

The Practice and Inspiration of Bisection Class to College English Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Higher education in China has experienced rapid development and attained remarkable achievements from the end of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century. However, teaching in universities has become increasingly inadequate, and many problems have been exposed to the continuous expansion of universities, the impact of substantial online resources, and higher requirements for talents in the new century. With the increase in the number of university students, the larger the class scale is, the worse the teaching effect is. Students generally lack proactive learning attitudes and methods, and their motivation for learning tends to be utilitarian due to the influence of long-term test-oriented education. There is a wide range of channels to acquire knowledge for students, and the absorption of knowledge has become increasingly fragmented, which has challenged the traditional classroom teaching methods. In this paper, we focus on implementing a bisection class in College English teaching. We discuss the advantages of the bisection class of college English and propose the method about how to stimulate students' initiative in learning English, cultivate their scientific thinking methods, and improve the classroom teaching effect of college English. Then we carried out questionnaires and interviews among teachers and students in the universities and investigated how to realize the teaching practice in College English teaching by applying the bisection classroom. The research finds that the selection and use of teaching materials are particularly crucial for the practice of bisection class; moreover, the reasonable arrangement of homework after class can effectively guarantee the teaching effect; finally, the discussion in the class is the biggest highlight of the bisection class.

Keywords: Higher education, Bisection, English class

1. INTRODUCTION

In early 2014, Professor Zhang Xuexin proposed and experimented with the bisection class, a new class-teaching mode, in his class in response to the main problems in current university teaching. Such mode combines the advantages of lecture-based and discussion-based classes and leads to profound changes in traditional classroom teaching, promoting students' active learning. In the following two years, the theory and practice of bisection class have been popularized in universities across the country, and positive recognition has been received from teachers and students in many universities. In August 2015, Fudan University in Shanghai held a "Seminar of Teaching Innovation for National University Teachers" with the theme of "Towards Active Learning." At this conference, experts and teachers discussed with a specific focus on the theory and practice of "bisection class," which has become a new model in the current reform of classroom teaching in college.

This paper discusses how to carry out the bisection teaching method in College English classroom efficiently and effectively. The teaching process with bisection classrooms is not a simple separation of the class into the teaching and discussion, but a process of promoting

students' autonomous learning and heuristic learning to achieve innovative thinking and improve students' learning ability.

2. THE CONCEPT OF BISECTION CLASS

2.1 Bisection Class

The bisection class allocates half of the class time to the teacher, while the other half is designed for students' discussion. More importantly, the form of "interval discussion" is adopted in the bisection class, which encourages students to arrange learning independently within one week after the lecture to gain personalized assimilation. In the interval discussion, students have completed the self-learning task assigned by the teacher and participate in discussions with their understanding of new knowledge. In this way, the effect of discussion will be better, the class atmosphere will be more active, and learning enthusiasm and initiative of students will also be significantly improved as everyone is fully prepared [1]. The bisection class, focusing on the reform of the teaching process, has a strong popularization since it is an economical and practical teaching reform without

significant investments [1]. Along with the popularization of the teaching idea, the actual practice of the bisection class has been carried out in full swing in many colleges and universities all over the country, and teachers have also been continually exploring such useful mode in practice.

2.2 The Teaching Process of the Bisection Class

The bisection class divides the teaching process into three interrelated sections, in-class presentation of teachers, after-class assimilation of students, and class discussion among students. The presentation is a teachers' intensive lecture in class to provide students a better understanding of the framework of knowledge and the emphases and difficulties of learning. The assimilation is a process of combining learning and thinking in which knowledge has been internalized into the personal experience by reading textbooks or other materials after class. The discussion is to communicate with other students in the class with the results of self-learning and thinking after class, and it can be divided into group discussions and discussions between groups.

2.3 Changes Brought by Bisection Class to College English Education

2.3.1 Changes of the teacher-student speech imbalance in traditional English class

Flanders, the American teaching and research expert, has summed up a "two-thirds rate" of class based on large quantities of classroom observations, that is, two-thirds of class time is used for speech, in which teachers' speech also accounts for two thirds. Besides, two-thirds of teachers' speech is for speaking to students rather than talking with them [2]. It can be seen that the ratio of teacher-student speech in the traditional classroom is severely imbalanced, and the time for speeches between teacher and student and among students is severely insufficient. When students have been accepted all the time passively, their motivation for learning must be declined significantly. The bisection class leaves half of the class time for students, which objectively changes the verbal imbalance phenomenon. It also ensures the degree of students' participation, gives students full trust and opportunities to show themselves and makes the educational principles clear that teachers and students are the subjects of class.

As a language class, it is particularly important to give students sufficient practice in college English classes. Through group discussions and classroom presentations, students have trained their English thinking patterns and expressions, and their language expression skills have been continuously tested and revised in interactions, which

genuinely reflects the language teaching idea of "learning by doing."

2.3.2 Promotion of students' ability in English self-learning through bisection class

Self-learning is a kind of ability of learners to manage their learning [3]. Its theoretical basis is derived from constructivism theory, and the bisection class is an innovative teaching mode inducted by such theory as well. Constructivism attaches great importance to learners' learning and emphasizes that learners are the subject of information processing and active constructors of meaning [4]. In the bisection class, the teacher wholeheartedly believes and respects students' level and experience of cognition, and gives sufficient time and freedom. Students accept what they have been taught in choices and internalize them into personal knowledge through class discussion and after-class assimilation. In this process, students strengthen their learning beliefs, identify learning motivations, manage learning processes, and continuously adjust their learning strategies, all of which are essential aspects of self-learning ability. In the bisection class of college English, teachers have many approaches to promote students' self-learning ability. For example, the author has cultivated students' self-learning ability by keeping them writing reflective diaries regularly. Teachers can also consciously remind students to reflect on their language learning strategies and manage their learning process in the bisection class. Besides, students can be pushed to think and record their learning process in English by teacher's questions during the review after class, which can not only train the students' writing ability but also improve their ability to manage their learning.

2.3.3 Promotion of students' ability in English thinking through bisection class

One of the main goals of university teaching is the cultivation of thinking ability and spirit of exploration, which has always been the weakness of traditional teaching. For a long time, the transmission of explicit knowledge has been paid sufficient attention to the curriculum system and teaching model of the university, instead of cultivating scientific thinking. Bisection class combines the teaching with the learning and thinking of students, encourages them to form their views through the independent thinking after class and critical acceptance of what has been taught. Scientific methods of argumentation are recommended to learn and use in discussions within or between groups to evaluate different viewpoints dialectically. All these training activities for thinking are essential contents of university education and essential approaches for students to develop critical thinking ability.

2.3.4 Promotion of development of formative assessment through bisection class

Bisection class has brought changes in teaching and learning methods, and it must also lead to changes in assessment methods. In general, the bisection class's assessment method puts more emphasis on the process evaluation with the addition of specific content of regular assessments, and the assessment on the learning effectiveness is dispersed into the specific tasks of each teaching unit. These changes genuinely reflect the process assessment. Additionally, more focus is attached to the learning needs of different students in the bisection class [5]. In the mode of bisection class, students' final scores of the curriculum are closely related to the learning process, and students are assigned relatively fixed tasks at the after-class learning phase of each unit, which can be concluded as three words: highlight, examination, and help. To be more specific, students should effectively assimilate what has been taught in class, put forward highlights, examine peers, and ask for help to solve problems. Forms of assignments should be diverse without any standard answer, and students will get the grade as long as they hand in assignments. Scores and assessments are mainly based on the degree of assignment completion. That is to say, such an assessment method pays more attention to the student's learning process and focuses on the learning needs and personal characteristics of different students at the same time. The scores are more scientific and objective, and the phenomenon of ignoring the daily learning but relying on the cramming before the exam to get a high score is avoided.

3. A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY ON THE BISECTION TEACHING METHOD

To study the effect of bisection teaching in College English class, we conducted a questionnaire survey on the essential teaching elements. A total of 314 questionnaires were distributed and collected in different linguistics classes, including 299 valid ones. Then, according to the questionnaire survey results, 15 students were randomly selected for interviews to understand the reasons behind the survey data.

3.1 Attitude towards the Textbooks

Teachers should make good use of textbooks and choose them properly in order to enhance the systematic teaching contents in the teaching environment of university. However, there are two contradictory viewpoints on the use of textbooks. One point of view is that textbooks are the collective result of everyone's wisdom based on the choice of previous contents in various textbooks with careful selection and reasonable arrangement. Therefore, they should dominate the main content of classroom teaching. However, the other opinion believes that

textbooks, especially for social science subjects, are impossible to be updated at any time as the speed of knowledge updating in the information age is so fast. While teaching is required to keep pace with social development, textbooks should only be used for self-learning and as reference rather than the main contents of lectures. Teachers are expected to collect the latest information and views concerning the course, and share and discuss with students in the class. By doing so, the timeliness of teaching is able to be reflected.

The results of the questionnaire survey show that 70% of the students think the textbook is critical, 28% think the textbook is less critical, and only 2% think the textbook is not essential.

3.2 Attitude towards the Homework

The questionnaire survey results show that 75% of the students admitted that homework could improve the teaching effect of the bisection class, and 85% think that the form of homework can be diversified. In the interview, the students said that the homework in class could not be in one form, and more diversified homework content could be designed according to different students' learning levels.

3.3 The Effectiveness of Improving the Classroom Atmosphere

The questionnaire survey results show that 90% of the students think that the bisection class helps improve the classroom atmosphere, which shows that the bisection teaching mode can stimulate the students' willingness to express, which is of great help to activate the classroom atmosphere. 88% of the students wholeheartedly agreed with the discussion and thought that it could deepen a deep understanding of language learning. However, only 50% of students think that bisection teaching can improve their interest in language learning. Therefore, more design and research should be done to reasonably design teaching content and process and stimulate learning interest.

4. EXPLORATION ON PRACTICE of THE BISECTION ENGLISH CLASS IN COLLEGE

4.1 The Selection and Use of Textbooks Are Critical

Teachers should make good use of teaching materials, make proper choices, and enhance teaching content's systematicness. The bisection class keeps the traditional way of teaching, fully affirms the unique and classical nature of textbooks, and attaches importance to the vital role of textbooks. Professor Du considered that the

reasonable teaching objective targeted by the bisection class is for most university courses, which aims to make students master the primary contents of an excellent textbook through the study in one semester [6]. Therefore, textbooks are the most important source of knowledge for teaching in bisection classes.

The topic selection, arrangement system, and practice contents of college English textbooks have been updated and revised, which means teachers should continue to study textbooks and use them effectively. In the limited teaching time, teachers should choose the appropriate output approach according to the topic content, select explanation emphases under the text language's difficulty, and design the self-learning content and the way after class in combination with in-class exercises. Students can have a relatively comprehensive understanding of the significance of topics in textbooks, keywords, and sentences in the text and essential language skills in each unit through teachers' explanations. Meanwhile, what teachers do not express adequately in the class also leaves enough room for students' self-learning and interval discussion after class.

4.2 The Reasonable Arrangement of Homework after Class Can Effectively Guarantee the Teaching Effect

Teachers should be good at designing after-class assignments that reflect the assimilation effect of students on the teaching contents and the organization of active class discussion. The after-class assignments of the bisection class should consider the learning ability and learning needs of different students. That is to say, neither complete consistency in contents and forms nor standard answers are required as much as possible. Some of the assignments should be easy, and some should be challenging so that a majority of students can consolidate and absorb what they have learned, and there is also some room left for excellent students to show their potentials. In this way, these assignments are facilitative enough to offer sufficient material for interval discussions, and students can be well prepared and enjoy sharing ideas.

4.3 Interval Discussion is the Most Outstanding Highlight of the Bisection Class

Interval discussion is the most challenging segment of teachers' class organization ability. The success of group discussion depends on the level of participants' activity and the organizers' judgment and guidance throughout the discussion. Therefore, the teacher should understand and continuously summarize how to organize a fruitful discussion. For instance, how to create an inclusive environment so that every student is willing to participate in the discussion, promote the smooth progress of discussion in the manner of appropriate comments, view and encourage silent ones in the discussion, and help them get into the discussion. College English courses are

commonly based on language learning and experience of "topics," and assignments and class discussions should also be developed around topics. First of all, teachers should ensure that all students have sufficient language input through assignments after class. Students must master the essential words and phrases, have a correct understanding of the text, and be given specific extra-curricular tasks of reading whatever their English learning foundation is. Secondly, students should be provided with the freedom and encouraged to show their learning results, discuss learning difficulties, and express their opinions on the topics they have learned. Students at different levels will be able to improve their language skills and participate in class discussions.

As front-line teachers, we should not only understand the concept of bisection but also make bold attempts and learn and summarize the method of bisection in practice, which is the most effective path for the development of bisection class.

5. CONCLUSION

The reform of teaching modes in university classes is an essential way for the development of college education. The information trend has resulted in the endless occurrence of modes of teaching reform with a heavy dependency on multimedia and big data, and new concepts and buzzwords. It remains to be studied whether these teaching modes can be adapted to the generally large scale of teaching classes in China or be suitable for universities' current status interns of economic development and student sources in different regions. As a seemingly conservative mode of teaching reform, Bisection class has its typical advantages over other modes - scientific theory basis, concise and clear teaching process, lower requirements for hardware, and strong adaptability and popularization. As a public basic course, college English courses should become a vital promotion base for bisection class. In the future teaching practice, attempts should be continuously made to explore the systematic nature of the presentation in college English class, the effectiveness of class discussion, the support from school policies. Experience needs to be summed up in practice for the improvements of all aspects of the teaching management system, which enables the bisection class of college English to become an efficient class that truly adapts to the new environment and requirements of universities.

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