

Development of Chinese University English Teachers' Student-involved Classroom Assessment Literacy

Lili Zhang

School of Languages and Media, Anhui University of Finance & Economics, Bengbu, 233000, China

Abstract

On basis of the previous study on student-involved classroom assessment and the status quo of university English classrooms in China, this study discussed the dynamic construct of university English teacher assessment literacy and put forward suggestions on how to develop university teachers' student-involved classroom assessment literacy.

Keywords

Assessment Literacy; Student-involvement; Classroom Assessment; University English Teacher.

1. Introduction

In January 2017, Chinese State Council issued the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education", further enhancing the role of assessment in morality cultivation. One of the conditions for realization of educational assessment is based on the assumption that "students are concrete people, people in relationships and people in the process of formation" in which the initiatives of students are fully respected. Since student-involved assessment embraces students' initiatives in assessment and learning, its potential effect has been widely acknowledged by numerous researchers and teachers under the background of "assessment for learning" and "assessment as learning".

As for students' involvement in classroom assessment, the biggest challenge is posed for teachers, since teachers should provide students with "scaffolding" when guiding students to participate in classroom assessment. For example, teachers should provide students with assessment criteria, provide appropriate assessment tools, and provide assessment feedback that is conducive to students' improvement (Li Yusheng, 2015). But these all depend to a large extent on teachers' assessment literacy. If teachers have low assessment literacy, they will face many difficulties in facilitating students to participate in classroom assessment. In addition, if the assessment objectives and criteria set by teachers are not conducive to students' understanding, there will be great differences in the understanding of assessment goals between teachers and students, and even lead to students' misunderstanding, and students' involvement in classroom assessment may be futile. If teachers only use student-involved classroom assessment as a tool, but are not aware that assessment is a part of teaching, which is conducive to improving their own teaching and students' growth, student-involved classroom assessment organized by teachers will become "false attention" and "shallow attention" (Zhou Shide, Zhang Mingmin, 2005), which have made college English courses as "hollow courses" (Feng Yan, 2006).

Therefore, to explore the construct of college English teachers' classroom assessment literacy and then explore the approaches to help Chinese university English teachers develop their assessment literacy in student-involved college English classroom assessment is of great importance in resolving the crisis that students "can't learn something" and "no interest in English learning" in college English classroom (Yu Liming, Yuan Duping, 2005; Feng Yan, 2006).

2. The Construct of University English Teachers' Classroom Assessment Literacy

2.1. Classroom Assessment

In the fourth generation of assessment, it is advocated that classroom assessment should be based on negotiation, dialogue, understanding and meaning construction in a favorable psychological classroom environment. According to Richard Stiggins (1991), classroom assessment, in any form, at any time, are designed to maximize student interest and motivation in order to facilitate student progress. For this reason, students instead of just being the object of assessment, they should be the real subject of classroom assessment, who should have the right and must actually participate in assessment process related to their academic achievement.

In addition, classroom assessment has shifted from focusing on external measurement to subjective assessment in classroom, from the unilateral objective and unified assessment criteria of assessors to mutual unification and integration between assessors and assesses, and build a student-centered classroom assessment system that promotes students' all-round development.

As for the local context in China, as early as in the time of Confucius, attention was paid to knowing students, and whether students were consistent with their words and deeds through their actions, so as to assess whether the intended educational objective was achieved. Besides, Confucius also advocated that students should conduct self-assessment through "introspection", requiring students to "see the virtuous and then learn from it, and see the unworthy and then reflect to avoid repeating it" (The Analects of Confucius, Liren) It can be seen that Confucius believed that students' self-assessment includes two aspects: academic practice and moral cultivation.

Other scholars also contributed a lot to the study of classroom assessment. According to (Shi Liangfang, 1996) classroom assessment is based on teaching objectives, using operational scientific means, and systematically collecting relevant classroom teaching information to make judgments in value on the process and results of classroom teaching activities, the process which provides self-improvement feedback for the assesses and informed decision-making evidence for related stake-holders.

In brief, classroom assessment is a process of judging the value and characteristics of classroom teaching plans, activities and results in certain methods and ways (Zhang Hua, 2011). This covers assessment object, assessment standard and assessment method, which is embodied in the following three aspects, that is, classroom assessment is a kind of value judgment by root; classroom assessment mainly involves three parts, namely teachers' teaching, students' learning and the utmost classroom teaching quality and outcome; and classroom assessment is a kind of detecting the differences between real teaching outcome and ideal teaching objective. These three aspects are the key and essence of classroom assessment.

2.2. Student Involvement in Classroom Assessment

How to facilitate students' involvement in classroom assessment has long been a research topic both in the West and in the East. Ralph Tyler (1969), who first studied student involvement, first proposed the concept of Time on Task as an important reference for evaluating student involvement. He believes that time has an important impact on the completion of learning by students. That is, the longer a student is in a learning state, the richer he or she gets. Based on this premise, student involvement obtains the basis of concepts and theories, and comes as the earliest conceptual prototype of student involvement. C.Robert Pace (1982) enriched Tylor's research finding by the "Effort Quality Theory", which states that the more time and effort students invest in learning, the more students will gain from the experience of involvement.

Alexander Astin (1984) believes that students' deep involvement mainly refers to the realization of maximizing students' learning outcomes in the whole learning environment and interpersonal communication to encourage students' participation, and students' physical and psychological input energy.

In the 1990s, research on student involvement was often conducted on a certain aspect, such as behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects, which indicate that student involvement is multi-dimensional and mutually independent. But it is Newmann (1992), further elaborated on student involvement, that it is not sufficient to limit students' involvement in behavior only, and there should be a deeper level of involvement, that is, psychological involvement, which is the key and essence of student involvement. In the 21st century, based on previous research, George Kuh etc. (2011) proposed the concept of student engagement, which stresses the effort level of students and the environment and services that the school can provide, so that students can get involved more deeply, resulting in better learning and teaching outcomes.

In China, current study on student involvement is mainly about the characteristics and elements of student involvement itself. Wang Sheng (2001) put forward that students' spirit-psychology-thinking involvement is the most important part. The coordinated and unified involvement of these three levels is "deep immersion", which is a highly unified involvement of students' intelligence, emotion and behavior. According to (Wei Hong, 2001), student involvement can be divided into active involvement and effective involvement. The former focuses on students' emotions and attitudes, while the latter focuses on students' knowledge, skills, processes and methods.

Shen Jian (2001) put forward two dimensions of students' involvement, that is, receptive and experiential. The former is the truth-seeking activity, which is at the level of logical cognition and aims to generate human knowledge, technology and practicality, while the latter is at the level of emotion and attitude, and takes the moral personality of the person as its value destination. The two are the premise and cause and effect of each other, and constitute the overall involvement of students. Sun Haibo etc. (2006) further echoed this finding that "involvement" and "initiative" should be used in combination, which mainly reflects the "initiative" of students in participation, and is a manifestation of attitude.

2.3. University English Teachers' Classroom Assessment Literacy

In view of the characteristics of student-involved classroom assessment, the construct of university English teachers' classroom assessment literacy is complex and dynamic, which consists of classroom assessment awareness, attitudes, knowledge, skills, values, and ethics. Since this ideal state is difficult to be achieved in a short period of time, this study focuses on three parts of teachers' classroom assessment literacy, that is assessment awareness, assessment knowledge and assessment skills.

Assessment awareness in assessment literacy consists of teachers' understanding of the subject, method, function, process and system of classroom assessment. Each dimension has different content elements, which are represented by teachers' assessment practices, and can also be expressed through discourse, and reflection, etc. The assessment awareness represented by assessment practice is usually teachers' actual assessment awareness, while assessment awareness expressed orally or in writing are often teachers' ideal one. The agreement between the two is the embodiment of the unity of teachers' assessment knowledge and assessment practice, which is also the utmost pursuit of education.

The systematic integration of the above-mentioned dimensions can provide a theoretical framework and an observation system for a comprehensive investigation of university English teachers' classroom assessment awareness and value orientations. Teachers' assessment awareness will also affect teachers' classroom assessment practices and the construction of assessment knowledge and skills to a greater or a lesser degree. Assessment knowledge and

skills includes elements such as clarifying purpose, setting goals, collecting and interpreting evidence, providing feedback, making adjustments, and communicating results.

On account of the sequence of classroom assessment, it can be divided into three stages: pre-class preparation, in-class implementation and after-class processing, each stage includes different assessment accountability and practices. In the pre-class preparation stage, teachers should refer to the requirements of the curriculum standards, investigate students' prior learning and needs, take into account of teaching material context, select appropriate teaching methods, design teaching objectives and teaching activities, and ensure the relevance of objectives and activities. The process of instructional design at this stage involves the participation of teachers' assessment awareness, and it is also the process of embedding assessment design into instructional design.

During the in-class implementation stage, teachers use various forms and levels of activities such as comprehension, application, transfer and creation, etc. to engage students in learning and implement the established teaching objectives. Meanwhile, assessment methods, such as, questioning, observation, exercise, and performance tasks are adopted to collect evidence of students' learning, determine the gap between students' current level and potential level, give feedback, provide scaffolding, and promote the dynamic generation of knowledge. The process of teachers' implementation of assessment at this stage is also the process of implementation of teaching. After class, university English teachers need to communicate with different assessment stakeholders such as students, schools, and parents by reporting students' learning results, reflecting on classroom teaching practice, adjusting teaching and assessment strategies, all of which are for future improvements. During the whole assessment process, university English teachers should pay attention to the ethical issues such as the validity, reliability and fairness of the assessment. Assessment knowledge and skills of university English teachers in different stages of classroom assessment are completely integrated with the requirements of teachers in the teaching process, and they are expected to work jointly to facilitate students' learning and development.

3. Approaches to Developing University English Teachers' Student-involved Classroom Assessment Literacy

Under the background of student-involved classroom assessment, university English teachers' classroom assessment literacy is closely related to teaching and learning outcomes, which affects the promotion of foreign language curriculum and assessment reform, and the construction of the national foreign language assessment system and the talent cultivation in this new century. To develop university English teachers' classroom assessment literacy, three approaches are put forward as follows.

First, teachers' assessment awareness should be sharpened and their understanding on assessment should be deepened. That is because, teachers' classroom assessment awareness and value orientation will directly affect their classroom assessment practice. To this end, university English teachers should update the concept of foreign language education and assessment, with the purpose of implementing morality, cultivating people and educating people in disciplines, and promoting the development of students' language, culture, thinking and learning ability. In student-involved classroom assessment practice, university English teachers should straighten out the relationship between assessment, teaching and learning, be fully aware the different assessment functions of questioning, feedback, classroom observation, performance tasks, in-class quizzes, and portfolios to strengthen the awareness of the classroom assessment function in promoting learning and teaching. University English teachers also need to be clear about the assessment process concepts and examine the complex dynamic assessment system of macro social culture, meso school organization and micro classroom

context. comprehensively Only when university English teachers realize the importance of classroom assessment, receive relevant assessment training and learn relevant assessment theories, can they apply what they have learned into their assessment practice.

In addition, practical inquiry and action reflection are suggested for university English teachers. Since university English teachers are not only the organizers and implementers of classroom assessment, but also the classroom assessment learners. Keeping on inquiring in practice and reflecting in learning is one of the advisable ways for teachers to improve their classroom assessment literacy. Teachers should embed assessment in teaching, and focus on the design and implementation of teaching-learning-assessment integration. Teachers should give full play to their own agency, like communicating with colleagues, consulting with experts, and adjusting to contexts etc.. Teachers should also enrich themselves with relevant assessment literature, using theory to guide practice, theorizing and improving practical assessment experience, and sharing it with others.

Last but not least, university English teachers are suggested to strengthen their faith and construct their identity in student-involved classroom assessment. Restrained by many macro, meso and micro assessment contexts, university English teachers are in a dilemma between the ideal of promoting assessment for learning and the reality of test-taking education, and need to balance the contradiction between espoused theory and applied theory, and need to bridge the gap between daily concepts and scientific concepts of classroom assessment. The internal agency and vision of university English teachers are the source of their professional development, as well as the pioneering dynamics that promote team building and school culture development. At present, there are many external factors promoting or restraining the development of university English teachers' classroom assessment literacy, including promotion of the reform of university English courses and assessment, cultivation of the core literacy of talents, increasing requirement of assessment to promote learning, the reform of the enrollment system, as well as the support of the school environment, the cooperation of students, and the understanding of parents etc.. Under such a complex and dynamic assessment context, university English teachers should strengthen the belief in classroom assessment for learning and teaching, give full play to initiative, actively construct their assessor identity, take the initiative to improve the psychological adjustment mechanism, strengthen communication with different assessment stakeholders, improve communication, and obtain more external support to develop classroom assessment literacy.

4. Conclusion

The history of the reform and development of English education in Chinese colleges and universities shows that innovation in assessment concepts, assessment systems, assessment techniques and other aspects of classroom assessment has become a bottleneck and key issue in the reform of English education in colleges and universities.

At present, talent cultivation is placed in a more important and prominent place by Chinese colleges and universities. In addition, the course attributes and teaching objectives of college English make "how to construct a scientific assessment system and a good education ecology" in college English classroom assessment gain increasing attention from all circles. College English teachers have also been expected of more assessment responsibilities and accountabilities than in the past. They are expected to use classroom assessment to stimulate students' desire for knowledge, enhance learning confidence, obtain learning satisfaction, help students gradually enhance consciousness of equality and democracy, promote the formation of a sound personality, and then achieve the goal of whole-people cultivation. To this end, the "what" and "how" of university English teachers' assessment literacy development need and should be translated into university English teachers' daily assessment practice.

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