

Exploration Into College English Teaching Practice During the Period of Pandemic Prevention and Control

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ABSTRACT

The sudden global outbreak of novel coronavirus has altered people's living style as well as teaching patterns around the world. In response to the Guiding Opinions issued by the Ministry of Education, students' classrooms have been transferred from offline to online. This essay points out the challenges faced both by teachers as well as students; explores the online teaching practice of college English in the background of epidemic prevention and control; and puts forward the urgent need to improve college teacher's information technology literacy, which is very crucial to integrate into international English education.

Keywords: *Pandemic, online college English teaching, information technology literacy*

1. INTRODUCTION

The sudden global outbreak of novel coronavirus has transformed people's living style as well as teaching patterns around the world. Most students' classrooms have been transferred from offline to online, which is a new challenge for both teachers and learners. In this context, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guiding Opinions on Doing a Good Job in the Organization and Management of Online Teaching in Regular Colleges and Universities during the Period of Epidemic Prevention and Control" (hereinafter referred to as the "Guiding Opinions"). The Guiding Opinions pointed out that colleges and universities should make full use of the online MOOC and high-quality teaching resources on various online course platforms at all levels and on campus, which is conducive to jointly implement and guarantee online teaching in colleges and universities during the pandemic prevention and control period, and realize "continuing teaching and learning in spite of class suspension" [1]. Obviously, this is an important manifestation of social service with Internet and education, as well as a test of the integration of online and offline teaching since the application of network information technology into teaching process of college English in Chinese universities.

The Ministry of Education organized 22 online platforms to open more than 24,000 online courses for free, covering 12 subject categories for undergraduates, and 18 majors for colleges and vocational colleges. Combined with these teaching resources and the learning platform of U campus, the

course of New Horizon College English was carried out in our university. This paper discusses the challenges, procedures of online teaching as well as some practical implications into effective teaching and teachers' development in the background of education informatization.

2. CHALLENGES FACED BY ONLINE COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING DURING THE PANDEMIC

In the context of pandemic prevention and control, both teachers and learners are compelled to work or study from home. It is undoubtedly a severe test for teaching, especially for language teaching, which requires a great deal of interaction in class. There are many challenges to overcome both for universities and teachers as well as the students.

2.1. Learners' Emotional Instability

In addition to losses to people's lives and property, crisis events can also cause varying degrees of emotional changes among individuals, even psychological trauma [2]. Under the special background of the pandemic, teachers should not only think about how to transmit knowledge remotely through online platforms, but also give priority to the mental health of learners and provide correct guidance at appropriate times. The outbreak of the epidemic has

altered the regular study life of learners. Compared with usual days, factors such as the relatively irregular work and rest may lead to students' emotional instability, such as irritability, anxiety or even depression. Additionally, in the era of information explosion, learners can easily receive a large number of epidemic-related news updates through various social media software. Some news may be exaggerated or fabricated for the sake of shock value. It is fair to say that teaching is never a one-way process. Since the face-to-face communication in the traditional classroom is replaced by the "human-machine" dialogue, the relationship between teachers and students are in a state of separation. First of all, it is difficult to create a good classroom learning atmosphere, and learners are prone to feel uninspired and unsupervised behind the screen, which breeds undisciplined emotions and reduces their enthusiasm for participating in the classroom. Plus, a large number of class sessions that require peer interaction cannot be achieved efficiently and effectively. For example, in group work, some learners are inclined to feel inferior or confused when searching for peers online, thereby being reluctant to be involved. It is also difficult for teachers to observe the learning process and provide targeted and appropriate guidance. Another good case in point is that remote role-playing tends to be less impressive since students cannot see the body language or the facial expressions in most cases. Therefore, the completion degree of activities is far unsatisfactory to traditional classrooms. In addition, learners cannot provide timely feedback on the teaching contents by saying together or through simple body language such as nodding or frowning. Likewise, teachers cannot judge whether students are clear or not about what they have taught by observing learners' responses and then make timely adjustments about teaching strategies and progress.

2.3. Lack of Deep Learning

Compared with offline classrooms, the separation of teachers and students in online teaching increases the learning freedom of learners, while teachers' control over classroom teaching and the functions of instruction as well as supervision are weakened to a great extent. It is difficult for teachers to discover learners' behaviour that do not meet the requirements of the classroom in time, and it is even more difficult to provide timely guidance. If learners lack self-discipline in study, online learning tends to become a mere formality formalities and effective learning is difficult to occur. In addition, online teaching cannot ensure that every learner has a good learning environment, and the uncertainty of the learning place makes learners easy to be disturbed by life or things around them, thereby failing to think deeply, summarize and sort out the teaching materials in time.

Most students are not deeply involved in the world and cannot effectively distinguish right from wrong. Some negative reports will inevitably lead to tension, even fear, and the inability to concentrate on learning will ultimately affect learning efficiency.

2.2. Unsatisfactory Class Interaction

All the above factors will prevent students from concentrating on the class, which take a toll on the occurrence of deep learning [3].

2.4. Immature Online Teaching Technology

The fact that teachers have to rely on online teaching to carry out daily teaching activities puts forward higher requirements for their practical ability of information technology. Although in recent years the reform of education informatization has gradually deepened, and the teachers' technology literacy has been improved to varying degrees, these teaching activities mainly occur in physical spaces such as multimedia classrooms and laboratories in schools. However, the temporal and spatial scenarios of online teaching have undergone a fundamental change. Due to the outbreak of the epidemic, most teachers are not fully prepared for this change, and it is difficult to find an effective online teaching model in a short time. In addition, the outbreak of the epidemic has caused a huge increase in the number of users of online teaching platforms, causing network congestion, a wide range of technical problems such as freezes and crashes or even breakdown, which will affect the effect of online teaching to some extent.

3. EXPLORATION OF ONLINE TEACHING PRACTICE AMID PANDEMIC

In spite of challenges, online learning is inevitable and actually proved to be the most effective way to make students resume study during the period of pandemic prevention and control. Some teaching principles and procedures are adopted in the second language teaching.

3.1. Teacher-centred as well as Student-centered Principles

On the one hand, teachers should reflect the main role of teaching in English courses. In the context of the epidemic, they are supposed to carefully select teaching platforms suitable for delivering course, and pay attention to the development and application of

teaching resources. According to the characteristics of language study, teaching objectives and teaching content, an online and offline mixed teaching model should be implemented, including designing teaching activities, posting learning tasks, and equipping students with learning strategies, guiding students to quickly adapt to studying from home and becoming independent and cooperative learners.

On the other hand, students should embody the vital role of autonomous learning in English courses. Whether they can use online resources scientifically and efficiently rely on their self-planning and self-management abilities. Pre-class preparation should be done well in the study of autonomous learning, which is a crucial part of to ensure effective learning in live-streaming class. Besides, they should learn to communicate and cooperate with teachers, complete the after-school homework assigned by the teacher, and proceed in a planned way.

3.2. Online Teaching Practice

Before class, teachers can use the online system to check students' pre-class preview. Before each lesson, the teacher uploads the lesson units and the corresponding set of words and English text that students need to preview with PPT or self-recorded micro-classes to the teaching platform. They can also harness some information technology to stimulate students' interest in learning, such as producing English situational dialogues and English movie clips to make them fully informed of teaching activities, which will save time and deepen students' understanding of the teaching materials.

In class, teachers should make optimum use of online educational resources and encourage interaction through rewarding mechanisms. After the teacher explains the main knowledge points of the English textbook, they can give a simple discussion topic for students to pool their ideas in class. In the process of expressing their opinions and opinions, students not only exercise their oral English, but also foster active learning atmosphere for teacher-student interaction. The beneficial supplement of online teaching resources will greatly increase students' participation and maintain their passion in learning English.

After class, teachers should utilize the online review system to supervise students' practice after class. The online review system could set the specific training time and grade their assignment and participation. This function enables teachers to have a firm grasp of the students' actual learning effect, which serves useful purposes for evaluating students [4]. Due to differences in the basic level and learning efficiency of each student, the online review system also allows students to train repeatedly. In this way, they can appropriately increase or decrease the training intensity after class according to their actual situation. At the same time, teachers can also establish an after-

school online communication platform, allowing students to discuss learning content and difficult issues, and share learning results online to promote mutual assistance and communication between students and stimulate their initiatives in learning.

3.3. Teacher-centred as well as Student-centered Principles

Diversified evaluation is the key to the blended teaching model of college English. Teachers should integrate multiple evaluation and incentive mechanisms into the entire teaching process. On the basis of fully respecting individual differences among students, teachers should attach importance to the evaluation of the learning process and guide them to put emphasis on the learning process. Evaluation criteria can be established from the following aspects: The first one is the awareness and attitude of college students to learn English courses independently. This is mainly based on students' enthusiasm and participation in online and offline learning, such as the level of pre-class preparation, the number of sign-in and the quality of the completion of the homework; the second is the evaluation of the college students' sense of cooperation and communication, which can be mainly reflected in the communication and feedback with the teacher in the class, and the completion of the group discussion tasks; the last is the evaluation of the college students' mastery of the course and the use of English, which can be based on extracurricular activities such as final test and different forms of English contests [5]. A diversified curriculum evaluation system can promote the development of autonomous learning ability and ensure the quality and sustainable development of the curriculum during the epidemic.

3.4. Teacher-centred as well as Student-centered Principles

Teachers' information technology knowledge and skills, together with their previous experiences in using the Internet and computer, are of significant importance in the development of their ability to further use information technology. Besides, when teachers realize the advantages and the convenience of utilizing technology, it is more likely that they will adopt innovative teaching methods in their instructional practices [6]. On the contrary, if teachers feel seriously uncertain or have doubts about their technological performance, they are unlikely to make instructional changes and reluctant to invest much time and effort in integrating information technology into their teaching practices [7].

As the integration of information technology into language instruction requires time and effort, the investment of large amount of time sometimes

conflicts with the worth of making instructional transformation. Before planning and creating technology integration activities, teachers have to find related resources, acquire new knowledge and skills, and become familiar with software or other technical tools. Advanced information technology skills may not be as easy to grasp as the traditional or old-fashioned ones, many of which only require simple skills to operate.

Therefore, teachers might be subject to tremendous pressure at first about acquiring technological knowledge and skills, and later might find it difficult to keep up with the development of information technology. Teachers are concerned about where to get digital materials and resources and how to obtain innovative technological knowledge and skills. They are also concerned about how to utilize new technical tools in their teaching practices successfully. Therefore, it is very likely that teachers have feelings of incompetence with regard to utilizing information technology, and feelings of uncertainty about whether student learning can be enhanced by integrating information technology.

On top of that, the need of ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills in technology use calls for continuous professional development because whether teachers consider themselves as technology literate affects their utilization of it. Whether teachers successfully and effectively accomplish the goal of integrating information technology into curriculum and instruction relies on their level of technology literacy to large extent.

4. CONCLUSION

Challenges are opportunities as well. The sudden outbreak of the epidemic broke the regular teaching order while also promoting teaching reform. Online teaching is an irreversible trend and has a huge impact on future education. The use and popularization of online courses can not only represent the current innovative curriculum model, but also the development trend of future education, driving the reform of educational thinking and educational concepts. Today's innovation is tomorrow's routines, and the online course system is exactly the same for the current college English education. Chinese university English teachers should equip themselves with skills of modern information technology, make full use of online resources and platforms, thereby moving closer to and integrating with practical and international English education.

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