

Study on the In-depth Cultivation of Students' Eight Competencies in College English Courses under the Guidance of the "Learning-centered" Teaching Concept

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Abstract

Under the background of education informationization, college English courses should timely take the transition of students' learning style into consideration, on accounting of they belonging to the generation of "Digital Native" in the 21st century. This paper aims to construct the depth of English learning mode by designing diverse learning resources and activities conforming to students' cognitive regularity, according to the guidance of "Learning-centered" teaching concept, driven by developing students' eight competencies. The mode efficiently promotes the mutual interaction between the first class and second class, realize the offline communication as well as online practice and guidance, as well as meet the needs of the learners' diverse, personalized and autonomous learning goals. The eight competencies fostered by learners in the process could effectively transfer into other disciplines and works of life, enhancing students' comprehensive qualities and competencies.

Keywords

College English Course; "Learning-centered" Teaching Concept; Eight Competencies; The Depth of English Learn Mode.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Significance

The study is the positive response to the double-edged sword of mobile terminal technology. In the 21st century, current learners (or more specifically speaking, "digital native" generation) have more multiple channels to obtain large amount of information anytime and anywhere, which in turn poses great threat to the authority of classroom and professionalism of teachers. Actually, what students obtain is just the fragmented knowledge without In-depth thinking. This paper intends to achieve modernized English teaching and construct the scientific mode of learning English. This is conducive to improving the current situation where college students do not devote too much energy to learning in a sense, increasing the efficiency of the English learning and arousing their persistent learning motivation for learners.

The research is in line with the development concept of colleges and universities. It is an important step to practice the eight competencies required for the cultivation of applied technical talents. The eight competencies refer to the competency of international vision and exchange, of physical and mental health, of technology application and innovation, of expression and communication, of humanistic literacy and morality, of professional knowledge and expertise, of knowledge acquisition and self-study, of dedication and cooperation, and etc. [1], which contribute to cultivating undergraduates to build a lifelong learning system.

This paper aims to assist in cultivating students' stable learning drive, promote whole-person development, and foster students' competencies of learning, thinking, practicing and comprehending. The eight competencies students developed in English language study can be transferred to other disciplines and works of life.

1.2. Literature Review

“Learning-centered” teaching concept originates from overseas. Von Glasersfeld (1990), R. B. Barr and J. Tagg (1995), Stephen (2005), Huba & Freed (2000) and other scholars have actively explored and proposed that teaching should be reformed from “teaching-centered” mode to “Learning-centered” one, confirming that teachers have become the scaffold of students’ knowledge system construction, achieving teaching effectiveness [2].

Domestic scholars have launched a positive exploration, especially in the couple of years. Among which, the more representative ones are as follows: Lin Guangbin (2013) wrote the paper On University Education based on Learning-centered Teaching Concept [3], pointing out the fundamental tasks and goals shouldered by China’s higher education, which should emphasize the “student-oriented and Learning-centered” teaching concept to implement teaching, therefore embody the value of philosophy of university education; Wang Yuling (2021) divided students into several groups, who were required to display their works of PPT in the classroom by exploring the teaching materials, in this way to promote the dominant position of students themselves, and practice “Learning-centered” teaching concept [4]; Ma Yu (2021) Investigates the application status, practical obstacles and transformation paths of “Learning-centered” teaching concept in English courses of higher vocational colleges and universities from the perspectives of teachers and students [2]. Scholars such as Wang Na, Zhang Jingyuan (2018) [5], hu Lirong (2020) [6] have actively promoted the reform of English teaching in universities relying on information technology in the Internet era.

In summary, scholars have provided certain guidance on how to promote the concept of Learning-centered education, but they have not presented a set of systematic and operational implementation plans, and the overall depth and implementation strength need to be strengthened, especially as to how to improve students critical thinking which still needs to be further exploited, so as to achieve In-depth processing of knowledge.

2. Theoretical Basis

Constructivism theory holds that knowledge is not acquired through teachers. Instead, it is gained through the construction of meaning by learners, who are exposed in a certain context, that is, in a socio-cultural context, with the help of others (including teachers and learning peers), using the necessary learning materials [7]. The theory puts a strong emphasis on students’ role in English acquisition [7]. It is students themselves who explore, discover and construct the meaningful knowledge learned. Teachers are no longer the center of teaching, but are the loyal supporters, guiders and facilitators of students’ constructive knowledge. The teaching model has changed from the traditional “teaching” by teachers to the “learning” by students.

The “Learning-centered” teaching concept requires that the absorption and internalization of knowledge should be in accordance with the working mechanism of human memory. The key to memory is primarily on the retrieval, instead of on the storage. While, the key to retrieval lies in the regularity and orderliness of organization, that is, information storage. and only by storing all sorts of information in the most conducive way to retrieval could learners effectively improve memory efficiency [8]. It is as if the bulks of books stored in a library. As long as the librarians classify the diverse books by the category codes and storage, individuals can quickly find the target book using the online query system.

Deep Learning Theory just emphasizes that learners mainly absorb new knowledge and new ideas on the basis of comprehending learning materials, at the same time integrate the original knowledge experience based on the schema framework of learners, transfer the past information and experiences to promote the integration of knowledge and cultivate the learners’ high-level thinking ability. The five basic characteristics of deep learning theory are

as follows: focusing on cultivating critical thinking skills, emphasizing the correlation and integration of various information, promoting knowledge construction and reflection, focusing on the transfer and application of knowledge and ability, and cultivating problem-oriented problem solving [9]. It is self-evident that Deep Learning Theory coincides with the realization of students' development goals on eight competencies.

3. Main Content

Based on the current situation of English learning by students in colleges and universities, this paper is carried out under the guidance of the "Learning-centered" teaching concept, with the reverse thinking by taking the cultivation of students' eight competencies as the starting point. It takes the students from Xi'an Peihua College as the research subject, takes the theme in each unit of the university English courses as the clue. This learning mode takes Deep Learning as the theoretical basis, integrates the unit objectives and discourse content, relies on the Mosoteach platform, to integrate the offline communication and interaction as well as the online practice and guidance together, realizes the mutual promotion and mutual advancement of the first and second classrooms, and strengthens the cooperation and exploration between teachers and students, and students themselves. This learning mode reflects the ubiquitous English learning characteristics, meet the needs of the learners' personalized and autonomous learning goals, and cultivates students' diversified learning competencies.

4. Research Design

4.1. In-depth Exploitation of Teaching Materials to Promote the Interactive Exploration of Offline Communication in the First Classroom

To follow the "Learning-centered" teaching concept, the teacher should bear the reverse thinking in mind when preparing the lesson from the very beginning, to organize teaching activities and contents with the goal of cultivating students' eight competencies. The traditional roles of teachers and students must have been changed. After the teacher combines the unit themes and discourse content to explore valuable topics, the scaffolding role of the teacher is reflected by raising inspiring questions to students, who in turn, actively ponder on the logical connections between different paragraphs, and construct structured knowledge through problems exploration and problem solving. Under the guidance of teachers, with questions-driven, it is students themselves who spontaneously explore, digest, absorb and integrate the previous knowledge and experience, to form the concept of critical thinking, and update the knowledge structure. The concept of Deep Learning runs through in the process, focusing on the connection between previous and new knowledge. During the process, the cognition of language competencies and cultural consciousness is strengthened, learners are unconsciously to understand themselves, the society and the world with a more prudent, objective, inclusive, comprehensive attitude and perspective, to internalize into their own knowledge, qualities and behavioral habits to solve diverse problems in the future. The competencies such as of international vision and communication skills, of expression and common skills are boosted as well.

In the past, learners habitually understand the meaning of the passage from a microscopic perspective, that is to say, they carry out literal translation word by word and sentence by sentence. In fact, It seems that learners do not really understand the whole passage from a bird's-eye view. They always feel at a loss if asked the concrete questions in the text. Therefore, they lose the passion in English learning as a result of plenty of teaching contents could be picked up online. Unlike the traditionally mechanical English learning mode, take the passage of How My Chinese Mother-in-Law Replaced My Husband for instance, instead of the teacher

translating the text word by word and students listening, learners are encouraged to first identify the focus of the family's contradictions, that is, how to allocate household management and who is responsible for taking care of the baby, hence learners are asked to disrupt the original order of discourse to get the answer. Secondly, students are asked to see the family problems from the perspective of an outsider, to analyze the contributions and problems of each role of the foreign wife, her husband and the mothers-in-law respectively, at this time learners will look at the description of the wife from the text in a neutral and fair way, and form a more comprehensive and objective insight. In this process, students undoubtedly draw on the responsibilities and contributions of themselves and other family members in their own families, and combine their personal experiences to propose diverse solutions to the contradictions in the text. At the same time, students and the teacher will talk about the differences on the concepts and practices of family education in China and western countries by exhibiting their works through videos, PPT and other forms, and finally build a network structure of language knowledge and culture. The teacher guides the students throughout the whole process to explore valuable topics, and the students are the true active builders.

4.2. In-depth Practice of English Activities to Achieve the Transfer and Innovation of Knowledge in the Second Classroom

In the design of the production-oriented link, the teacher just designs the group activities on the basis of hot topics in current society by combining the unit theme and students' major. Students are encouraged to take the unit theme as a clue, constantly challenge themselves by seeking novelty to complete group works (such as street interviews, sitcom shooting, questionnaire, personalized design of mind maps and etc.). They deepen their understanding of the unit theme and transfer knowledge, to enhance their knowledge structure. Through group members' exploration, students better improve their own qualities, understand others, society and the world, foster a correct value orientation and way of thinking, and form objective speculative insights. While improving the comprehensive linguistic competencies, students also cultivate competencies of innovation ability, critical thinking, language expression and integration, and coordination and communication.

For example, when learning the unit of love story, students major in Chinese Language and Literature are asked to exhibit some classic love stories in China and/or Foreign countries. One group vividly exhibits the firm and loyal love of Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao, and praises the responsibility and spirit of giving up individual interests for public benefits. Students internalize the language points they have learned in this unit into their own knowledge system, while enhancing their national pride and cultural identity. This work has set correct orientation towards love and has received high praises among students.

4.3. The Depth of Designing Mosoteach Activities to Practice Online Practice and Guidance, Boosting Students' Knowledge Acquisition and Self-learning Ability

The teacher should give full play to Mosoteach, the place where students carry on In-depth processing, to ensure that students are dedicated to engage in English learning, students' learning participation and sense of experience are also highlighted as well. Activities range from regular reading before learning each passage, regular uploading study notes, to class performance including raising hands in the class, grabbing answers and random selection, to quiz on text comprehension, questionnaires, brainstorming on the theme, to uploading group works and homework and teacher feedback after class, and etc., which turns out to highly arouse the enthusiasm of students and solve problems such as students' low participation in the classroom, limited English class time in total, less practical use after class and so forth.

4.4. The Scientific Implementation of Teaching Evaluation to Guide Students to Think for Depth

Through classroom assessment, clear requirements are made on students, which in turn set standards on their behaviors. Not only the summative evaluation is included in English learning, but also the process assessment also exerts a vital role in the whole process, two of which make the scientific combination to timely influence students' learning style, attitudes, behaviors and effects, guiding students to carry on In-depth thinking. Data collected from the Mosoteach platform give timely and positive feedback on students' class status, contents of group works, and levels of English proficiency, providing feedback on classroom learning quality. Evaluations from the teacher, and among students themselves are blended together to provide the scientific measure. The teacher gives timely feedback on those excellent assignments and works, and problems discovered, to set good examples and help students understand their problems in English learning, which more scientifically reflect "Learning-centered" teaching mode.

Clearly defined disciplines are the premise to ensure effective classroom teaching. In the past, students could not resist the temptation of playing smart phones, chatting with each other or sleeping in the classroom, to some degree they assumed it was only the summative evaluation that decided whether they could pass the English course. Currently, process assessment has set fixed and strict requirements on the aspects that students should strive for. The teacher and students, in advance, should reach the consensus on the detailed rules such as classroom attendance, the leave system, students' status in class, the display of group works on schedule, and rating standards for group works, as well as various activities in Mosoteach platform. That is to say, as for the fair chance of rushing to answer, each student could only enjoy 2 times to answer the question during 2 periods and gain the relevant scores because of plenty of them are eager to respond. As for the originality of the brainstorming activity, students should provide their own insights on the given topic asked, instead of picking up information online. If students give irrelevant answers or they just copy from others, they will get 0 as the punishment. By contrast, if their answer are very original and creative, they will get the rewards, additional scores. As for confidentiality of the quiz content, students will not know the correct answer in fixed time and are forbidden to reveal the answer to others before the end of the test. As for the relevance of discussion area, since the scores are given in advance by the platform, students could only give pertinent answers rather than talking nonsense, otherwise, the score will be deducted from the platform operated by the teacher. As for the quality of group works, every positive exploration towards the theme will be approved of by their originality and devotion, instead of doing homework for the homework. At first, it was extremely hard for some students, especially for those shy and reserved one. Only few students are willing to challenge themselves simply wanting to get high scores, however, their actions exert a radiant power on surrounding peers, who are influenced to become more and more active. It turns out that the constraint of discipline management is conducive to forming a fair, just, open and orderly learning atmosphere, and helping students cultivate the scientific and rigorous attitudes, advocating knowledge and respecting the facts.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the traditional cramming method of English teaching instilled rigid and boring knowledge into students, resulting in students to accept knowledge in a passive and mechanical way, rather than to comprehend it by thinking about the problem actively. By contrast, under the guidance of the "Learning-centered" teaching concept and with the eight competencies as the starting point, teachers only play a pointing and inspiring role, arousing students' thinking, helping students to find their own ideas and opinions, making students full of the desire to pursue the knowledge, stimulating students' active emotions of acquiring knowledge, so as to

maximize the subjective initiative of students, exert their own potential, and thus cultivate innovative talents satisfying the needs of the society. All in all, the In-depth study of students in College English Courses put forward by eight competencies pays more attention to the In-depth and fine processing, cultivates students' high-level thinking competency, could boost them to gain transferable knowledge, construct a meaningful knowledge system, and improve the core competencies of the discipline. This mode will increase the cognitive and behavioral investment in learning, while pointing to the purpose of lifelong learning.

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