Research on the Dilemma of College English Micro-course Teaching in China

A Thinking from the Perspective of Teachers

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Abstract—**College English micro-course teaching has become a hot word in the field of college English teaching reform in China. Although some achievements have been made in the research of micro-course teaching in college English teaching, there are still some problems in college English teaching practice. Some college English teachers not only have improper understanding of English micro-course teaching, but also lack the ability of designing micro-course, which seriously restrict the further development of college English micro-course teaching in China. This study can provide some useful suggestions for the benign development of college English micro-course teaching.**

Keywords—college English teaching; mirco-course; dilemma

I. INTRODUCTION

In March 2012, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China promulgated "Development Plan of Educational Informatization for the Following Decade (2011-2020)," which pointed out, "From a deep integration between higher education and information technology, it is not only available to get a modernization of education content, but also get the modernization of teaching means and teaching methods, which can innovative the personnel training mode and comprehensively improve the quality of higher education"[1]. Then, on November 21, 2012, the Deputy of Minister of Education, Limin Liu pointed out, "A teaching competition of micro-course is to meet the requirements of times and it can promote the change of training methods to college teachers, at the same time, it also can solve the problems of teaching diversity and promote a deep integration between college teaching and modern information technology" [2].

In terms of college English teaching, China Association of Higher Education and Higher Education Press launched the first session of China Foreign Language Micro-course Competition in July 2014. In 2015, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press held the Teaching Star teaching competition to explore the application of micro-course in flipped classroom, aiming to spread a new teaching model. In recent years, the research on college English micro-course teaching has become a hot word in the field of college English teaching reform in China. At present, some scholars have comprehensively demonstrated the feasibility and efficiency of micro-course in college English teaching from the aspects of teachers, students and teaching environment. (Ji Liu, 2018; Ying Li, 2017; Tao Zhang, 2017; Li Ren, 2016; Ting Shao,2016) For example, after a comprehensive research, Ying Li (2017) pointed out the feasibility of English micro-course teaching in college. "College students not only have enough English knowledge and experience, but also have the ability of English self-learning and master some effective English learning methods. In addition, college English teachers are willing and quick to accept new technologies, new ideas and new teaching methods". [3] However, some scholars also pointed out that, "In the field of the design of college English micro-course teaching in China, there are still many problems to be solved in terms of time arrangement, content design and technology selection, which need our researchers' attention" [4]. "The language mistakes, design mistakes and application mistakes reflected in the actual micro-course production have hindered the long-term healthy development of college English micro-course teaching in China" [5]. Based on the current situation of the application of college English micro-course teaching in China, this paper intends to reveal the practical problems on the application of college English micro-course teaching in China from the perspective of teachers, and puts forward some corresponding suggestions.

II. DEFINITION OF MICRO-COURSE

"The earliest micro-course was a 60-second course proposed by professor Mc Grew from the university of Northern Iowa in 1993, and a one-minute lecture by professor Kee from Napier University in the UK in 1995"[6]. Subsequently, the research on the connotation of micro-course has become a hot spot in the academic circle, and many scholars at home and abroad have defined it from different perspectives. Educause defined micro-course as "a short recorded audio or video presentation on a single tightly defined topic." Chinese scholar Jiahou Li (2013) believed that "Micro-course is a small course with clear teaching objectives, short content and a concentrated explanation of a problem within 10 minutes" [7]. Jianli Jiao (2013) pointed out, "Micro-course is an online teaching video that aims to explain a certain knowledge point, takes the short and concise online video as the expression form, and aims at

learning or teaching application" [8]. "Micro-course is short for 'micro video network curriculum', it takes a tiny video as the main carrier of teaching, aiming at a subject knowledge point (important point, difficult point, doubtful point, etc.) or teaching section (learning activities, teaching theme, teaching experiment, teaching tasks, etc.), which is a kind of video course resources online and supports for multiple learning ways"[9].

From a comprehensive analysis of the research results on the connotation of micro-course at home and broad, although there is no a consistent conclusion, a few scholars depicted the characteristics of micro-course, namely teaching by teachers, videos by streaming media, teaching time is shorter, less teaching content, teaching resource capacity is small, teaching design is delicate, classic case demonstration, autonomous learning, production is simple and practical, abundant relevant materials and so on.

III. DILEMMA OF THE MIRCO-COURSE APPLICATION IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

It is believed that college English teachers have had a high degree and a strong ability to accept new things, which can lay a solid foundation for the establishment and effective application of micro-course teaching model in college English teaching, but it is not the case. In fact, some college English teachers have encountered many problems in micro-course teaching. In general, the problems encountered by micro-courses in college English teaching are mainly reflected in the following three aspects:

A. Teachers Have Improper Understanding of Micro-courses

Firstly, as a new teaching method, micro-course is not well understood by some college English teachers in China. A number of studies show that "only 16.22% teachers said they were very clear about the concept of micro-course, and the rest teachers either had a general understanding of the concept of micro-course, or were not clear about the concept, or not clear at all" [10]. "Many teachers have a wrong understanding of micro-course, and many of them regard micro-course as a small course, believing that micro-course is a slice of traditional classroom, and they still use traditional teaching methods and teaching processes to design micro-course, and the design duration of micro-course sometimes reaches more than 20 minutes" [11]. It is no doubt if college English teachers do not clearly understand the nature, positioning and role of English micro-course, then it is difficult for them to make a satisfactory course, even though they are willing to do an English teaching reform with micro-course. Secondly, due to the limitations of teaching philosophy and teaching professional quality, although some teachers are not yet able to accept the new teaching model of micro-course, they also do some micro-course teaching under the various pressures. So the phenomenon of doing micro-course for micro-course can be seen everywhere in college English teaching. "In the actual teaching process, teachers spend a lot of manpower, material resources and financial resources to pursue the appreciation of micro courses but not the teaching effect, ignoring the original intention of micro-courses" [12]. Thirdly, some

teachers' understanding of the role of micro-course has some misunderstandings. "Some teachers believe that this micro-course teaching model will weaken the role of teachers, students can learn everything by watching videos". [13] "Although some college English teachers have realized the advantages of micro-course in traditional classroom teaching and made some beneficial attempts and explorations, most English teachers have not realized its importance" [14]. Finally, there are also some teachers pointed out, "The teaching process is a generative process and the effective classroom is created by teachers and students. No matter how wonderful the pre-recorded teaching video is, it has a certain sense of alienation from the scene and lacks the interactive atmosphere of face-to-face teaching". [15]

B. Teachers Lack the Ability of Designing Micro-course Content

It can be said that the design of micro-course content should be first and the production later, however, the reality is that due to the lack of systematic training of micro-course teaching design for college English teachers, most of micro courses have no strict teaching design and the teaching content quality of most micro-courses is not high. On the one hand, the teaching content of micro-course fails to highlight the important knowledge of English subject. Generally speaking, although each subject has its own characteristics, most of the teaching contents that can be selected to make micro-courses are the key and difficult knowledge in the stage of college English teaching. However, according to the research results of current teaching content of micro-courses in college English teaching, it can be known that, "Most selected teaching content is too explicit without in-depth explanation, or there are too many teaching activities organized, without any substantive content. Students can't learn anything valuable after watching it". [16] In addition, it is not difficult to find that in some college English teachers' classroom, the main teaching contents in micro-courses are only the explaining words, sentence patterns and structures, which are in common with the traditional teaching way, the content is not vivid. Teachers could not set up some interesting or creative questions to inspire students' autonomous learning interest; as a result, many students give up the study of micro-course. It cannot be denied that some micro-courses content in college English teaching is too superficial. Teachers fail to highlight the key points of English subjects and present the key knowledge of English subjects, which make students feel meaningless when learning micro-courses. Therefore, although teachers carefully produced a large number of micro-course videos, students were not interested and the learning effect was not good. On the other hand, the teaching content of micro-course deviates from the college English teaching objectives. For instance, some teachers pay more attention to the diversity of contents and the appreciation of forms in micro-courses making, but always neglect the attainment of teaching objectives, others try to use only one tiny micro-course to achieve more than one teaching objective, so the teaching content has to be too much, as a result, many students often fail in getting what the important content is, which not only cannot reach the teaching objectives, but also cannot play a good role in assisting the teaching, and even

cause the whole teaching process deviated from the teaching objectives.

C. *Teachers Lack Relevant Skills to Make Micro-courses*

It is undeniable that a high-quality micro-course needs some educational technology support. People take it for granted that college teachers are omnipotent and they must have good skills of micro-course making, but the reality is that, "Up to now, many teachers have no idea or are not very clear about the technical means of micro-course development, and do not know how to design a micro-course" [17]. "Most teachers still lack the skilled skills to record and edit micro-courses, and it is very unlikely to use excellent micro-courses in college English teaching" [18]. Frankly speaking, at present, so many college English teachers' educational technical ability cannot keep pace with the development of micro-courses, which seriously limits teachers' enthusiasm in making micro-courses and affects the production and promotion of micro-courses.

IV. COUNTERMEASURES

From the perspective of teachers alone, the problems faced by college English micro-course teaching are more than two aspects. One is whether teachers are willing to use micro-course or not, and the other is whether teachers have the ability to do the micro-course teaching. Therefore, the paper proposed corresponding suggestions from the above two aspects.

A. *Helping College English Teachers to Establish a Correct View of Micro-courses Teaching*

The first is the problem of college English teachers' cognition of micro-course, which is the premise of the development of college English micro-course. Therefore, the most important thing is to improve English teachers' correct cognition of micro-course status and function, and fully understand micro-course's status and function, as extracurricular supplementary and auxiliary teaching resources. So, in order to help teachers understand and agree with micro-course as soon as possible, and establish a correct micro-course teaching concept, schools should provide some opportunities for English teachers to go out to other universities for exchange and study. And on the other hand, schools also can invite some experts on micro-course teaching to the school to do a face-to-face training for English teachers. In addition, college English teachers should also initiatively get to know and learn relevant knowledge of micro-course teaching, change the traditional teaching concepts, and actively establish the correct concept of micro-course teaching. Teachers should make a full use of micro-course, a brand new teaching tool, to transfer knowledge to students in a more novel way.

B. *Helping College English Teachers to Get the Ability of Making Micro-courses*

As is known to all, even a simple micro-course also needs certain educational technical knowledge, and the post-editing work of an excellent micro-course video also needs extremely complicated educational technical support. However, it is obvious that some college English teachers are seriously deficient in educational technical knowledge. So,

on the one hand, schools should actively organize a special training of micro-course production technology for teachers, aiming to help teachers master the basic knowledge of micro-courses, teaching design of micro-courses, production processes of micro-courses and so on, so as to truly grasp the ability of making micro-courses. On the other hand, English teachers should also actively devote themselves to the study of micro-course production technology. In fact, a lot of software related to micro-course production is not difficult to learn, and so many relevant video teaching resources on the internet can be used, as long as people are willing to learn, it is difficult to master the ability of micro-course production.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, from the perspective of teachers, this paper made a comprehensive analysis of the problems facing the implementation of micro-course teaching in Chinese college English teaching, and proposed some targeted solutions. We can say that although there are still many problems in this research field of micro-course teaching that need to be discussed, it has become a consensus for many teachers that micro-course can serve college English teaching well. And it is believed that with the deepening research of micro-course teaching, college English teaching in China will surely reach a new level in the near future.

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