles/how-the-flipped-classroom-is-radically-transforming-learning-536.php>>.
- [5] Han Lizhen. The Bottleneck and Future of Flipped Classroom Mode in China. *Journal of Jiangsu Radio and TV University*, vol.24, no. 2, pp. 41-44, 2013.
- [6] Zhou Ping. Flipped Classroom Based on Modern Educational Technology and Its Theoretical Basis. *Audio Visual Foreign Language Teaching*, no. 2, pp. 72-77, 2015.
- [7] Cui Yanhui, Wang Yi. Flipped Classroom and Its Application in College English Teaching. *China Audio-Visual Education*, no. 11, pp. 116-121, 2014.
- [8] Li Xi. Role Transformation of College English Teachers in the Flipped Classroom. *English Square*, no. 4, pp. 74-75, 2015.
- [9] Zhou Zhilian, Long Xiang, Zhao Ming. Key Issues of Flipped Classroom in College English Teaching. *Journal of Wuhan Institute of Metallurgical Management*, vol.24, no. 3, pp. 80-83, 2014.
- [10] Li Jingnan, Wu Zhongjie. Practice and Reflection on College English Flipped Classroom. *Chinese Foreign Language*, vol.12, no. 6, pp. 4-9, 2015.