The Application of the Teaching Model - Flipped Classroom on the Teaching of College English Listening

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Abstract: Listening is a main access for information acquisition and language perception among the five skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. However, college English listening is a bottleneck for a large number of college students. There exist many problems in college English listening nowadays in a great deal of universities. Flipped classroom is a major technological reform influencing classroom teaching as well as an effective approach to solve the problem of English listening. The application of flipped classroom on college English listening should be implemented according to three steps, which are pre-class design, in-class design and after class design. Flipped classroom is an effective way to arouse students' interest in English listening and an efficient teaching approach to improve students' English listening competency on condition that it is implemented in appropriate means.

Researches show evidently that 45% of verbal communication is devoted to listening; speaking takes up 30%; reading occupies 16%; the rest 9% is left for writing. The five skills in comprehensive English ability include listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. Listening is a main access for information acquisition and language perception among the five skills and one of the effective approaches to improve the rest four skills. The proportion of listening test is rising year by year in CET4 (College English Test Band 4) and CET6 (College English Test Band 6). CET4 and CET6 are significant criteria in evaluating college students' English competency and in job hunting. However, listening is a bottleneck for a large number of college students. Consequently, listening has become a hot potato that needs to solve for college students.

1. Problem analysis in listening teaching of college English

There exist many problems in college English listening at present in a great deal of universities.

Above all, the teaching material of English listening is lacking in new ideas and English listening training is short of cross-cultural background. Teaching materials in English listening are mostly traditional textbooks and audios. In this era of information proliferation, the update of textbook version is comparatively fallen behind. Plenty of valuable and influential real-time news may be inclined to be disregarded and neglected during English listening teaching.

Secondly, English listening teaching method is usually rather monotonous. Consequently, the teaching effect is sometimes far from satisfactory. The teaching model of college English listening still remains the traditional model of "first listening – then checking the answers – at last listening again" in a large number of universities. English listening teaching method needs to be improved and polished.

Thirdly, there still exists the phenomenon of insufficient teaching hours in English listening curriculum design in a large amount of universities. Take the university that the author is teaching in as an example, there are six teaching periods for college English every week. English reading and writing takes up four teaching periods, and only two teaching hours is left for listening and reading every week. Class learning time for English listening is rather insufficient.

Additionally, English listening teaching process attaches too much importance to listening theory, and at the same time ignore the importance of practice. Students merely listen to the teaching materials negatively and inactively. They are lacking in English listening learning initiative. What's

more, there is rare extracurricular supplementary English listening material.

After that, students' English listening ability is different from one another. English listening classroom activities may be effortless for some students, while the same activities can be arduous for other students. Nevertheless, students with different listening abilities are supposed to stay in the same class. Consequently, traditional college English listening teaching does not take students' differences into consideration. Traditional teaching cannot teach students in accordance with their own listening aptitude.

Finally, interactions between teachers and students are rather unsatisfactory. Furthermore, interactions among students are comparatively inadequate. Classroom interactions can not only arouse students' interest but also can liven up classroom atmosphere.

Against this background, English teachers are supposed to reflect on the present English listening teaching problems actively and strive to figure out some effective approaches to improve English listening teaching and learning methods and effect. Consequently, a new teaching philosophy -"flipped classroom" appears in some classroom practice of higher education.

2. Flipped classroom

Flipped classroom was put forward by two chemistry teachers Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams in Woodland Park High School in 2007. They began practising flipped teaching at the high school level. They recorded their lectures and posted them online in order to accommodate students who missed their classes. Perhaps the most recognizable contributor to the flipped classroom is Salman Khan. Because of Salman Khan and his Khan Academy, this teaching model was spread widely all over the world.

Flipped classroom is also called inverted classroom. Flipped classroom is a kind of teaching form, in which students learn digital materials made by teachers autonomously before class, participate in interactive activities between classmates and teachers and finish the exercises in class. The basic teaching process of flipped classroom is like this: firstly, the teacher assigned the students to watch video or audio teaching materials before class; secondly, the students do exercises on the basis of mastering the existing knowledge; thirdly, the students return to the classroom and explore the knowledge and questions with classmates under the guidance of the teachers; finally, the students summarize and reflect on the knowledge they have learned under the help of the teachers.

Flipped classroom is a major technological reform which influences classroom teaching. It is just the opposite of the traditional way that "the teacher teaches in the classroom during the day, and the students go home to do their homework in the evening". Students finish the study of knowledge before class through online video materials given by teachers beforehand. The classroom becomes a place for various interactions, including answering questions, solving puzzles and knowledge application between teachers and students. Well-developed networks, computers and computer-aided instruction tools make flipped classroom practical and feasible. Students acquire knowledge by way of internet and computers before class, and internalize knowledge with the help of the teachers and the students in class.

Flipped classroom should have the following major characteristics: at first, the quantity and the quality of the video and audio teaching materials should be adequate and accurate; secondly, the teaching content must be clear and unambiguous; finally, teachers should re-construct learning process in flipped classroom.

There are two stages in the traditional teaching model, which are the information transfer and the internalization of knowledge. The information transfer is realized by way of the various interactions between the teachers and the students in class. The internalization of knowledge is accomplished by the students through homework after class. Flipped classroom readjusts the traditional teaching model. The information transfer is finished autonomously by students before class. Teachers not only provide videos and audios, but also provide on-line instruction. The internalization of knowledge is the teaching emphasis of flipped classroom. It is accomplished through interactive activities in class. Teachers learn the learning difficulties of the students in advance and offer effective instruction and practice in class. The mutual communication between students is more

beneficial to promote the internalization process of students' knowledge.

The traditional teaching model can't satisfy the students' individual differences and promote students' initiative and creativity. Sometimes our students have passed CET 4 or CET 6 examinations, and are competent for English reading and writing. However, employers are still dissatisfied with graduates' communicative competence in English. Sometimes graduates are incapable of accomplishing English communication successfully. Flipped classroom is an effective approach to solve the problem of English listening and speaking. It changes the traditional teaching method of infusing and feeding duck and fully develops students' English listening and speaking ability in an all-round way.

3. The application of flipped classroom on listening teaching of college English

The application of flipped classroom on listening teaching of college English should be implemented according to the following three steps.

3.1 Pre-class design

Teachers make videos or audios of English listening micro-lessons which are suitable for students' language competency and personality difference according to the difficulty of the listening content. The videos and audios help students to clarify the listening objectives and contents and to summarize the important and difficult points. The video duration is supposed to be controlled in 5-10 minutes. The content of micro-lessons is supposed to be presented in various ways. Consequently, students' interest in English listening can be aroused greatly.

The content of micro-lessons should not merely about the textbook since news in listening book becomes old news after the book was published. The latest news about the topic of the textbook can promote students' motivation and interest in English listening learning. With the development of internet and technology, there are a large quantity of sources of videos and audios available for teachers and students, such as VOA, BBC, Keke English, hjEnglish, Tingclass, TED, etc.. Teachers are supposed to integrate or accommodate these abundant resources or provide the various resources to students for their free option.

Students learn by themselves through videos or audios before class autonomously. Self-study and task preparation should be completed before class on the network platform. Students are supposed to reflect the difficulties and problems that they encounter on-line to teachers before class.

3.2 In-class design

Teachers summarize and categorize the problems reflected by students during self-study of watching videos before class and exercising. After that teachers organize students to have group discussions together to tackle the problems encountered. The role of the teacher is a facilitator, guide, and motivator. The host of the class is the student. Students are the center of English listening class.

Teachers are supposed to encourage students to figure out keys to the problems through peer assisted learning and group cooperative learning of group discussion. Outcome of the group discussions ought to be presented by one representative and can be taken into account of students' regular grades, which encourage students to speak actively in class and stimulate students' awareness of cooperative learning. The teacher offer comments and intensive explanation according to the outcome of students' group discussions. As a result, students can absorb and internalize the knowledge and language skills during practicing, group discussion and teacher's instruction. Consequently, students' ability of self-control, collaboration and innovation are supposed to be cultivated gradually.

Curriculum evaluation system is supposed to be adjusted according to flipped classroom. The evaluation of students' performance must break the traditional method of taking final exam grade as the center, in which teachers' assessment of students is the main means. Curriculum evaluation system in flipped classroom is supposed to combine formative assessment with terminative assessment. A multiple evaluation system is supposed to consist of a large amount of factors, such

as teachers' assessment of students, students' self-assessment, mutual assessment among group members, groups' self-assessment and groups' mutual assessment, etc.. Students change from the object of the evaluation to the master of the evaluation. Teachers change from a former sole evaluator into one of the evaluators and organizers of the evaluation activities.

3.3 After class design

Teachers are supposed to make full use of Internet platform for online interaction with students. Teachers answer questions that are not solved during listening class and put an end to the obstacles that students encounter during English listening. Teachers are also supposed to design appropriate and adequate after-class activities according to the topic or theme of each chapter or unit so as to make the students fully understand and internalize the knowledge. Teachers are supposed to offer feedback and evaluations to students' performance in time. Teachers can arrive at the destination of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude through providing personalized guidance and consolidation training after class. In the university where the author is working, Shandong Jiaotong University, various Internet platforms are adopted, such as MOOC, UMOOC, etc.. Internet platform helps to increase communication between teachers and students, arouse student's interest in English listening and improve students' English listening ability.

4. Conclusion

College English listening is a bottleneck for a large number of college students. There exist many problems in college English listening nowadays in a great deal of universities, which includes inadequate and obsolete teaching materials, monotonous teaching methods, insufficient teaching time, too much listening theory and unsatisfactory interactions, etc. Flipped classroom is an effective approach to solve the problems of English listening and speaking. It changes the traditional teaching method and fully develops students' English listening and speaking ability in an all-round way.

The application of flipped classroom on listening teaching of college English should be implemented according to three steps. In pre-class design stage, students learn by themselves through videos or audios presented on the Internet platform by teachers autonomously and reflect the difficulties and problems that they encounter on-line to teachers before class. In in-class design stage, teachers summarize the problems reflected by students and organize students to have group discussions together to discuss the problems encountered. And then, teachers offer comments and intensive explanation according to the outcome of students' group discussions. Consequently, students can absorb and internalize the knowledge. In after class design stage, teachers design after-class activities to make students further internalize the knowledge and offer feedback and evaluations to students' performance.

Flipped classroom can enhance students' enthusiasm and stimulate students' interest in English listening efficiently. It contributes to improve students' listening comprehension competency. It requires teachers to prepare and design videos, audios and activities more carefully before class. Teachers are supposed to be proficient in multimedia internet technology to produce vivid and fascinating teaching materials. In the meantime, students are required to have strong self-restraint ability and can accomplish the tasks autonomously in time during the three stages. All in all, appropriate application of flipped classroom on college English listening can improve students' listening ability effectively.

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