

Application of UPP Assessment Mode to English Teaching in Private Colleges and Universities

Wenting Zhang

Dianchi College of Yunnan University, Kunming, China

Keywords: UPP, portfolio, assessment, college and university, English

Abstract: UPP assessment examines students' learning and performance and reflects their learning process and learning results dynamically by guiding them to establish their own UPP of learning, so as to cultivate their cognitive and metacognitive abilities. In recent years, with the deepening of education reform, private colleges and universities have made great efforts as well as progress in English teaching. Teachers' level, teaching management and students' attention to English are gradually increasing. However, due to the poor source of students and other reasons, it is difficult for the traditional evaluation mode to improve students' interest in English learning. This paper is mainly to establish an effective UPP assessment mode, namely Unit Project Portfolio, for English learning according to the actual teaching practice in private colleges and universities, to study its impact on the learning ability of English learners, to make a thorough study of the current teaching of UPP assessment mode in English teaching, and to discuss its significance and limitations.

1. Introduction

In the long-term practical teaching, the author has found that students in private colleges and universities generally produce inferiority complex, and the emotional attitude reflected during the learning process is relatively negative. To a large extent, this restricts students' learning initiative and enthusiasm, leading to their ineffective learning results. Therefore, it is a significant topic that teachers in private colleges and universities are required to use pedagogical theory and method to consciously stimulate and mobilize students' positive emotional factors in learning English, and to improve the effectiveness of English teaching. This study establishes UPP (Unit Project Portfolio) assessment mode in combination with the characteristics of students based on the teaching practice of English reading and writing course in private colleges and universities. This mode aims at collecting and sorting out students' learning achievements at a certain learning stage, so that teachers are able to understand their students more comprehensively and objectively, improve teaching, and provide effective guidance and help for the development of each student as more as possible. Meanwhile, it also enables each student to be conscious of their own advantages, tap their potential, build up confidence in English learning, and ultimately improve their English learning proficiency.

2. Basic Survey of English Teaching and UPP Assessment Mode

2.1 Current Situation of English Curriculum in Private Colleges and Universities

It has been found that the enrollment expansion in the past few years has enabled a group of students with relatively poor English foundation to study in colleges and universities. Although most colleges and universities are constantly developing and practicing various teaching methods for cultivating students' interest in learning English, the effect is not satisfactory as expected. One of the reasons is that English curriculum is not reasonable enough to meet students' learning needs, which is specifically manifested as follows. First, it does not follow the principle of hierarchical teaching. At present, English curriculum in colleges and universities has not fully taken into account the actual situation of students' English. The curriculum setting is too single to carry out the principle of teaching according to student's aptitude, let alone to mobilize student's interest and

enthusiasm in learning. As a result, those with poor foundation are unable to get proper detailed guidance and training while those with good foundation only repeat their studies in low-level courses and gradually lose interest and motivation in English learning. Second, it does not follow tightly the trend of social development. At the present stage, English education does not keep pace with the trend of requiring graduates to have strong English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation abilities. It overemphasizes the passing rate of CET-4 and CET-6. Therefore, students spend a lot of time and energy preparing CET-4 and CET-6, but they are not capable of applying their knowledge flexibly.

2.2 Practical Value of Portfolio Evaluation

Portfolio assessment is also called “growth record bag”. Bill Johnson, an American curriculum evaluation expert, firstly defined portfolio assessment in the Handbook of Students’ Quality Assessment (2001) that portfolio assessment is based on students as the center and theory of democratic education, showing and evaluating students’ academic achievements and progress. In the actual portfolio assessment, teachers’ opinions are of great reference value. Through the combination of the effects of several teachers’ use of portfolio to assess teaching, the following values are summarized:

Firstly, it promotes the professional development of teachers and improves their ability of teaching and research. Teachers mentioned in interviews that the most significant impact of portfolio assessment on themselves is to help them improve the professional level. This kind of improvement not only refers to the aspect of English professional knowledge, but also the aspect of the study of basic education principles, especially the theory of educational assessment. The implementation of portfolio assessment also puts forward new requirements for teachers. They should not only master professional knowledge, but also design different teaching activities according to the actual learning level of different students. In addition, they are expected to master the relevant knowledge of pedagogy, educational psychology and so on, constantly modify the implementation plan in the process of practice, observe and analyze the problems existing among students, and then put forward solutions. This process not just promotes the transformation of professional knowledge teaching to be professional ability teaching, but also enhances professional theory teaching to be professional skill teaching. Secondly, it helps teachers change their assessment concepts. At present, the main assessment method of English teaching in junior middle school in China is still summative assessment. Under the baton of “examination scores”, most teachers teach for examination, and quite a number of students learn English only for examinations or entrances to higher grades, turning into “examination machines”. Such an utilitarian learning motivation can not stimulate or cultivate students’ interest in learning. Portfolio assessment is helpful for teachers to renew their teaching ideas and improve teaching methods with scientific teaching assessment methods. Transferring teachers’ attention from examinations to the dynamic development of learning makes them not only pay attention to students’ academic performance, but also stress the investigation of students’ comprehensive language use ability, giving full play to the incentive-oriented role of assessment. Ideas determine actions. Only by effectively changing teachers’ educational evaluation concept can we promote curriculum reform and achieve educational goals.

Finally, it leads teachers to open the door of professional wisdom. Portfolio assessment is diversified, which contains rich and colorful contents and is not rigid in form. While promoting students’ all-round development and personality training, teachers have also embarked on the road of diversified development. Teachers are not only supposed to have a solid theoretical basis, but also a good moral character, firm ideals and beliefs and strong personality charm. In order to carry out portfolio assessment well, on the basis of combining theoretical knowledge and practical skills effectively, teachers are expected to have rich imagination and creativity to break through conventions. This is the practice of a teaching evaluation method as well as the process of artistic creation of scientific education work, which is a manifestation of wisdom. It is in the fertile soil of educational practice that teachers’ professional wisdom begins to germinate. In the practice of

portfolio assessment, teachers have experienced arduous journeys, completed the exploration of unknown field of knowledge, gone to a broader world, and seen a more distant landscape. This sense of achievement and satisfaction will encourage teachers to continue to teach and educate people.

In College English Curriculum Requirements, it is clearly pointed out that the assessment of students can be divided into formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment is allowed to take many forms, such as records of classroom activities and extracurricular activities, online self-study records, records of learning files, interviews, discussions and so on. Secondly, due to the unbalanced level of education development and the long-term influence of traditional exam-oriented education, the main assessment mode of College English teaching in China is still summative, in which examination results are still regarded as the only criterion to measure students' learning ability and teachers' teaching quality.

3. Importance of UPP Assessment to English Teaching in Private Colleges and Universities

The advantages of UPP assessment in English teaching in private colleges and universities are as follows.

3.1 Improve Students' Abilities

When building UPP of learning process, students are capable of gradually improving their reflective ability (judgment and control ability), and forming the ability of self-evaluation and self-reflection through deep reflection and self-evaluation. Most importantly, in the process of creating UPP, students do not passively complete the learning task, but actively participate in teaching. After defining the content requirements of UPP, students' attention can be turned to the goal of improving their quality in all aspects, thereby eliminating the useless work and psychological pressure in dealing with closed-book examinations. Ultimately, it is conducive for them to reach the ideal state of self-learning, and develop the good habit of active learning, which benefits them all their lives.

3.2 Broaden Communication Channels between Teachers and Students

Communication benefits the mastery of language, while there is very little communication between teachers and students in English class due to the limited time. Standardizing extra-curricular assignments in the form of UPP or online communication will effectively promote English learning. For example, teachers are suggested to assign some homework in each class, requesting students to review or study textbooks carefully, consult the relevant materials, and complete the homework in the electronic form. Meanwhile, teachers need to correct students' homework carefully, and enhance communication in the form of words or e-mail or group chat, which will make up for the lack of time for discussion in class. Students can also read and communicate with each other to learn from each other and avoid weaknesses.

3.3 Effectively Accumulate Experience in Teaching and Learning

UPP of learning process can be stored and reflects students' learning process at every stage, in every semester or even in several years, including homework, teachers' corrections, problems encountered in the learning process, achievements, self-reflection, suggestions for teaching and so on. Through this accumulation process, students will better understand their learning process and related learning and cognitive strategies, achieving meta-cognition effect. UPP of learning process not only records the learning process of students, but also the hard work of teachers, from which we can see the achievements and shortcomings of students. Teachers and students are suggested to take measures according to specific difficulties, so as to adjust teaching or learning and achieve better results.

3.4 Enrich the Teaching Assessment System

UPP assessment of learning combines "qualitative" assessment and "quantitative" assessment. It

effectively combines them by assessing the value of learning process and learning results. For example, the assessment of a student's learning can be carried out in the term of qualitative aspect including self-reflection, teaching plan or courseware as well as in the term of quantitative aspect like feedback from teachers, record of academic ability, evidence of students' positive learning, etc. It can be seen that UPP of learning breaks the traditional test method and assesses learners' knowledge level and teachers' teaching skills in many ways.

3.5 Experiences Gained by Individual Students

Students can reflect on and become aware of the differences and deficiencies in learning in time. They are guided and evaluated by teachers and other students after finishing each learning task, and then self-evaluation is carried out in which they write down their experience in order to find their gains and shortcomings in the learning process. In this way, students re-recognize their learning process, adjust their learning plans in time and apply control strategies and self-regulation strategies. The use of these metacognitive strategies will help students effectively arrange their learning, control the whole learning process and lay the foundation for making great progress in learning in the future. Moreover, students are able to constantly recognize their own mistakes through information feedback in electronic portfolio, reinforce correct information through retelling, elaborate processing and organizational strategies, and constantly connect with the original information to produce new information, thus promoting the acquisition of the second language. Through this way, students can continuously improve their self-management ability, self-regulated ability and lifelong learning ability.

4. Research Purpose and Content of UPP Assessment Mode

4.1 Research Purposes

- (1) Apply UPP assessment mode to classroom teaching. Improve the utilization rate of students' learning time and enhance the efficiency of students' listening and classroom participation.
- (2) Stimulate students' interest in learning, help them to explore their potential, build up self-confidence in learning, and promote the development of their positive emotional factors.
- (3) Help teachers understand and evaluate students and test teaching effect, as well as provide effective basis for further improving teaching level and improving teaching evaluation methods.
- (4) Help students make self-reflection and self-evaluation, so that they are able to understand their strengths and weaknesses in the learning process, and find their own learning methods through self-exploration.
- (5) Build a platform for communication between students and teachers, promote mutual understanding and communication, and create a harmonious learning environment for students.

4.2 Research Content of UPP Assessment Mode

UPP of English Learning in colleges and universities is mainly based on the UPP Unit Learning Record Table. It is closely integrated with the curriculum setting of New Horizon English Reading and Writing Course in Colleges and Universities. It takes the learning task of a unit as the content and is divided into five parts, pre-class preview, check and correct, daily learning record, presentation of learning results, self-assessment of students, teachers' evaluation and students' evaluation. The specific contents and functions of each part are as follows:

- (1) To-do List: Pre-class preparation. This part is filled out by teachers. Its content include two or three questions put forward by teachers according to the key knowledge of the unit and students' academic level, which will inspire students to think purposefully in the process of pre-study. It is a diagnostic assessment in which students answer teachers' questions after preparation. Teachers are also expected to appraise students' learning readiness before class, so as to take appropriate measures to make the teaching plan carry out smoothly and effectively.
- (2) Check & Correct: This part is filled out by students. In this part, students are required to check and correct the questions they answered in the preview section, and compare changes before

and after learning. It is a kind of summative assessment in which students judge their learning effect through self-reflection and self-evaluation. It is also a process for students to understand “what have I learned” and “how have I learned”.

(3) Achievement: A daily record of learning. This part contains two parts: classroom learning record and homework completion record. Classroom learning record is filled out by students. In this part, students are asked to record the key points of classroom knowledge in each unit in each lesson. It can also be regarded as a “learning record” or “classroom note”, which is conducive to teachers’ formative evaluation of students.

(4) Funs & Activities: Display of learning outcomes. This part is completed by both teachers and students. Firstly, before the beginning of a new unit, teachers are suggested to design three extra-curricular assignments according to the theme of each unit, which reflects different intelligence advantages of students, and filled them in the Table. The homework design combines the Unit Project of each unit of New Horizon English Reading and Writing Course in Colleges and Universities. According to the actual learning situation of students, their practical operation ability in English reading and writing can be exercised. Meanwhile, their individual differences in the development of multiintelligence can be fully considered, so that each student is able to get the opportunity to show their own advantages. Among three assignments, students are allowed to choose one of them according to their hobbies and intelligence advantages. This part is closely related to the content of textbooks and higher than the content of textbooks. It is a link to stimulate students’ creativity and imagination, and let students experience the fun of “playing in learning” and “learning in playing”.

(5) Comments: Exchange Garden. This part includes three functions: students’ self-evaluation, teachers’ evaluation and students’ mutual evaluation. At the end of a unit, students and teachers communicate equally on this platform. Students can not only review and summarize what they have learned in the course of learning a unit, but also talk about their true feelings in the process of learning, or even put forward their own opinions and suggestions for teachers’ teaching. They are able to get a comprehensive self-awareness from the evaluation of teachers and parents, build up self-confidence in learning, and obtain a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, UPP assessment breaks through the traditional standardized examination, effectively improves students’ English reading and writing ability, improves students’ self-confidence in learning, and stimulates students’ potential. Through the establishment of UPP, students are capable of displaying their learning achievements and advantages in the field of intelligence, discover potential, and gain successful experience, so as to cultivate interest in learning and build learning confidence. Moreover, it promotes the professional development of teachers and the promotion of scientific research ability, enables teachers to further learn and master the basic principles of pedagogy, educational evaluation theory and related knowledge of educational psychology, helps teachers change their evaluation concepts, and shifts teachers’ attention from examinations to the dynamic development of learning so as to give full play to the incentive-oriented role of assessment.

Acknowledgement

The work is funded by Scientific Research Project of Dianchi College, Yunnan University.

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