

Application of Collaborative Learning in College English Teaching

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Abstract. For a long time, there are many problems in college English teaching, such as large class size, limited interaction between teachers and students, and students' low interest in learning. By introducing the flipped classroom into college English teaching and combining with collaborative learning, students' interest and enthusiasm in learning are greatly aroused, and the interaction between teachers and students as well as between students is increased, thus improving the effect of English teaching. Based on the method of comparative studies, this thesis introduces the basic theories about flipped classroom and collaborative learning, and expounds the concrete application of collaborative learning in college English teaching. The data of students' assessing results prove that adopting collaborative learning in college English teaching can greatly improve students' learning efficiency.

Keywords: collaborative learning, flipped classroom, college English teaching.

1. Introduction

After entering the information age, there are continuous changes in the field of education. The channels for students to acquire knowledge are constantly expanding, and educators begin to emphasize the cultivation of students' autonomous learning ability and the ability to acquire sustainable development. This change urges educators to examine traditional teaching concepts and seek more efficient teaching modes and means. In this process, the flipped classroom has attracted more and more attention from teachers and researchers. In 2011, Salman Khan introduced the teaching mode of flipped classroom to the world. Bergmann and Sams formally put forward the teaching concept of flipped classroom in 2012[1]. After that, scholars at home and abroad have carried out a lot of research work and explored the concept of flipped classroom learning from different perspectives. It is generally believed that the flipped classroom needs video learning materials such as micro-lessons and certain classes provided by curriculum teachers in the information environment [2]. Students complete the learning and watching of video materials before class. Teachers and students work together to complete homework questions, collaborative inquiry and interactive communication activities in class. During such a teaching process, students learn by themselves according to the arrangement before class and focus on exploring and solving problems in class, thus getting rid of the passive acceptance of knowledge and improving the enthusiasm of learners. It is a good teaching strategy to use group cooperative learning in practical teaching [3].

In fact, collaborative learning theory originated earlier in the 1970s in the United States, and it is considered as one of the most influential and fruitful theory in contemporary educational research and practice. It was introduced into China in the 1990s. It was found that its teaching system was creative and effective, so it was gradually popularized and applied widely. Collaborative learning is in line with the independent, cooperative, and inquiry learning advocated by the flipped classroom, so it is favored by educators. Many schools have used collaborative learning to teach and achieved better results.

Wang Jie has adopted the collaborative learning mode in college oral English teaching. Teachers such as Chen Chang and others have implemented collaborative learning in 21 classes of a university. After two years of teaching practice, they have also achieved the desired results [4]. The application of collaborative learning in the flipped classroom lays actually a more systematic emphasis on learners' learning, which makes teachers become assistants instead of teaching leaders.

The thesis firstly introduces the general application of collaborative learning; secondly it discusses concrete steps to put collaborative learning into use in the flipped classroom and finally it sums up the benefits of this teaching method.

2. Collaborative Learning in the College English Flipped Classroom Teaching

2.1 Making a Learning Plan

The development of collaborative learning extends from primary school to university. Primary school students lack autonomous learning ability and cooperative learning skills, while the time for secondary school teaching is limited and the learning tasks are heavy. College students have strong autonomous learning ability and good cooperative skills. Therefore, it is feasible to adopt collaborative learning for college teaching, especially college English teaching.[5].In order to verify the effect of collaborative learning model in flipping classroom, two classes of 2017 in Department of Mathematics, Bohai University, Jinzhou City, were selected as the research objects in English teaching. The two classes are close in number and learning basis. The first class is an experimental class with 30 students and five study groups while the second class is taught with traditional teaching method with 29 students. The content of the course is College English and the time is set for one semester.

2.2 Investigation and Teaching Preparation

Firstly, investigation is conducted among students through questionnaires. The specific contents include students' understanding of the cooperative learning model, group willingness, students' attitudes towards collaborative learning, and their opinions and suggestions on developing collaborative learning in groups. The survey results show that students generally agree with this learning model. Ten percent of the people were worried about the limitation of conditions and doubted the learning effect of this model, believing that it might have a negative effect on learning. Most students are able to recognize the advantages of group cooperative learning and think that it can create a better learning atmosphere and enhance the ability and interest of foreign language learning.

Secondly, the teaching and learning resources are carefully prepared. In order to accomplish the tasks in the pre-class stage, the bibliographies related to college English courses are carefully sorted out, and PPT slides are rapidly transformed into cloud classes by using software such as PowerPoint and Adobe Presenter. Adobe Presenter software is simple to operate and easy to use. It is more suitable for teachers to develop elementary digital learning. PPT classroom teaching is extended to the Internet at the lowest cost of technology and time. Practice has proved that using this software to make micro lessons will not increase the burden of preparing lessons for teachers. After the preparation of electronic resources is completed, relevant thinking questions are set for each class for students to discuss in class. Ordinary classes are still prepared according to the traditional teaching mode.

2.3 Course Implementation

According to the teaching plan, the experimental class is assigned tasks such as bibliographic reading and micro-class learning before class. The students learn by themselves to grasp the key content of this class, summarize their learning experience, complete the thinking questions, and discuss the assigned tasks in the classroom by group cooperation. In classroom teaching, each group first reports the learning situation and answers the questions reserved for online learning. On the one hand, teachers help students sort out the teaching content by answering questions and solving doubts; on the other hand, they guide the learning groups to debate and create situations so that the group members can complete their learning tasks through interaction and cooperation. When the class is over, the learning groups should summarize and exchange after class, review the knowledge points in class, summarize the experience of group cooperative learning, and complete the tasks assigned by teachers. And through online communication, teachers can be contacted at any time to seek help or

to provide suggestions on their learning. The three stages of the teaching process are shown in Figure 1.

In the process of learning, teachers should always pay attention to the dynamics of learning groups, understand students' cooperative attitude, methods and participation, and give praise to outstanding groups and individuals, and give timely communication and guidance to groups with problems. In addition, teachers should provide help to students or listen to students' feedback through online communication with students at any time. We should try our best to create more open learning content, avoid the simplification of learning content, and mobilize students' enthusiasm and initiative to participate.

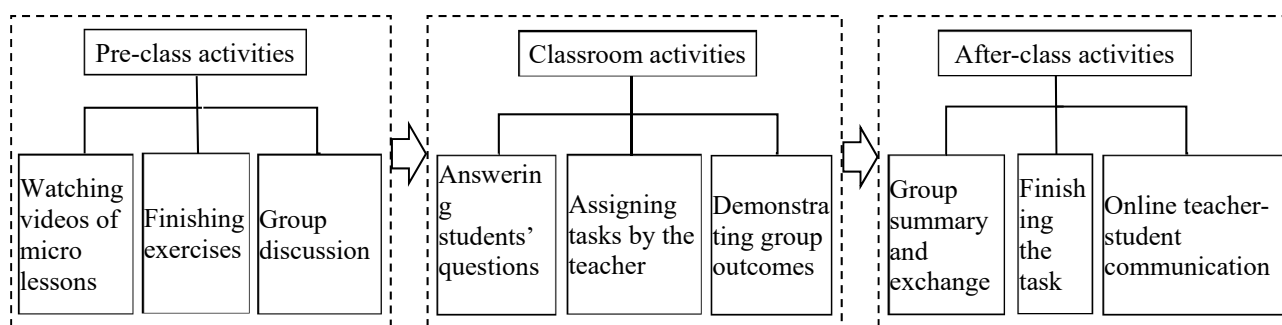


Figure 1. Schematic diagram of teaching mode in experimental class

2.4 Score Analysis

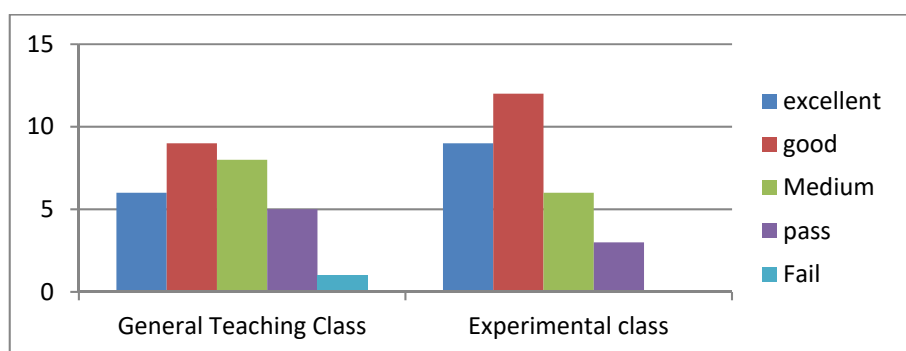


Figure 2. Schematic analysis of the results of two classes in the teaching period

As is shown in Figure 2, after a semester of class teaching, all the students in both classes took the final examination. From the analysis of examination results, the flipped classroom teaching mode has certain advantages. The average score of the experimental class is 3.1 points higher than that of the normal class, and the excellent rate is 30%. Compared with the normal class, the excellent rate and the number of students who have achieved above the middle level in the experimental class are obviously higher than that in the normal class. After a semester of study, the students in experimental class generally believe that this teaching mode can stimulate their learning enthusiasm, and they can have more exchanges with classmates and teachers.

3. Effect of Collaborative Learning-based College English Teaching

3.1 Enhancing Interest and Enthusiasm in English Learning

Traditional college English classes are mostly large classes, with a large number of students, fewer opportunities to speak in class, fewer hours and heavy tasks, and limited classroom interaction. In the long run, it is often difficult for students to concentrate and improve their interest in learning. And students always have "communication anxiety" in their expression, and are shy of speaking out, afraid of losing face in front of the whole class and teachers. Based on cooperative learning, college English flipped classroom overcomes the shortcomings of traditional classrooms, and enables students to learn independently through a large number of vivid videos, teaching courseware and other resources

before class, so that they can have sufficient preparation and confidence in classroom discussion. Moreover, group discussion and smaller circles help students to eliminate anxiety and participate in learning better. Over time, it will improve students' learning motivation, and no longer be pushed forward by teachers.

3.2 Improving Students' Oral English Level

In traditional classroom teaching, students often do not have too many opportunities to express themselves. In order to accomplish teaching tasks, teachers mostly focus on teaching at the expense of students' participation in the classroom. Moreover, there are many students in the class. Even if the teacher asks questions, only a few students have the chance to answer. In College English flipped class based on collaborative learning, students must cooperate with each other and discuss actively in order to master the content before class. In class, everyone in the group participates and contributes, which increases the chances of oral expression. In this way, students have full opportunities to express their opinions in English, effectively overcome the drawbacks of the original "dumb English" and greatly improve their oral expression.

3.3 Improving Students' Writing Ability

In the flipped classroom of cooperative learning, in order to achieve better results for the group in the final classroom report, the group members need to cooperate with each other, internalize the knowledge they have learned, and then output it, and read, revise and improve it among the students. This provides students with a good place and opportunity for peer-to-peer writing, gives students more opportunities to start writing, and improves their writing ability.

3.4 Improving Students' Teamwork Ability

The flipped classroom of college English based on collaborative learning attaches great importance to students' cooperation. In the whole learning process, students need to cooperate with each other to complete the task, constantly adjust themselves, communicate with each other, integrate into small groups, and focus on team building, so as to complete the task. Through this process, students' interpersonal and collaborative abilities can be fully exercised.

4. Summary

For a long time, there are many problems in college English teaching, such as large class size, less class hours, heavy tasks, limited interaction between teachers and students and low enthusiasm of students. Integrating the flipped classroom into college English teaching and combining the collaborative learning mode, to a large extent, overcomes the disadvantages of traditional teaching, improves students' enthusiasm and interest in learning, and promotes the interaction and communication between teachers and students and students' learning effect is greatly improved.

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