

Mobile “English Speaking Practice + Micro-Teaching”: An Experiment on Developing English Teaching Skills of English Education Majors in China

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ABSTRACT

In order to change the current insufficient spoken English and teaching skills of English education majors in China, this study proposed a new mobile training mode of "English speaking practice + micro-teaching", and conducted a 16-week experiment to 106 students in English education major. After practicing spoken English, watching teaching video of famous teacher, preparing teaching courseware, and carry out micro-teaching 30-60 hours respectively on average, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the scores of spoken English and teaching skills by 34.7% and 28.5%. In addition, the follow-up survey found 90.4% of students in the experimental group successfully applied for the teaching job vacancies in primary and secondary schools, which is 31.1% higher than that of the control group; the proportion of their satisfaction with their scores of teaching demonstration is 82.7%, which is 30.8% higher than that of the control group. The experimental results show that the training mode has a significant role in promoting spoken English, teaching skills and job application success rate for the English education majors in China, which can provide references for other normal colleges and universities.

Keywords: Chinese universities; English education majors; spoken English and teaching skills; training mode; experimental research

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, many English education major graduates in China are inefficient in teaching skills when they are applying for primary and secondary school teachers' interviews and at the initial stage of their employment. The main problems are lack of spoken English ability and familiarity with teaching materials, poor analysis of teaching materials, inefficiency of teaching skills, unclear blackboard writing, lack of classroom discipline management skills and other aspects [1][2]. The main reasons are related to the academic orientation of China's normal universities, that is, attaching importance to theoretical knowledge but ignoring the cultivation of pre-service teaching skills, unreasonable curriculum setting, insufficient teaching skills courses and teaching practices, lack of ideal professional education for teachers and effective vocational training for students, and shortage of practice bases. In addition, some schools and guidance teachers are irresponsible, which makes the teaching internship less effective.

For this reason, researchers have put forward a lot of improvement measures, such as increasing the teaching skills courses and teaching practice hours. However, due to the reform of the curriculum of education major and the limited teaching hours in the first three years of undergraduate education, the prospective graduates are

often busy with the postgraduate entrance examination, thesis writing and job interview during the senior year, it is difficult to increase the teaching skills courses and teaching practice significantly. As a result, this problem cannot be effectively solved for a long time [3][4]. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to explore a new online course of teaching skills which can be easily implemented without increasing a large number of teaching hours, which is also the purpose and significance of this research.

Based on years of theoretical research and teaching practice, the author tries to start an elective course of "Online Teaching Skills Practice" in the mode of mobile "English speaking practice + micro-teaching" in the senior year of English education majors. The purpose is to enable students to carry out group practice and mobile micro-simulation-teaching at any time through Wechat group, and get teachers' and colleagues' guidance and evaluation of learning in time to promote the improvement of teaching skills.

As the feasibility of the new course needs to be demonstrated, a small online teaching experiment for 16 weeks is carried out to verify the teaching effect of the course, find out the existing problems and further improve it.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Micro-teaching is a systematic method to train pre-service students and in-service teachers by means of modern teaching technology. Allen proposed the method in 1968 and he pointed out that that micro-teaching "is a reduced and controllable teaching environment, which makes it possible for those who are ready to become or have become teachers to concentrate on a specific teaching skill and teaching content". In fact, micro-teaching can provide a practice environment to simplify the daily complex classroom teaching, and to enable practitioners to get a lot of feedback [5]. Therefore, the concept of micro-teaching can be defined as: "micro-teaching is a controlled practice system, which makes it possible for pre-service students or in-service teachers to focus on a specific teaching behavior or study under controlled conditions. It is based on teaching theory, audio-visual theory and technology to systematically train teachers' teaching skills.

Micro-teaching is a small class teaching with a small number of students or simulated students as the teaching subject. The time is generally controlled in 5-10 minutes. Teachers are required to present the 40-minute class content completely in the limited time and let students understand. This kind of teaching process can be videotaped, analyzed and reflected after class, which is an important way to train new teachers and improve teaching level [6][7].

Micro-teaching, as one of the important methods to train students' teaching skills, is an advanced method to cultivate professional teachers' basic teaching skills. It is conducive to the exploration and renewal of teaching ideas, the scientificization of teaching theory and educational research, and the training and cultivation of students' teaching skills. As an important way of students' skill training, microteaching training requires strengthening the study of theoretical knowledge, strengthening students' sense of role-playing, paying attention to the design of scheme, highlighting the diversity of training methods, and strengthening the feedback evaluation of microteaching, so as to improve the effectiveness of microteaching training for students [8].

Si [9] believes that microteaching should adhere to the principle of student-oriented, instructor-led, and training as the main line, which is conducive to the cultivation of students' creative thinking. The implementation of micro-teaching includes learning relevant knowledge, determining training objectives, observing and demonstrating, analyzing and discussing, compiling teaching plans, role-play and micro-practice, evaluation and feedback, and revising teaching plans. After the training of teaching skills and teaching objectives are determined, trainees should design teaching according to teaching objectives, teaching contents, teaching subjects and teaching conditions, select appropriate teaching media and compile detailed teaching plans. The teaching plan first explains the concept of the application of the teaching skills, but also indicates the teachers' teaching behavior, time allocation and possible students' learning behavior and countermeasures. Role-playing is an important part in

microteaching, and it is the specific teaching practice process for trainees to train teaching skills. Furthermore, the trainees will go to the stage to give lectures and act as teachers, so it is called "role playing". In order to create a classroom atmosphere, other members of the group act as students. Before teaching, trainees should give a brief explanation of the course, so as to make clear the teaching skill goal and clarify their teaching design intention. Lecture time depends on the requirements of teaching skills, generally 5-10 minutes. The whole teaching process will be recorded by video recording system. After that, the trainees make "self-feedback" according to the evaluation of teachers and students, and modify the teaching plan. In this way, the teaching skills of trainees can be improved continuously [10].

British teacher education attaches great importance to the training of teachers' professional skills. Micro-teaching is fully carried out in British teachers' colleges and universities. It is arranged in the four-year Bachelor of Education course, a total of 42 weeks, 5 class hours a week, a total of 210 class hours. After receiving microteaching training, students go to schools for educational internship, and the teaching internship time is also extended from 6-8 weeks to 24-32 weeks. Therefore, the teaching skills of British normal university graduates are relatively solid [11].

Some domestic researchers have also found that micro-teaching is an effective way to improve teachers' teaching skills [12]. However, due to the limited teaching hours of teaching skills courses (most normal colleges only have about 32 class hours), it is impossible for each student to receive micro-teaching training. Therefore, micro-teaching has not been widely and deeply applied in normal colleges and universities in China. Therefore, students' learning skills are difficult to be improved [13]. In addition, the time for teaching internship in most normal universities in China is 8-10 weeks. Some internship schools (mostly public primary and secondary schools), students' parents and instructors are quite inconsistent with the classroom teaching internship of education majors. Students rarely get the opportunity to give lecture independently in internship, and the teaching internship often fails to achieve the expected effect [14].

Therefore, it is not only the expectation of students, but also the responsibility of teachers in normal colleges to explore the way to set up micro-simulation-teaching course which does not occupy more class hours and allows each normal student to fully participate in it, so as to improve teaching skills rapidly.

3. EXPERIMENT DESIGN

3.1. Experiment Subjects and Period

In this study, 106 senior students from 4 classes of English education major in Zhejiang International Studies University were selected as the experimental subjects.

There was no significant difference in the source of students and the average academic achievement of the four classes. Among them, 52 students were randomly selected as the experimental group and 54 as the control group. The students in the experimental group practiced online teaching skills in the mode of mobile "English speaking practice + micro-teaching", while the students in the control group maintained the original learning and living state without intervention. The experimental period was 16 weeks.

3.2. Practice Mode of Experimental Group

3.2.1. Mode of practicing spoken English

Firstly, a Wechat group of the experimental group was established, and the researcher served as the instructor.

The mode to teach spoken English is: **teacher uploads English speeches and teaching videos—students imitate and record and upload their own videos — teachers and students evaluate each other online — practice again and improve consistently.**

The specific analysis is as follows:

- (1) The instructor selected 10 classic English speeches and excellent English teaching videos, analyzed the English speech skills, and released them together in the Wechat teaching group.
- (2) The students in the experimental group were required to imitate the practice seriously and upload a 5-minute English speech video in self-defined topic every 2 weeks.
- (3) Teachers and students are required to comment actively online.
- (4) Students practice and improve according to the evaluation, and the final oral English scores are given together with the micro-teaching scores.

3.2.2. Mode of practicing micro-teaching

The teaching mode of microteaching is as follows: **teacher uploads demonstration micro-teaching — students carry out micro-simulated-teaching — online mutual evaluation between teachers and students — modifying and improving consistently — evaluation of teaching skill.**

The specific analysis is as follows:

- (1) The instructor recorded and edited 10 excellent 6-8-minute micro-teaching videos of English teaching in primary and secondary schools, analyzed and explained the teaching skills, and selected 20 excellent teaching plan samples, which were released together in the Wechat teaching group.
- (2) Students in the experimental group were required to study hard through mobile mode, from imitation to self-innovation, not limited by class hours, and fully carry out micro-simulated-teaching in class and after class anytime and anywhere, and submit a self-compiled English

teaching plan and 6-10 minutes micro-teaching video in Wechat group every two weeks.

- (3) Students in the experimental group and the instructor evaluated each micro-teaching video online and gave a score.
- (4) Students can revise their next micro-teaching plan according to these evaluations, and gradually improve their teaching skills and oral English level.
- (5) Each experimental group was required to submit 8 micro-teaching videos in the 16-week experiment. The average score of the last three videos was taken as the final score of the student's "teaching skills". Meanwhile, the oral English scores were given according to the percentile system.

3.3. Test and Evaluation Method

3.3.1. Items and evaluation standards of pre-and post-test

In order to be objective and fair, the pre-test and post-test were completed by three senior teaching internship instructors. The test standards are as follows:

- (1) Teaching skills

The test of English teaching skills is scored according to five indicators: teaching plan design, teaching content, teaching mode, teaching effect, and student evaluation.

- (2) Speaking ability

Spoken English was scored according to the five indicators: expression accuracy, sentence pattern, grammar correctness, pronunciation and intonation, and fluency. The test was conducted simultaneously with the micro-teaching skill test.

3.3.2. Scores of teaching internship

The score is based on the test subjects' three-month teaching internship in elementary and secondary schools during the same period, which is also a percentage system.

3.3.3. Job application situation

The evaluation is based on the job application situation of the subjects in the last semester of their senior year.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSES

Through a 16-week online teaching skills practice experiment, 106 participating students' spoken English and teaching skills scores in pre- and post-test are compared in Table 1. In the pre-test, the scores of spoken English and teaching skills of the two groups of students were all just over 50 points, which is not ideal, and there is no significant difference between the groups. During the

experiment, the students in the experimental group spent 3.5 hours a week on average practicing spoken English in a fragmented time, 2.1 hours a week on average learning teaching videos of famous teachers online, and 2.9 hours a week on average making PPT for teaching, and the time

spent on these activities for students in experimental groups is 17.5 times, 7 times, and 7.3 times of that of the control group students. For micro-teaching practice, the experimental group practiced 3.6 hours per week on average, while the control group did not have this training.

Table 1. Comparison of scores of spoken English and teaching skills in pre- and post-experiment

Item	Experimental Group N=52 students	Control Group N=54 students	Sig
Average time of English speaking practice per week (hours)	3.5	0.2	.000
Average score of spoken English in pre-test (points)	51.2	51.7	.143
Average score of spoken English in post-test (points)	73.4	54.5	.000
Weekly time to learn famous teachers' teaching video (hours)	2.1	0.3	.000
Weekly time to prepare teaching courseware (hours)	2.9	0.4	.000
Weekly time to practice micro-teaching (hours)	3.6	0	.000
Average score of English teaching in pre-test (points)	55.3	55.6	.157
Average score of English teaching in post-test (points)	77.6	60.4	.000

Therefore, the average scores of spoken English and teaching skills in the experimental group were 73.4 and 77.6 points, which were 34.7% and 28.5% higher than those of the control group.

Because students in the experimental group were trained in English speaking and micro-simulated-teaching, the average score (given by primary or secondary school teachers) of teaching internship in primary and secondary schools for this group was 94.3 points and 12.7% higher

than that of the control group. At the same time, in the follow-up survey in the second semester of senior year, it was found that 90.4% of students in the experimental group successfully applied for primary and secondary school teachers, which was 31.1% higher than that of the control group; 82.7% of students in the experimental group are satisfied with their scores of teaching demonstration in job application, which is 30.8% higher than that of the control group. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2. Comparison of internship scores and teachers' job application

Item	Experimental Group N=52 students	Control group N=54 students	Sig
Average score of teaching internship (points)	94.3	83.7	.000
Number of students satisfied with the score of teaching demonstration in job application	43 students, 82.7%	28 students, 51.9%	.000
Percentage of students to successfully become teachers	47 students, 90.4%	32 students, 59.3%	.000

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A 16-week online teaching skill practice experiment was carried out in the mobile “English speaking practice + micro-teaching” mode and the results show that students in the experimental group spent 56 hours on average practicing spoken English, 33.6 hours on average watching teaching videos of famous teachers, and 46.4 hours on average preparing courseware, and 57.6 hours on average

micro-teaching exercises, and their scores of spoken English and teaching skills are 34.7% and 28.5% higher than that of the control group without training in these items, and the improvement was significant.

At the same time, the follow-up survey found that 90.4% of students in the experimental group have successfully applied for primary and secondary school teacher vacancies, which is 31.1% higher than that of the control group; the proportion of them satisfied and very satisfied with their scores of teaching demonstration is 82.7%, which is 30.8% higher than the control group.

Experiments show that this training model has a significant role in promoting the spoken English, teaching skills and job-hunting success rate of students of English education major in Chinese universities, and can provide reference for other normal universities.

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