Autonomous Mechanism of College English Teaching and Learning*

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The aim of college English teaching in China is to build the teaching mode with the Internet and to foster talents with comprehensive quality. This paper proposes to build mechanisms of dual autonomy, dual classroom, and dual evaluation in universities, especially those in undeveloped areas, to facilitate both teaching and learning.

Keywords: autonomous teaching, formative evaluation, autonomous learning

Introduction

In the context of teaching mode reform, the new teaching mode with network multimedia has been prevalent in recent years. Many colleges have established autonomous learning centers and introduced in formative evaluation to foster the learner autonomy. However, problems are exposed: Students could not smoothly adjust to the new teaching mode for their deficiency of autonomous learning ability; hardware facilities and teaching environment lag behind the modern technology. Thus, the key point lies in how to bring the teacher's guidance into full play to stimulate the student's subjective initiative and learning interests.

Related Conceptions

Autonomous Teaching

By David Little, teachers must be able to exploit their professional skills autonomously in all their pedagogical actions, which embodies in their responsibility for teaching. Teachers are able to get emotion and cognition through reflection and analysis. Little once said that learner training and learning strategies are indeed indispensable for the growth of learner autonomy, while the decisive factor lies in the interaction between teachers and students, namely the nature of pedagogical dialogue. He redefined the teacher's roles: facilitator, counselor, manager of learning resources. Teachers are supposed to focus on the four sections of teaching mode: teaching plan and lesson preparation, class environment, class teaching, and professional duty.

Autonomous Learning

Learners take their first step towards autonomy, discovering their learning needs in personality and society to nail down learning resources and strategies and reflecting their learning through the cooperation with others. They are responsible for their own learning and decide autonomously the WHAT, the HOW, and the WHEN of

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their learning so that they are able to bridge the class and practice, namely, learning and exertion. Specifically, they exercise that responsibility and decision through their involvement in all aspects of learning process—setting goals, planning, implementing, reflecting, and evaluating. Autonomous learners are able to make learning strategies and make never-ending efforts to grasp these strategies when setting goals and discover problems in learning so as to find solutions when in the process of reflection, and make clear personal criterion for self-assessment when evaluating their learning progress.

Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluation produces in the process of educational activity in which the knowledge, skills, and attitude form. It is conducive to the improvement of teaching activity and learning progress through the monitor and assessment from teachers and the feedback to both teachers and students. The common forms include class performance, classroom discussion or group dialogue between teachers and students, students' understanding and thinking written down in diaries or journals of what they have learned, homework and quiz, student record, and so on and so forth.

Mechanisms of Dual Autonomy, Dual Classroom, and Dual Evaluation of College English

These three kinds of mechanisms, conducive to the improvement of professional level for teachers and the comprehensive quality for students, denote the enhancement of autonomous awareness from students and teachers, the combination of two kinds of classroom, namely, First Classroom and Second Classroom, and the dual evaluation to both students and teachers.

(1) Building autonomous teaching system of college English and making efforts to foster students' autonomous learning ability.

Teachers must be able to exploit their professional skills autonomously in all their pedagogical actions, which embodies in their responsibility for teaching, and get emotion and cognition through reflection and analysis.

Teachers are supposed to focus on four sections of teaching mode: teaching plan and lesson preparation, classroom environment, classroom teaching, and professional duty. The essentials for the autonomous teaching system are student-centered, balanced with teachers, students, teaching materials, teaching mission, and other factors, and mutually beneficial to the autonomous awareness from both students and teachers.

As for the first section, teaching plan and lesson preparation, it is composed of four essentials: knowledge presentations including teaching content and teaching method as well as student-relevant knowledge, determination of instructional objectives, instructional design with internal consistency, and assessment of student learning. Teachers are able to transform instructional design into sequential teaching activities and exercises with a keen appreciation of teaching content and teaching method. They can also set instructional objectives acceptable to students and adopt the feasible assessment of student learning.

The second section, classroom environment, is composed of four essentials: mutual respect and harmony, cultural atmosphere for English learning, management of classroom order, and management of students' action, which are all interactions in classroom that contribute to foster a good classroom environment and English learning environment. Teachers with highly autonomous awareness work on fostering learning motivations of students and the growth of autonomy in their learners with the construction of strong learning atmosphere.

The third section, classroom teaching, is composed of six essentials: clear and exact communication, techniques of questioning and discussing, students' earnest about their studies, feedback to students, flexibility,

and responsivity, which are organically integrated. A couple of points deserve concentration. One is the teaching mode reform concerned with students' learning style, a spontaneous perception and cognition with relative stability. The student-centered classroom teaching requires teachers to have a great understanding of their students and offer diverse information and skills based on the respect to their different learning styles so as to encourage them to determine learning tasks autonomously. It not only caters for students' needs but also promotes the autonomous learning ability and all-round ability of students. The other is the learning strategy to be strengthened, which acts as the key to guide students to learn autonomously and efficiently. Therefore, students must admit the importance of learning strategies. Additionally, the positive interactive relationship between tactics and academic progress helps students to understand and apply strategies into use.

The last section, professional duty, is composed of five essentials: teaching reflection, precise record, contributions to college and school districts, professional development, and professional presentation, which are part and parcel of teacher's responsibilities outside classroom. Teaching reflection denotes the thinking upon the teaching practice, through which teachers can find out their deficiency and make adjustment to their teaching plan to better guide the work and lead to the progress of teaching. Maintaining precise records is as essential as a fundamental of teaching complexity, which benefits individual's development of students and promote the mutual development of students and teachers.

To put it in a nutshell, autonomous teaching is a framework that never stops changing whose specific plans vary with different groups, curriculum tasks, and other factors. Teachers are expected to provide guidance in learning methods, reading tactics together with new information, and language communication. Holding the people-oriented principle and from the view of the all-round development of students, teachers are what is meant by agencies to conduct students to apply knowledge, skills, and strategies to practice which serves the control of the learning process and foster talents with independent thinking and ability to solve problems.

(2) Optimize First Classroom and strengthen Second Classroom.

Many scholars have been engaged in research on Second Classroom. In practice, the way of organization and evaluation of Second Classroom supported by some certain theories or the Internet environment, by students, cannot benefit them widely and some of them participate inactively in it for their demand of evaluation mechanism concerned. Students are over-free in extracurricular activities, which is a kind of management called "herding sheep". Considering these situations, the content of Second Classroom is included into First Classroom in classroom teaching evaluation and autonomous teaching by the author.

The mutual teaching aim of dual Classroom is to conduct students to apply their language knowledge and skills to practice in language application, foster their ability to communicate with others, and help to improve their comprehensive quality. Many research efforts at home and abroad have been focused on this area and presented theory support. Stephen D. Krashen, representative of psycholinguistics, proposed his second language acquisition that second language should be acquired through exposure to natural and authentic language environment so that learners can grasp it in the quickest way. By Krashen, students acquire from formal classroom teaching only explicit language knowledge that cannot be transformed into implicit one in normal communication. Therefore, in order to improve students' interactive ability, much more opportunities outside classroom need to be provided for students to learn and practice second-language.

The exposure of authentic language can be maximized through network multimedia in classroom teaching which focuses on the instruction of learning method. Classroom teaching helps to foster autonomous learners who are able to study consciously after class. Second Classroom which allows students to most utilize their

spare time after class is celebrated as teaching in large classes cannot offer everyone an opportunity to make a presentation. For the sake of the orderly development of Second Classroom, an organization institution concerned needs to be established, for instance, English club. The club is comprised of English talents and teachers and the president of the club in charge of various associations and responsible for general directions are regularly recruited from these talents. The English website of the club is created for publicity and promotion to encourage students to actively participate in various English activities and lead to an English learning environment. Meanwhile, students are required to join at least one club which they are interested in because this will be included in the final assessment at the end of the semester.

Teachers can divide students into learning groups to carry out cooperative learning in class and evaluate their learning while students are required to finish their learning tasks and make presentations before class, thus First Classroom and Second Classroom can be effectively integrated.

(3) Build dual evaluation mechanism to encourage the subjective initiative of both teachers and students.

Significant achievements have been made in the reform of college English teaching in recent years. In spite of that, the real transformation of teaching mode has never occurred as it may be difficult for some teachers to fit in with. Therefore, evaluation mechanism needs to be built accordingly to lead teachers to welcome something fresh and new and improve professional quality. The formative evaluation and summative evaluation to students run parallel with those to teachers.

First and foremost, the management method must be flexible. All sorts of activities are operated in various units such as community, department, class, group, and so on and so forth. People hold the post of monitor, commissary in charge of studies, and faculty adviser must take responsibility for management, feeding back any progress to the teachers of research group at once. A series of examinations occurs along the learning process for the sake of a complete evaluation, consisting of the learning portfolio, attendance and absence, classroom performance and extra-curricular performance, homework and assignment, midterm and final exams, and other indexes. The formative evaluation and summative evaluation respectively account for 30% and 70% of the assessment results. The whole process of evaluation aims to facilitate the all-round ability of students and their application ability of English while various indexes of examination are just one of the evaluation methods. Teachers focus on the part of learning and results instead of teaching and process. They examine students from multilevel and multiple places and the latter will be inspired. Meanwhile, students are able to transform their self-confidence and satisfactorily built in the process of learning into learning motivation.

Furthermore, an incentive mechanism of evaluation must be clear. On the one hand, teachers should have the right to teach autonomously. They are able to flexibly adopt teaching methods with the aim of improving the all-round application ability of students. On the other hand, the college writes relevant stipulations on a coherent general idea of teaching which should be absolutely followed by teachers when the teaching mode develops maturely. In addition, a proper evaluation mechanism built by the college is necessary. The assessment of teachers can be presented through questionnaires filled up by students. Teachers are encouraged to maintain innovation spirits with the incentive system. Thus, the quality of teachers and students will be improved. Otherwise, the college English teaching reform will lead to formality.

Conclusion

College English teaching reform is a project of great complexity which goes ahead only when the subjective initiatives of both teachers and students are maximized. Various teaching modes, teaching methods,

and network multimedia are all tactics. Considering the unbalanced development of universities, the mechanisms of dual autonomy, dual classroom, and dual evaluation should be built from every college and individuals to improve the all-round application ability of students. How to build a fair-and-square and clear dual evaluation mechanism should be focused on in future studies.

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