

A Review of Four Representative Teaching Methods of English Classes in Chinese Universities

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Abstract. Education has always been a topic of great concern and good teaching methods help students to learn better. Any teaching mode points to and accomplishes certain teaching objectives. Traditional teaching models are elaborated from the perspective of how teachers teach, ignoring the issue of how students learn. The development trend of modern teaching models is to attach importance to the subjectivity of students in teaching activities, to their participation in teaching and to the rational design of 'teaching' and 'learning' activities according to the needs of teaching. There are now many teaching methods in schools, each with its own characteristics and drawbacks. Whether a teaching model is suitable for student learning or whether it will be the future of education depends on what students learn from it and what people say about it. There are currently four representative teaching methods that are suitable for students, namely face-to-face teaching, which is the oldest mode of teaching. There is also online teaching, graded teaching and flipped classrooms. The article analyses the advantages and disadvantages of the different models for teaching purpose and finally chooses the one that is most suitable for university students to learn English.

Keywords: Teaching Method, English, Flipped Classroom, AR Technology.

1. Introduction

The typical model of teaching in ancient times was the transmission style, the structure of which was 'lecture-listen-read-remember-practice'. It was characterized by the teacher instilling knowledge and the students passively receiving it, with the text in the book being almost identical to the teacher's lecture and the learners answering in the same way as the book or the teacher's lecture. The 17th century saw a shift in teaching style to 'explain-question-answer-practice', which was thought to be integrated into classroom teaching, and that visual activities such as observation should be incorporated into the system of teaching activities. The 19th century was a period when scientific experiments flourished. At the time, the 'understanding-union-systematic-method' four-stage teaching paradigm was quite popular. Then, instead of a four-stage teaching model, a five-stage model was developed: 'preparation - prompt - union - summary - application.' All of these teaching styles have one thing in common: they all overlook students' subjectivity in learning, prioritize indoctrination, and stifle and inhibit the development of students' personalities to varied degrees.

As the most widely spoken language, English is used as a second language of learning in many countries. China now has over 400 million people learning English, accounting for roughly 30% of the country's entire population [1]. English for Chinese people is taught from the third year of primary school. The primary level is taught simply and focuses on learning basic words and sentences. At secondary school level, English is taught mainly for exams, focusing on listening and reading. At university, however, English reaches an advanced level of difficulty, focusing on the three areas of listening, reading and writing, so the demands are higher. There are also many different types of university English, such as Travel English, Business English, English for British and American Culture, etc.

Because of China's 'open door' policies, there has been a 'boom' in English study since the late 1970s. Since the late 1970s, there has been a 'boom' in learning English in China, partly due to its 'open door' policies, which has effectively created a 'fault zone' of intellectuals in various academic subjects. In China, this has posed a challenge to the ELT profession. Both qualified non-native and native English teachers have long been in high demand at the tertiary level. In several academic

subjects in China, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) has essentially created a "fault zone" of intellectuals. However, the number of English learners in China has not decreased as a result, rather, it has increased at an astounding rate over the last two decades. Over 90% of all college students are required to take English as a subject. To obtain a bachelor's degree, the majority of students must pass the College English Test Band 4 (CET4) at the national level [2]. But there are still problems, because language learning requires a language environment, and in most classrooms, teachers still use Chinese to communicate with students, and this way of learning is very inefficient. Therefore, the English classes in Chinese universities today urgently need a good teaching model.

Students learning English as a second language require additional language assistance. In order to develop their experience and skills, they must practice hearing language, reading language, speaking language, and writing language [3]. They will need to use a variety of tools to complete these activities, including those that will assist them in learning the language quickly and successfully [4].

There are many different teaching methods being used for learning in the classroom, such as guided reading, guided visits, independent learning and task-driven methods. However, these methods are not efficient and some of them have become outdated. With the current technological progress, there is a need to teach with new teaching models. College English should not only grow students' comprehensive English application ability, but also improve their cultural literacy, as it is a required basic course for Chinese college students. Many teaching improvements and innovations have sprouted up throughout the years in order to meet the goal of College English instruction. As a result, English instruction in colleges and universities is continually exploring new approaches in the context of the national educational information reform [5]. In the face of this situation, this article focuses on four methods that are suitable for teaching English to university students: face-to-face teaching, online teaching, graded teaching and flipped classroom teaching.

2. Four Representative Stream Teaching Methods

2.1. Face-to-face teaching

In a face-to-face classroom, the instructor can devote only one block of time to the class, offer framework and immediate feedback, educate with direct eye contact, and answer to questions immediately [6]. This mode of teaching is also the most traditional mode of teaching in China, which has been used since ancient China and has not been eliminated until now. The advantages of face-to-face teaching are that the use of the board is well organized, focused and easy for students to review. In this way, the teacher also gives students the opportunity to take class notes as they write, at a moderate pace that is easy to absorb. The teacher's writing is very helpful for students to summarize later, and will be useful in exams and revision. This mode of teaching allows the teacher to keep track of changes in students' moods and attention spans and can adjust the pace of the lesson at any time. The interaction between teacher and students is very direct in this environment, which helps the teacher to solve students' problems quickly. However, the disadvantages of face-to-face teaching are also obvious as it has limitations; this model must include the three elements of student, teacher and classroom. Because it is face-to-face, students cannot listen to the content of the course repeatedly, they are unable to pause in class to consider what the teacher is saying, and when they are perplexed by a question, they may overlook vital details while attempting to reproduce the teacher's remarks, if they do not understand something in class, they can only ask the teacher or their classmates for advice, and there is no way to solve the problem through their own efforts.

2.2. Online teaching

We are currently experiencing a significant shift in how teenagers learn and the advantages that social software provides. Technological innovations can supplement and enhance traditional types of social learning, resulting in a more comprehensive and diverse approach to information literacy that supports the present, more gradual shift toward a technologically advanced world [7]. Faculty, according to Sheridan (2006) and Van de Vord and Pogue (2012), are concerned that online training

takes stronger than normal face-to-face teaching [8, 9]. According to Van de Vord and Pogue (2012), online classes require the lecturer to spend much more time into or out of the classroom. Academic staff who teach online courses devote considerable time organizing and running their programs than conventional academic staff, according to Sheridan (2006) [9]. Although online teaching differs from face-to-face teaching, instructors who do not obtain professional development have a tendency to transfer face-to-face educational techniques to online settings. As teachers gain experience, they tend to translate face-to-face practices gained from instructors in college to the regular classrooms they educate in [6]. Some pedagogical advances, according to Everhart, are either difficult to achieve face-to-face or are substantially better online [10]. Online learning could surpass face-to-face classrooms in creating learning experiences that are 'social, dynamic, contextual, engaging, and student-owned,' as Everhart put it [10]. In a distance education environment, a new paradigm happens from student-centered learning to instructor-centered or lecture-centered styles of teaching [11]. The advantage of online teaching is that it is very free, students can study online whenever and wherever they want, and they can communicate with their classmates if they have questions without interfering with the teacher's lectures. However, due to the constraints of the environment, students are not very self-motivated to attend classes online. Higher-order thinking skills are frequently deficient in distance courses, which could be due to teachers attempting to translate conventional teaching procedures to online classes [12].

2.3. Graded teaching

In most institutions, there are obvious differences in new students' levels of ability, and there can also be polarization of ability within the same class, making it more difficult to attain consistency in learning progress. In today's China, the Ministry of Education promotes quality-oriented education. The traditional teaching technique, which treats all students equally, is inadequate to satisfy the demands of today's education. Students with a good English foundation will find it easy and lose interest, whereas students with a bad English foundation will find it too tough and lose confidence in their ability to learn. To deal with this circumstance, a graded teaching method is developed. The grading system was developed in the United States. However, many institutions and colleges are now attempting to implement this form of instruction [13]. The benefit of graded instruction is that it enables learners of all levels to study at a pace that is suitable for them. Because of their limited self-study capabilities, instructors should integrate lecturing in the schoolroom with tutoring after lesson in time, and have more assistance to the students who are more ready to comprehend in the improvement classes and outside the schoolroom, while students who are less able to understand can absorb knowledge at the pace of the instructor in the foundation classes [14]. The graded teaching structure has been proved in recent years by the actual experience of numerous colleges to be in accordance with the demands of higher education. It can help students relax while studying English, as well as making the class more enjoyable. It is highly advantageous for instructors to arrange class teaching since it can spark the passion of students from all backgrounds. Furthermore, a graded teaching strategy can make full use of all the colleges' multimedia gadgets, enhancing the depth and vibrancy of classroom instruction and laying the groundwork for sparking students' interest [15]. However, there is a fatal problem with this model, as teaching classes according to ability leads to low self-esteem and sadness for those students who are placed in poor classes, and this negative implication can be demoralizing for students, a situation that is not advocated in education.

2.4. Flipped classroom teaching

The 'flipped classroom,' also known as the 'inverted classroom,' is a method of instruction that totally deviates from the typical collegiate English education model. Various people have different ideas on what it means. The definition of a flipped classroom is as follows: in a relevant data environment, instructional teachers provide such a wide range of learning resources so that students can finish the transaction of information sharing before lesson, and instructors and learners can complete the process of information internalization together during classroom by responding to

questions, cooperative investigation, engaging transfers, and other tasks [16, 17]. Instruction that used to take place in lecture is now available at home, in advance of class, thanks to teacher-created videos and interactive lessons. Class is becoming a space where students may work through difficulties, discover new concepts, and collaborate. Above all, all components of training may be rethought to optimize the most valuable learning resource—time [18]. Putting students in charge of their courses by allowing them to watch, rewind, and fast-forward as needed. Lectures can be watched multiple times, which may well be beneficial to someone who does not speak English as a first language [19]. Learners in a flipped classroom study materials and watch the videos at home before working on projects with their classmates during class time. All of these things improve collaborative skills and reciprocal understanding and cooperation. The lecturer can use class time to work one-on-one with a person who needs more assistance [19]. The most important feature of the flipped classroom is that learning is personalized, with each student being able to choose lessons according to their own interests and needs. The speed of the video lessons can also be freely adjusted, but this model relies heavily on student self-motivation and some students are not excited about learning, which may also cause students to delay studying when they are afraid of their next exam.

These four teaching modes are all commonly used in Chinese schools today. With the advancement of technology, the flipped classroom will become the future of school teaching as it is a combination of face-to-face, online and graded teaching modes. Students can choose a live lesson that suits their schedule and interests before the lesson, watch the video of the lesson at any time, and choose to pause or continue the video at their own pace. When they have completed their self-study, they bring their questions to discuss and learn face-to-face with the teacher or classmates, which is most efficient as this mode of learning is self-directed rather than passive.

3. Conclusions

By comparing the four representative teaching methods, when teaching face-to-face, the teacher will adjust the pace of the lesson according to the student's status. However, this model is very limited. Online courses offer more freedom than offline classes, but students absorb knowledge less efficiently. Graded teaching is much targeted and students of different abilities are given appropriate lessons, but this can also lead to a sense of inferiority among students in poorer classes. The flipped classroom is an integrated version of these three teaching models. The flipped classroom will become the future trend of teaching and learning, students control their own time to study and review well. Now that technology is becoming more and more advanced, AR technology will gradually be integrated into the teaching process. In the future, the face-to-face question and answer section will have the opportunity to be realized in AR technology, so that students and teachers do not have to agree to meet in the classroom to solve their problems in reality, they can even use AR technology to achieve virtual face-to-face meetings at home or anywhere, which is different from meeting in front of an electronic screen, this is an immersive experience, which allows face-to-face communication without the obstacle of location, learning English requires a language environment to support the learning process. This will allow Chinese students to have more opportunities to speak English with foreigners, rather than being restricted to speaking English with Chinese people, which will make students more excited about learning and more effective.

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