The Research on Higher Vocational English Teaching Based on the Flipped Classroom Mode

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Keywords: Flipped Classroom; Higher Vocational College; English Teaching.

Abstract. As an essential part of higher education, higher vocational education aims to cultivate numerous front-line applied talents in diversified fields and social classes. Therefore, it’s imperative to conduct educational reforms so as to enhance the quality of talent cultivation in higher vocational colleges. As for the subject of English, the traditional teaching approach, which focuses on impartment of teachers, didn’t attain prospective effect, so a more effective English teaching mode is urgently demanded. On the contrary, “Flipped Classroom” is an innovative teaching mode, which has been popularly applied in various classrooms and proved to be impactful. The paper aims to explore the feasibility of the application of “Flipped Classroom” in English teaching in higher vocational colleges.

Introduction

Today, under the background of information society, the rapid development of science and technology greatly promotes the growth of modern teaching modes. As the base of teaching, schools, especially higher vocational colleges, have also suffered an unprecedented impact, urging a pressing innovation and reform in various aspects including teaching concept, teaching design and mode, teaching objectives, teaching means and so on. In recent years, as a new form of classroom teaching, flipped classroom mode has gained more and more attention from domestic and international educators. Under the traditional teaching mode, teachers always function as the subject of knowledge initiating in class while students being the object of knowledge accepting. On the contrary, with flipped classroom mode, students can recapture the classroom as the main body of classroom teaching, which completely subvert the traditional relationship between teachers and students, thus being able to plan their valuable class time effectively.

Theoretical Basis

A flipped classroom is an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom. On the basis of this mode, teachers are required to provide practical learning resources with teaching videos as the main form, while students are expected to carefully watch and learn the videos before the class and collaborate with their teachers in the classroom in terms of question answering, collaborative inquiry and interactive activities. The flipped classroom intentionally shifts instruction from a teacher-oriented model to a learner-centered one in which topics are explored in greater depth and meaningful learning opportunities are created for students. Thanks to “Flipped Classroom”, students are actively involved in knowledge construction and acquisition, while teacher's interaction with students can be more personalized and less didactic.

The effectiveness and feasibility of this new teaching model have been proved by the teaching practices of many primary and secondary schools home and abroad, but there is little research on the introduction of “Flipped Classroom” in vocational colleges. This paper aims to explore a flipped classroom teaching mode which is suitable for the specialty of higher vocational English.
The Application of the Flipped Classroom in Higher Vocational English Teaching

The application of the flipped classroom in higher vocational English class can stimulate the learning motivation, arouse the students' subject consciousness, thus improving the students' participation and enthusiasm and greatly enhancing the effectiveness of English teaching and learning. Practices have proved that the internalization and utilization of language must rely on real communicative environment and the flipped English classroom can plan the pre-class, in-class and after-class links as a whole, making it possible to constantly create a real language practice forum. The specific process is as follows:

Pre-class Teaching Module

The whole learning process of higher vocational English teaching in flipped classroom mode is reversible, speculative and autonomous. Specifically, the pre-class learning activities include the teaching of new knowledge, a certain number of related exercises, the discovery of questions, the discussion with peers, and the focus on feedback problems.

As the basic link of learning, the instruction of new knowledge is reversible, which is its greatest characteristic. However, its realization asks for certain preconditions. Firstly, the teaching video should be of high quality, and teachers should make clear, emphatic and appropriate video according to the course objective and the actual situation of students. In the process of video making, teachers can also choose to use education resources open on the Internet, such as university open courses, national quality courses etc. In addition, based on the students' practical situation, teachers can also make some teaching videos with different rating of difficulty. It is recommended that the videos should be of moderate length and highlight the subject. In this way, when watching the videos before class, students can reasonably arrange the learning process, and accordingly pause, review or repeat the videos, thus effectively avoiding the learning predicament of different levels of students in traditional classroom.

In addition, after watching videos, students should go through with some pertinent exercises in terms of English listening, speaking, reading, writing etc. Teachers should ask students to think independently in the process and complete the corresponding learning tasks. It is suggested that teachers design the exercises based on the characteristics of the English subject, such as the consolidation of basic skills and basic knowledge, the connection between old and new knowledge, and so on. Or they can also expand the knowledge appropriately.

During the autonomous learning before class, students can find problems while consolidating their knowledge. There are two ways for students to solve these problems. One is to re-play the video and find solutions independently. The other is to discuss with other students, or communicate with teachers online through some network communication means. If there are any issues remained to be solved, they can feedback to the teacher, who will classify them and extract the most representative ones to be discussed in class.

These pre-class learning activities based on flipped classroom mode are of great significance. On the one hand, this is the impartment of new knowledge. On the other hand, students can obtain the opportunity to think independently and learn to solve problems by exploration. Therefore, this part lays the foundation for knowledge internalization during the class.
In-class Teaching Module

The in-class teaching activities in flipped classroom are designed to promote the internalization of students' knowledge through discussion, inquiry, cooperation and negotiation. So the higher vocational English teaching on the basis of flipped classroom mode formulate various forms of classroom activities in order to stimulate students' learning motivation, and utilize the limited class time to create real communication scene for students, allowing them to perform the internalization of language in the process of language use and activity participation.

The first activity is to review the knowledge which is a preliminary examination of students' independent learning before class, and the teacher can detect them by listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is recommended that teachers focus on weak students at this stage to ensure they are proficient in new knowledge. After that, the teacher should set aside some time to discuss with students the problems that exist in pre-class study. The students are the main participants in this link, and the teacher should inspire their curiosity and open thinking through heuristic teaching.

Then, the teacher could set new tasks for the students, which should focus on the internalization of knowledge and language in form of individuals or groups. The teacher should ensure competitiveness equivalence between each group, which may consist of 3 or 4 students as appropriate with one student as the leader who will be responsible for the overall arrangement of the whole study. It is recommended that the teacher provide various types of classroom tasks for students, and the team members should help each other to complete the tasks.

Collaborative learning is the key link of knowledge internalization and the most important part of classroom teaching activities. It not only exercises the students' expressive ability and thinking ability, but also promotes the communication between students. In this process, the individuals participating in the activity have an equal status and enhance their understanding of knowledge during the process of dialogue and negotiation. In order to realize the common learning goal, members should exert their advantages and talents to stimulate their potential of self-learning. In the process of internalizing knowledge, students' mutual communication will strengthen their team spirit and cooperation consciousness. In this link, the teacher should coordinate and monitor the learning activities of each group, provide corresponding enlightenment to the difficulties, and grasp the classroom activity time from the overall situation.

Based on the collaborative learning, the result exhibition is indispensable. The results may be presented in written form, small acting or oral presentation, jointly exhibited by group representatives or all members. At the same time, they can communicate with each other and evaluate the results of other groups so that they can learn from each other and correct the problems that still exist. Then, the teacher will assess the results by taking consideration of each group's performance and encourage those with weak foundation to show more participation in their achievement reports, in order to enhance their confidence in learning, and promote their development and progress.

After-class Teaching Module

The whole English teaching process, from the beginning to the end of the class, is an integer which is mutually influential and interrelated. The traditional vocational English teaching only focuses on the impartment of knowledge within classroom but ignores the guidance and help for students after class. Most students lose the opportunity to practice their language skills because of the lack of linguistic context. Thanks to the flipped classroom mode, the English teaching can implement learning activities thoroughly inside and outside the classroom and provide more practice opportunities for students, who will therefore deepen their understanding of language continuously in the process of language use.

Students can utilize language knowledge after class by means of various forms of activities. For example, English debate competition, stage performance, speech contest, English classical literature reading and so on. Through debate and speech, students can enhance their thinking ability, while consolidating their theoretical foundation through literature reading. Apart from this, students can also conduct some book clubs for English reading in order to make more friends with whom they
can share their experiences and exchange ideas. As for teachers, they can guide students to make full use of network resources to develop a broader academic vision by expanding to subject learning in other fields. On the other hand, teachers can also encourage students to learn the excellent courses in vocational colleges home and abroad through the internet. In short, through online interaction with students, teachers can better grasp the learning status of the students after class, guide students to solve the problems in learning independently, and eventually strengthen their learning motivation.

In addition, teachers should conduct teaching reflection after class in order to further improve the teaching programs. In the flipped classroom mode, students' learning needs are enhanced, which is more conducive for teachers to further develop their professional qualities while perfecting their teaching ideas and knowledge structure to better carry out teaching activities. On the one hand, teachers should collect and screen the network resources to further improve the existing teaching videos. On the other hand, teachers should serve as desirable instructors of students, who will find their confusions in time, and encourage them to participate more in various teaching activities. Meanwhile, teachers should excel in accepting students' proposals in teaching, so as to enhance teaching means, improve teaching methods and finally boost teaching quality.

In a word, the vocational English teaching based on flipped classroom mode is a whole integrating pre-class, in-class and after-class activities. It provides students with a variety of learning activities and experience opportunities to enhance their independent learning ability, while facilitating teachers to enhance their teaching ability.

Conclusion

To summarize, as an emerging teaching mode on the basis of modern education technology, the flipped classroom mode is a tremendous change to the traditional teaching mode. It fully integrates pedagogy and information technology, highlights the dominant position of students in learning, and provides students with the practice scene for knowledge internalization so as to promote students' dynamic learning experience. Future researches should pay more attention to the optimization of the teaching programs in each link of classroom teaching and attaches great importance to the adjustment and transformation of roles between teachers and students as well as the systematic construction of flipped classroom theories, so as to explore a more suitable flipped classroom mode for different education level requirements and different discipline characteristics.

References

