

Web2.0-based Blended Learning in College English Teaching

Liu Siyang

Foreign Language Department Jilin Institute of Chemical Technology Jilin City, China
liu990205@163.com

Abstract

In Web2.0 environment, college English blended learning has been applied since it can combine the advantages of conventional classroom teaching and online learning. This paper briefly introduces the essence of Blended Learning, gives the overview of Web2.0, generalizes the characteristics of Web2.0-based college English blended learning, and mainly expounds its practice in college English teaching. It comes to the conclusion that the practice of Web2.0 blended learning can promote teaching reform and improve teaching quality.

Keywords: blended learning; Web2.0; college English teaching

1. Introduction

In 2007, College English Curriculum Requirements for Non-English Majors was issued by the Ministry of Education in China, which proposed to adopt a new teaching model to improve the conventional teacher-centered classroom teaching. Depending on the support of network technology, the new model has been suggested to direct the English teaching into a personalized learning, which is free of the constriction of time or place and, above all active. Thus, the new model fully reflects the essence of blended learning and will consequently bring the fundamental change to the college English teaching, for which

Web2.0 can provide a favorable environment.

2. Blended Learning and Web2.0

2.1. The essence of blended learning

Although “Blended Learning” is a new term in the education field, its ideas and thoughts have already existed for many years. The theoretical foundation of Blended Learning is dualism of emphasizing the guiding function of teachers and the subject position of students, which is based on constructivist learning theory, socio-cultural learning theory and cognitive theory. According to the explanation of American Learning Circuit, “Blended Learning” refers to learning events that combine aspects of online and face-to-face instruction. By combining the advantages of traditional classroom teaching and E-learning, blended learning not only focuses on the construction of knowledge by learners themselves, but also puts emphasis on establishing the guiding role of teachers as well as collaborative learning of peers. So, in connotation, “Blended Learning” is the blending of different learning methods, learning media, learning contents, learning models, student-supporting services and learning environments; and in essence, it is a new learning method or a new learning idea.

2.2. The overview of Web2.0

Web2.0 is not a thing, but a development

stage of the Internet, a general term for a variety of technologies and their related products and services at this stage. The most prominent character of Web2.0 is that it highlights to integrate common users into the Internet and make them the real hosts. It is the combination of such technologies as Blog, Wiki, RSS, Tag, SNS applications and so on with more emphasizing on freedom, openness, collaboration and sharing its core concept. Through realizing the automatic transfer of information among Internet sites, Web2.0 gives users much autonomy. The users can subscribe content in which they are interested and build their own Internet portals. Meanwhile, timely interaction can be carried out among users, between users and service providers. Web2.0 offers a basic platform for the sharing and transaction of information, fully realizing the socialized function of the network.

3. The Characteristics of Web2.0-based College English Blended Learning

It has been acknowledged that Web2.0 bears the features of allowing the extensive participation of users, promoting the interaction of users, deepening the personalization of users and sharing resource among users, etc. These features, together with E-learning systems of textbooks, create good conditions for Web2.0-based blended learning in college English teaching, and decide that it has the following characteristics as well.

3.1 The blended learning environment

Web2.0 provides college English teaching with a blended learning environment which is both formal and ubiquitous. College English blended learning environment includes classroom instruction, web2.0-based autonomous learning, and collaborative learning which

work together to promote English learning.

3.2 The blended learning content

Web2.0-based college English learning is the blending of relatively specified content and absolutely open information. The relatively specified content means that students are required to finish the autonomous learning of the material and courseware according to the tasks assigned by teachers. Meanwhile, in addition to the textbooks and the campus network learning system, there are a huge amount of English learning materials online, which means Web2.0-based learning content is absolutely open.

3.3 The blended learning approach

Web2.0-based approach to learning English is the blending of autonomous learning and collaborative learning. Here, autonomy mainly refers to the independent learning about accessing and processing information in a networked environment. And collaborative learning is, in the form of small groups of learners, to jointly reach the goals of learning through discussion and mutual assistance. For example, Blog focuses on individual-centered knowledge construction, while Wiki puts more emphasis on co-creation; therefore, this kind of blended learning promotes both autonomous learning and collaborative learning.

3.4 The blended learning idea

The idea of Web2.0-based college English teaching is the blending of the teacher-led idea and the student-centered idea. The conventional teacher-centered instruction emphasizes teachers' control of the teaching process. The students' initiatives are so much ignored that they have to accept passively the linguistic knowledge taught by teachers. While student-centered teaching stresses the

students' initiative construction, and the effective organizing of classroom teaching can hardly be guaranteed due to the lack of teachers' control. College English teaching based on Web2.0 takes into account the teachers' "teaching" and students' "learning", truly embodies the "teacher-led, student-centered" principles, and promotes harmony between the two.

4. The Practice of Web2.0-based Blended Learning in College English Teaching

In order to realize the ultimate goal of cultivating students' autonomous learning ability, innovative spirit and practical ability, in teaching practice teachers must be well aware of the characteristics and connotations of Web2.0-based college English teaching and guide students to carry out blended learning in three stages: autonomous learning, interaction online and classroom teaching.

4.1. Stage One—autonomous learning

The learning environment at the first stage of college English blended learning is the network platform, on which students should implement autonomous learning based on the objectives defined according to the content of the textbooks. Web2.0 provides teachers and students with a network learning system, online courses, Google and English forum on Moodle platform, Second Life virtual community and the language exchanges through Blog, etc. As long as the appropriate teaching systems are installed on the LAN, courses and online tests are available. Students can learn by themselves language points and relevant background knowledge with the help of the materials offered on the network platform, practice listening and speaking through using the video, audio and audio-visual scripts provided on websites, and complete the task assigned by teachers.

Through the platform, teachers can perform an evaluation and test on students' learning outcomes in the first stage.

4.2. Stage Two—interaction online

With the problems unsolved in the first stage, students start the study of the second phase. In the second stage, learning is carried out under the environment of wide area network and in the form of autonomous learning and collaborative learning, but mainly of collaboration.

It is known that the English learning websites based on Web2.0 can provide students with personalized service which enables them to choose the information that they are interested in to learn and improve their English language skills. While more importantly, using web as a platform, students can learn English together with their classmates, net friends and bloggers. With the discussion forum offered by college English courseware, real-time and non-real-time online interactions can be realized. In Second Life, which is a quasi-authentic social network community built with the technology of Web2.0, language teachers and language learners are offered a free site and resource. English learners all over the world form a virtual "global village" here and carry out group thematic teaching once a week. By continuously constructing the community revolved around English learning and participating community activities, students learn English language while they are doing all kinds of things. Consequently, learning content does not rigidly adhere to the materials of the textbooks and the effective learning is achieved. In this way, in the course of students' communicating, discussing and studying on the platforms which are formed by Web2.0-based Blog, TAG, SNS, RSS, Wiki and other social software, the expected results of

collaborative learning is achieved.

4.3. Stage Three—classroom teaching

Classroom teaching at the third stage is the key to teaching, which enables teachers to play a leading role fully and guarantees the teaching goals eventually. In the environment of classroom instruction, teachers can check the results of students' language learning directly. At this stage, group presentations can be required to give by students in order to train their oral English ability and develop their creative thinking in a real classroom environment. At the same time, group presentations can also test the quality of their own self-learning and collaborative learning. Teachers should summarize the contents of the unit and conduct a necessary overall evaluation on students' learning and performance. In order to ensure the orderly and efficient learning, teachers should carefully design all the aspects of classroom teaching. On the one hand, it is of great importance for teachers to stimulate students to participate in classroom activities with the model of "question—inquiry" and give full play to their dominant position. On the other hand, teachers have to pay attention to the control of teaching process.

It is necessary to point out that in hybrid college English teaching, the three stages of autonomous learning, online interaction and classroom teaching are not strictly conducted step by step or completely separated from one another. Therefore, teachers should make an intensive study of how to carry out blended learning and handle it properly.

5. Conclusion

Generally, social development and application of network technology are changing the conventional ways and concepts of learning. In Chinese

universities, the English learning model which is based both on computer and classroom has already been widely applied. With the complementary advantages of conventional classroom teaching and network learning, Web2.0-based college English teaching mode can not only train students' basic language skills, but also develop their cross-cultural communicative competence. It can be believed that blended learning is a necessary way to deepen the reform and improve the quality of college English teaching.

6. References

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