Task-based Teaching Model of Audio-visual-oral Course in the Environment of Modern Information Technology

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Abstract. With the development of modern teaching theories and modern information technology, Chinese National Department of Education puts forward new guidance for college English education, that is, to utilize internet and the computer to assist college English teaching. Combining with the characteristics of college English audio-visual-oral course, this paper puts forward the task-based teaching model based on the modern information technology, calling for a teaching management and evaluation emphasizing the process more than the result. The purpose is to make some beneficial exploration for the college English teaching reform.

Introduction

Based on the Teaching Requirement of College English Course published in 2007, Chinese Education Department published Teaching Guidance of College English Course (briefed as Teaching Guidance in the following part) in December, 2014. Teaching Guidance encourages the application of the advanced modern information technology and the setting-up of various internet courses, so as to provide a good language learning environment for the students. As to the listening and speaking ability, it also puts forward the target requirements of different levels based on the teaching reality, which stresses the development of the application of English, the consciousness of the cross-culture and the ability of communication. At the same time, the Teaching Guidance requires to develop the students’ ability of autonomous learning, to obtain the learning resources actively by utilizing the modern information technology, and achieve their goal of learning to meet the needs of the country, the society, the school and the individual development.

In the real teaching practice, the result of College English audio-visual-oral course is not satisfying. The improvement of the students’ listening and speaking ability is often not obvious. The development of the information technology and its wide application in the education provides the technical supports for the teaching reform and the practice. Combining with the characteristics of the course, this paper puts forward the task-based teaching model based on the modern information technology, encouraging the teaching management and evaluation which pay more attention to the process than the result, and wishing to make some beneficial exploration for college English teaching reform.

1. General Overview of the Task-based Teaching Model

The task-based teaching model is developed from the communicative teaching methodology and has great influences on language teaching. Task-based teaching model sets the specific task as the learning motivation, the process of fulfilling the tasks as the learning process, the showing of the result as the teaching and learning achievement. In the real teaching practice, that is, the teacher designs the learning tasks for the students, and makes them learn and use the language naturally in the process of fulfilling the given tasks. The learning tasks are usually the open teaching activities to finish something or to solve a certain problem with their acquired language skills.

The Indian educator Probhu is the first person who strongly supports the concept of task-based learning and achieves great teaching success. He pioneered in the idea of language learning in the process of solving non-language tasks. The result of this kind of learning is even better than
focusing on the language itself like grammar or new words, and even could make students get amazing progress. In 1980s, from the aspect of educational psychology, Breen and Candlin put forward the task-based learning based on the negotiation. They encouraged the teacher and the students to decide what to learn together. The students improve their ability of using language in the way of successfully solving various problems, while the teacher’s responsibility is to combine the language learning with various tasks.

D. Nunan (1989) divides the classroom tasks into two types: the real ones and the pedagogic ones. The real ones refer to the tasks of language-using activities in real life, such as drawing a road map or writing a laboratory report. The students’ ability of using English gets developed by the way of finishing these real-life tasks. The pedagogic tasks refer to the activities designed for teaching. The main purpose is to practice the language and master the respective skills, such as introducing the campus or describing the scenery of the hometown.

While designing the tasks, the students’ English level must be taken into consideration to decide the degree of difficulty and the training focuses. To maintain the passion of learning, the chosen materials should be colorful and catching up with the time. According to the nature of language learning, the training of the lower grades should focus more on the language input and the strengthening of the basic skills, as well as proper training on cognitive strategy and the effective strategy, so as to guide the students to understand the law of language learning and reduce their learning anxiety. For the higher grades, the training should focus more on the automatic learning and the language output, as well as the development of the meta-cognitive strategy. To gain the best result, the students need to master the planning strategies, monitoring strategies and the assessment strategies, and increase the chances to use the language by the way of seeking help and cooperative learning.

2. The Conveniences Provided by the Modern Information Technology to College English Audio-visual-oral Course

In recent years, with the fast development of the modern information technology, college English teaching has changed greatly in the aspect of technology, especially in audio-visual-oral courses. Due to the characteristics of the audio-visual-oral course, the internet is playing an unprecedented helping role. Comparing with the traditional language teaching, task-based language teaching in the environment of the modern information technology has so many advantages. In the traditional teaching environment, the comprehensive skill-training is far beyond enough. The teaching resources are usually limited to the textbooks. The means to involve the students is also very limited. The communication between the teacher and the students is in scarcity, and the class is often resulted in being boring and dull.

The conveniences provided by the modern information technology are as the follows:

1. The powerful multimedia teaching system.

The multimedia teaching system based on the modern information technology is quite helpful for the training of the language, which usually consists of the computer network platform, the system of the internet resources, the system of the monitoring, the system of the cooperative learning and the system of the automatic learning.

The computer network platform involves the digital language laboratory, the internet and the respective software and hardware.

The system of the internet resources integrates the digital resources and designs, or builds up the matching learning resources library, provides the relative references, websites or various searching engines.

The monitoring system involves two subsystems: the administration system and the assessment system. With the administration system, the teacher could make analysis to the course and the students, manage the information on the student’s automatic learning and the group works, do the follow-ups and give proper guidance and suggestions. The assessment system is used to evaluate the learning result. The integrated evaluation mechanism includes student’s self assessment, mutual assessment and the teacher’s assessment, and helps evaluate the students from cognitive ability,
emotional experiences and the learning skills in the form of the quantity tables. The teacher could modify the teaching target according to the feedback from the assessment system, and do the preparation for the following learning of the students.

The cooperative learning system generally consists of the self-developed teaching forum, chatting room, network videos, social software like wechat and qq. These network means provides the mutual communication between the teachers and the students without limitation of time and distances.

The automatic learning system may turn to English Automatic Learning System published by the Higher Education Press, or those developed by the specific university, such as the micro lectures or MOOCs, which are already in practice in many colleges and universities. With this system, the teacher could flexibly arrange the students’ listening and speaking assignments, do the follow-ups with the administrative system. According to the feedback, the teacher could manage the classroom teaching more target-focusing and coping. On the students’ side, they could know their learning level accurately, and do the coping plans and arrangements based on their own level.

2. Under the network teaching environment, the teaching resources are abundant, colorful and easy to obtain, which are quite helpful to motivate the interests in the students, to provide the most suitable individualized learning for them, very good for motivating and developing the students’ autonomous learning.

3. In the modern information environment, the modern means, such as the videos, slides, man-machine interaction, and the guidance on line and so on, provide the most direct and immediate language learning carriers, the relaxing and pleasant atmosphere and the most coping teaching directions. The three-dimensional language learning environment combines the activities in and out of the classes, inside and outside of the school, making the learning much easier to be put in practice.

3. The Practice of the Task-based Teaching Model in College English Audio-visual-oral Course in the Environment of the Modern Information Technology

*College English Guidance* sets different targets of listening and speaking based on different levels and puts much emphasis on the function of the application. In the real teaching practice, the students’ ability of listening and speaking varies not only from place to place, but also from student to student even in one teaching class. How to get a satisfying teaching result and take into consideration of the individual differences, is always a goal for the English teachers to achieve. With the modern information technology, taking advantage of the network resources, a relatively more satisfying teaching result could be achieved in a certain degree by applying the task-based teaching model.

Willis thinks that the teacher must provide the students with the following things: exposure to “real language”, opportunities for using language for real purposes and the motivation to learn and use the language. This idea could be exactly realized in the task-based teaching model, which makes the students start their learning by fulfilling the assigned tasks. In this process, the students’ attention could be directed back to the language they used and get corrections as well as modifications. Willis divides the task-based teaching model into three stages: pre-task preparations, carrying-out of the task and the language strengthening. With the motivation of the task, the students would employ more language means and try to broaden the range of the language practice, and their language skills would be greatly improved this way. In the process of fulfilling all the tasks, they will employ the learned language and the communicating skills in different situations, and the language learning becomes more interesting instead of boring.

In the following part, take class presentation for example in the teaching practice, this paper tries to explain the practical combination of the task-based teaching model with the modern information technology.
3.1 Task Assignment

In the classroom teaching, the open task is usually easier to be accepted and more willing to be carried out. My assignment for the class presentation is a five to ten minutes English presentation based on the students’ interests or concerns; No limitation to the form or the content; It could be presented either individually or in group; The means of modern information technology such as PPT or videos, could be employed but not a must; The presentation must be totally in English and without turning to the written materials while presenting in the front. At the same time, the standard of the assessment is given: C to A+ according to their performance, and takes 50% in the final term score. This is a term task, assigned at the beginning of the term and posted in the class wechat group to be checked any time according to the students’ need.

3.2 The Carrying out of the Task

In the environment of the modern information technology, the performance of the presentation is always satisfying. With the open nature of the task, the students can fully explore their interests and concerns to do the preparation, and their enthusiasm is fully motivated. In this way, the learning task is no longer a boring burden. In their preparation, the students will search online for all kinds of materials and then do the choice and organization, and experience the task-based learning this way. In the due process, they can communicate with the teacher instantly and efficiently by email, wechat, QQ and so on, and get progress in language ability and emotional improvement between the teacher and the students. During the preparation, whether for the individual performance or that of a group, they usually need help and cooperation of the classmates, so the friendship get developed and the college life become more meaningful and memorable. While they are doing the presentation, the digital materials prepared would be broadcast to each student’s computer, so the students could get very good audio-visual result and give active and accurate feedback in time. In the presentation, students’ interests and talents are seen, which is quite good for the relationship between the teacher and the students, and the harmonious atmosphere is resulted naturally.

In the real teaching practice, the student’s presentations cover very wide ranges and are often amazing. Student who likes Jack Chen’s action movies will collect all kinds of relative information and then summarize into a five-minute show in the class; Student who likes automobiles will collect large amount of information and then deliver a very professional scientific lecture. There are also students who like drawing, calligraphy, singing or dancing, and they will also collect the respective information and finally present in the class from their own point of view. There was once a group performance imitating “China’s Good Voice”. Everyone did so well that the whole class applauded again and again. We could see how hard they had been in their preparation, and of course they gained the happiness and friendship besides their improvement in language.

3.3 Language Strengthening and Assessment

After the class presentation, the teacher needs to give immediate feedback and assessment. The way of assessment has much influence on the students’ interest in language learning. The scientific assessment can help the students pay more attention to their performance in the process of learning and their interests would be motivated naturally. In the process of the presentation, many language problems will be seen, such as pronunciation, the grammar and so on. For the high-frequency mistakes, the teacher will do some corrections in time, and strengthen the language by doing more relative exercises. With the problems observed in the presentation, the teacher could modify the following teaching task design and give further guidance for the students learning.

In the assessment, the formative evaluation should play the major role, with the conclusive assessment as an aid, because the former can encourage students’ learning interest and improve the self-learning ability. In this way, the learning process is seen and the students’ efforts are confirmed, so the students’ confidence get strengthened and could be expected to have better performances later. Some students do not have a good base of English knowledge, but went out of their way to prepare, and their hard work could be seen by everyone in their presentation, although they were not good enough in grammar or the pronunciation. They could get A or B+ with consensus of the other
students. In this way, the students are encouraged to spend more efforts to prepare and get more improvement in the process. This also exemplifies the idea of emphasizing more on the process of learning than the result.

The result is usually given right after the presentation done, and will be posted in the class wechat group for the sake of fairness. Those who are not satisfied with the result could discuss it with the teacher or do it again later. The best result will be counted into the terminal score.

**Conclusion**

In the environment of modern information technology, task-based teaching model is playing a very positive and effective role in the practical teaching of college English audio-visual-oral course. At the same time, there are also many new challenges. The teacher needs to have a good understanding of the task-based teaching model, know the nature, as well as its advantages and disadvantages. The teacher should play the guiding role, using some learning strategies to involve the students into the process of fulfilling a task. In the process, autonomous learning habit will be developed bit by bit, and the students will actively combine the cooperative learning with the individualized learning, and get improvements in the language skills, finally achieve their expected goal. The development of the modern information technology provides many conveniences and possibilities for the audio-visual-oral teaching, and helps a lot to the design and the carrying out of the various task-based teaching activities. At the same time, our class could be more centered on the students, and make them play the major role in the process of learning, and the teacher just guides and assists the students to finish all kinds of learning tasks better.

**References**


