

Research on Teaching Reform for College English Class from the Perspective of Holistic Education

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Abstract: This paper explores the transformation from traditional education of cultivating pedant to modern holistic education that has effectively improved the teaching quality by introducing the concept of holistic education into college English teaching and conducting a series of reforms in teaching content, methods and skills.

Keywords: Holistic Education, College English Class, Teaching Reform.

1. Introduction

College English teaching model has been characterized by teachers' active teaching and students' passive acceptance for a long time. Such model attaches too much emphasis to elementary knowledge as well as basic English skills training including "listening, speaking, reading and writing". Under this model, students' learning motivation tends to be instrumental: learning English for further education, successful graduation or overseas study. Thus it is difficult for students to experience "happy leaning", ideological guidance or cultural infection, and it is impossible to cultivate their abilities for independent learning and innovation, let alone their overall quality. Hence, in the course of college English teaching, it is necessary to emphasize the "Two Basics" training and the concept of "Holistic Education". That is to say, students should be seen as organisms with unlimited development potential instead of passive teaching objects on the basis of knowledge inculcation and language skills cultivation. By doing so, the potential of individuals can realize free, comprehensive and sustainable release in addition to their sound personalities, cultivating students to be "holistic individuals" with heart of gold, knowledge, abilities developed in harmony. Currently, it is imperative to introduce Holistic education, activate and guide students' self-development, transform college English class teaching model to lift up the teaching quality of college English in all respects.

2. The Concept of "Holistic Education"

Holistic education is a comprehensive educational concept and an integration of various advanced educational thoughts. In the western world, holistic education can be dated back to the viewpoint of free teaching from Aristotle, an ancient Greek philosopher. In his opinion, everything has its own potential that is prepared to be unlocked and education is to help students unleash their own potential so as to make their achievements respectively. John Miller, an American educator, proposed the concept of "Holistic Education" in the mid-1980s. He argues that "holistic education is not to be defined as a particular method or technique; it must be seen as a paradigm, a set of basic assumptions and principles that can be applied in diverse ways" (Miller, 1992). That is to say, education is supposed to put priority on the all-round development including intelligence, spirit, sociality, morality,

aesthetics and creativity, and lies the core of holistic education in the development of "human integrity". On the basis of acquiring basic survival knowledge and skills, students also need to realize a unity of emotion, morality, physics and intelligence in inner self and have strong senses of responsibility and value belonging of their own. By establishing a connection between society, nature, and spiritual value through education, holistic education helps learners regain their passion for life and continuous momentum (Xie & Zhang, 2011). Rogers (1980) proposes that holistic education aims to promote the all-round development of students' cognitive quality and emotional quality and achieve self-fulfillment. It enables the educated, through the development of personality, to acquire the ability to practice the learned scientific knowledge and skills to create value. Holistic education is more than an educational concept. It is also an education form of the foreign language education today (Wen, 2014). Centered on students, the concept of holistic education pay attention to their emotion and will, which will bring benefits to the all-round development.

Holistic education integrates the two opinions of "society-oriented education" and "people-oriented education", which reflects its emphasis on both individual value and social value (Miller, 1988). The goal of holistic education is to advance people's comprehensive development instead of producing "half-man". Holistic education focuses on the development of people's subjective initiative, consciousness, spirit and potential, and unleashes human subjectivity, reflecting the dialectical unity of meeting social demands and pursuing the development of individuality.

Holistic education attaches importance to human spiritual world and integrated development while criticizes utilitarian education. since the advent of holistic education, scholars around the world have put priority on it and conducted more profound reflection on education.

3. The Establishment of New College English Teaching Model

(1) Integrate the advantages of traditional teaching model with online learning with the help of multi-media class, MOOC, Rain Class, and the internet, creating an environment for college English learning in all respects and change forced English learning into a voluntary one.

(2) Improve student's capacity for independent learning and thinking by adopting multiple teaching methods and approaches to transform the class teaching model centered on imparting knowledge and training skills into the new model of "holistic education" featuring "lifelong study and development" with the intention of educating people, embracing development and enhancing overall quality.

4. The Practice of New College English Teaching Model

4.1. Establish the Concept of Holistic Education

Teachers are the implementer of holistic education. They have to be the first to change roles. First and foremost, teachers need to transform from an imparter of knowledge and controller of class into a guide, participant, and supporter of learning. Moreover, teachers need to build a new relationship with students by respecting them, paying attention to their inner feelings, and making them feel concerned in order to create an equal, happy, and relaxing learning environment suitable for exploration. In addition, teachers should get self-improvement. They need to work hard to enhance their overall quality in all respects and guide the whole process of teaching through the collective preparation of lessons, teaching design and teaching reflections.

4.2. Update Teaching Methods

Promote the creative cultivation of students' learning ability through the innovation of teaching model. In traditional college English teaching, students are only educated in language input ability, while the concern on the cultivation of innovation ability, cross-cultural consciousness and the intercultural communicative competence has long been ignored. Therefore, teachers need to build a new teaching model of holistic education. To this end, we have explored various teaching methods.

4.2.1. Differentiated instruction

In traditional college English teaching, teachers spend much time on imparting knowledge and reading skills but underestimate students' different character and individual demands. Students are only able to passively accept what has been taught, leading to an unbalanced teacher-student relationship. After introducing the concept of holistic education, teachers can adjust their roles based on specific demands and guide students to independently form different interest groups and choose subjects according to their own appetite. In this case, teachers will give enough respect to different learning methods and strategies, provide different materials, give full play to individual advantages, and center students in the teaching activity to realize the purpose of cultivating talents with different characters.

4.2.2. Problem-oriented teaching

Teachers divide teaching content into concrete learning tasks and distribute them to every group for discussion through the internet platform. Accordingly, all group members are asked to collect relative resources for pre-class preparation. In class, teachers lead groups to present videos made before class, and extend teaching content on textbooks by speech delivery, role-play and discussion. After class, groups conduct extensive learning in various forms such as debate or mini research project from time to time. Such

method respects individual development, highlights the interaction and transition between people, and motivates students to study and also develops their cooperation spirit and social skills.

4.2.3. Immersion teaching

In traditional college English teaching, English is often acquired as a kind of knowledge instead of ability. Consequently, students often learn English with Chinese learning methods. As a solution, immersion teaching and the internet technique can play essential roles in providing students with a pure English environment to get rid of the disruption of the mother tongue. By offering a background of language activities and conducting cross-cultural communication, students are immersed in a natural context and in close connection with the nature. Under such circumstances, students will understand, sense, and recognize the society in their own way, which is an important life experience for their growth. Students are encouraged to engage in all sorts of facets in different countries and cultures, which will help them cultivate critical thinking, improve spiritual value, and shoulder the responsibility.

4.2.4. Experiential Situational Teaching

Experiential teaching requires time to experience the environment in class so as to help students gain corresponding situational experience. The essence of learning is a process in which the individuals interacts with humans, events, and the environment, a process that the individuals learn to analyze and solve problems and promote social development. Holistic education focuses on building application context. Students, therefore, participate in various social practices including case analysis and social research. In the process of analyzing classic cases, students are able to have vivid experiences by entering the scenario built by the multi-media technique. In the scenario, students actively discuss and deliver their ideas, which promotes their language proficiency and extends thoughts. At the same time, it is conducive for students to gain knowledge and experience and put them into practice, making themselves a liberal, independent, and holistic individual with the combination of emotion and cognition, an individual inclined to blaze new trails in practice. It demonstrates the process of "experience - cognition - reflection - theory - practice" and reflects the "people-oriented" thought, and practices holistic education concept.

4.3. Innovate Teaching Resources

Cultivate students' self-learning ability of using various channels and resources to acquire knowledge through online and offline integrated learning mode with the help of multi-media teaching, MOOC, Rain Class and the internet, and realize and promote new teaching mode based on network and multimedia.

4.3.1. Online teaching promotes self-study

Network technology creates a modern teaching environment, breaks the limitation of class, and provides students with rich and vivid learning resources. Teachers assign learning tasks via multi-media and students collect information on the internet and conduct self-study according to teaching demands. Online teaching translates the traditional teacher-centered teaching model that purely imparts language knowledge into students-centered individualized learning. Meanwhile, it stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning, attracts students to be willingly engaged, and gives full play to the subjective initiative of

learning. In this way, students will acquire a sense of joy from displaying outputs of self-study in the form of PPT to deliver speeches in groups in class.

4.3.2. Online teaching takes more time than teaching onsite

Considering the heavy burden of in-campus study, independent online learning breaks the restriction of class time and provides a real language environment for English learning and cross-cultural study. Online teaching integrates class into society and thereby weakens the role of “teaching” in an artificial environment and strengthens the role of “learning” in reality. Movies and TV shows from English-speaking countries issued online are proper teaching materials, for they combine voice, image, picture, and text in one, offer enormous vivid language materials from different perspectives and display fairly real language and cultural circumstances, making immersion learning possible. Students can appreciate anything they are interested during the fragmented time without feeling that they are not forced to learn but have great enjoyment. Moreover, students are able to make great progress in learning and their skills in language and the sense of humanities can be fostered.

4.3.3. Online teaching strengthens the cultivation of interpersonal interaction ability

The Internet has made interpersonal interaction between students and students, teachers and students, and students and others come true. Students gradually develop cultural and moral awareness and communicative skills through communication with different people. Students establish connections between listening knowledge, skill training with the created environment of ideas, culture, and morality in a familiar and realistic context through various ways of contact. Those connections motivate students to study, thus achieving the ultimate goal of learning. At the same time, by mutual interaction and cooperation with others, students are able to grasp the key to interpersonal interaction and truly understand that only by being equal, frank, sincere and kind can one establish good relationships with others and effectively enhancing working ability and adaptability when entering society.

4.4. Broaden Teaching Content

4.4.1. Select quality teaching materials and build the environment for holistic education

Considering the differences between arts, science, and engineering, teachers should know the professional needs and career plans of students and select proper teaching materials accordingly so that college English and professional English can be organically integrated, interdisciplinary knowledge interaction can be strengthened, and diversity in teaching and learning can be highlighted. At the same time, the teaching materials also need to cover contents about Chinese traditional culture, customs, social forms, economy and trade, and avoid excessive inclination toward British and American culture, in this way, students will be capable of introducing Chinese national conditions and history in English in international communication.

4.4.2. Probe into the cultural connotations in the textbooks for extension

Teachers should probe into the cultural materials in the textbooks to expand students’ cultural horizons and cultivate their humanistic spirit. Students are exposed to a large number

of Western cultures in the process of study, and there are many brilliant human cultural heritages worth learning. In the teaching process, teachers should pay attention to cultural elements, guide students to distinguish and extract essence and discard dross so that students can improve their critical thinking in aspects of morality, politics and cultural environments. Teachers should attach importance to the cultivation of students’ cultural quality, help students establish a global vision, deepen their understanding of the differences between traditional Chinese culture and the culture of British and American countries and ultimately improve their cultural taste and guide them to build correct value orientation.

While teachers focus on the improvement of students’ comprehensive English language abilities, they should also help students develop a sound personality, establish social relationships and realize of self-worth. Apart from developing students’ skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, teachers should also lead students to think about the moral values and principles embedded in the textbooks, integrate language learning with positive psychology, learning strategies, healthy emotions and cultural awareness to strengthen moral education. Generally speaking, the goal is to promote the overall healthy development of students’ bodies and mentality and nurture them to become responsible, well-rounded talents who actively participate in social life.

5. Conclusion

College English teaching has made remarkable achievements in the past, but many questions worth reflection still remain. Teachers should carry out the concept of holistic education, improve students’ knowledge structures, promote skill training, place students in the core of teaching, enhance their independent learning ability, and strengthen comprehensive cultural literacy in a bid to meet social and national demand for talents. It is time to help students make progress in all respects, resume the essence of college education: education for man, and move forward toward the target of cultivating a “holistic individual”.

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