Research on Lessons of International Trade Practice Based on Flip Class

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Abstract. This paper aims to provide a practical teaching arrangement of application of flip class in international trade practice. The paper firstly discusses possible value that flip class might bring to international business. Then the paper constructs a teaching framework following the pattern of flip class, by illustrating specific teaching arrangement in preview phase, in-class phase and after class phase. This framework can provide references for similar international business lessons.

1 Introduction

With the introduction of Internet technology, great changes have taken place in university teaching. The extensive application of instructional videos makes students' learning styles, time, and venues more adaptable, and various data analysis tools can increase the interaction between teachers and students. Therefore, the concept of flip class has begun to rise among Chinese universities, which has a huge impact on traditional education. The advantage of flip class is to transfer the initiative of teaching from teachers to students, making students' learning more active, therefore changing the traditional teacher-led mode.

The concept of "flip class" was proposed in 2007 by two teachers, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, of Woodland Park High School in Colorado, USA [1]. The main pattern of flip class is that before the formal teaching, the teacher firstly arranges the basic teaching content to the students through videos and materials, so that the students can learn by themselves. When come to the formal teaching in class, students will be guided to expand discussion by case analysis and practical problems. By flip class pattern the students would have the initiative to learn and apply knowledge, which would improve student motivation and participation. Jonathan and Aaron applied the flip class teaching model to chemistry teaching and found that it has a better effect than traditional methods.

The introduction of the flip class can improve the current teaching of international trade practice. Flip class improves the teaching by a three stages design: before class, in class and after class. During the before class phase, it can help students preview basic concepts through videos to access basic concepts knowledge. Then when come to the classes, teachers need to explain the difficult part in brief, and turn main focus to guide students to apply by practical cases. And after-class exercises can further consolidate the knowledge learned, and exercises statistics produces feedback to teachers.

Many teachers in China have explored the application of flip class, and have produced many
findings. Some researchers tried to conclude the basic teaching models based on flip class, such as Zhang Jinlei et al. (2012) constructed teaching models for flip class, and analyzed the challenges faced during the implementation of flip class [1]; Zhang Xinming et al. (2013) constructed a network teaching system model and the process of flip class by adapting online learning on students [2]. Some researchers have analyzed the effectiveness of the flip class and have come to the conclusion that the teaching effect of flip class is better. He Linjie et al. (2017) selected two similar classes in major of management for comparison experiments, and found that the class which was adapted flip class had significantly higher grades, and students with intermediate grades were most improved [3]. Some studies have discussed the feasibility and value of flip class to specific courses. Wang Jinliang (2016) discussed the advantages and problems of reforming teaching in the course of international trade [4]. Hu Jiehui (2014) reported the specific practice of flip class of English and concluded that the flip class is suitable for English teaching [5].

The previous literature only discussed the pattern or effect of flipping the classes, but seldom discuss its practical application on actual teaching. Therefore, this paper constructs a detailed and practical teaching arrangement by discussing the specific practical procedures of flip class based on lesson of international trade practice. This arrangement would provide a reference for similar courses.

2 Value analysis of flip class on international trade practice

Some problems exist in the lesson of international trade practice. First, lesson and training are difficult to satisfy the needs in market demand and real business. The international trade business has developed rapidly, from traditional wholesale goods trade to cross-border e-commerce to current overseas direct purchases. However, the current textbooks are still conservative, still focusing most on the traditional basic concepts, but rarely mention the current rapid development of international trade business. The lag in the teaching content of materials is difficult to provide appropriate guidance to teachers and students. Also, efficiency is not high in the traditional teaching process. The low efficiency is because that teachers who are in charge of the teaching are lacking of practical operation. Most teachers have strong research skills and theoretical background, but have little understanding about related industries, not even practical experience in the industry and actual business. Moreover, the lags in teaching materials, making whole lessons which should have been practical over-theoretical. The teaching in this way will make students only know the basic concepts, but they will not know how the concepts will be applied in actual business and what problems they should pay attention to when to apply.

3 Teaching arrangement design based on flip class

This paper takes the lesson of international trade terms as an example to construct a teaching arrangement based on flip class. The arrangement will be illustrated by three phases: pre-class preview, in-class teaching and after class review.

The pre-class preview phrase consists of three parts: teaching introduction, introduction of basic knowledge, and assessment test. In the teaching introduction part, teachers collect videos to introduce students to the circumstance of international trade. After the students watch the introduction video, teacher should assign questions for the students for guidance. For example, questions could be "What trading conditions do you think should be discussed in trade negotiation", 

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"How do you feel about long-term repeated negotiation of trading conditions", etc. These questions activate students' interest. Then, through the assignment of learning materials and videos, teacher offers a brief description of core contents of trade terms. The content includes introducing students to the basic concepts of trade terms, such as a brief introduction about INCOTERMS, so that students can understand the general content of this chapter. Finally, through simple exercises (mainly multiple-choice questions) to consolidate the students’ study, and the exercise results can form statistical results for reference. Teacher can take reference of statistical results to adjust the arrangement of incoming classes. For example, if students cannot understand the usage or meaning of certain concepts, the teacher should spent more time on the explanation of this concept in the following classes.

The in-class teaching phase can also be divided into three parts: explanation of knowledge background, case study and task-driven practice. The core of the teaching process is to strengthen students' application ability through practice and cases. The first thing is to give a detail and comprehensive explanation of the core points. For example, the teacher can introduce the three basic terms (FOB, CFR, and CIF) in depth, which drills deeper than the introduction during the preview phase. For example, the teacher can introduce connotation and precautions when applied. After the explanation, teacher can leave some time to resolve confusions to make sure students fully understand the knowledge of trade terms, which are necessary for next step application.

Next, the teacher goes through specific cases with students to observe how trade terms work. The reason to go through a case is to present the practical usage of trade terms. For example, this section selects a case that an export company chooses a trade term. The export company received an order from a foreign buyer, and the company needs to decide the best trade term to adapt to suit according to production conditions, goods features and transportation conditions. In the case analysis, the teacher should try to present the environment of the export company as real as possible, and guide students to compare and analyze several trade terms under different circumstances, therefore deepening students' understanding of concepts.

After case analysis, students have become more proficient in the content of trade terms. In order to motivate the students’ application ability, the next step will be to arrange tasks and problems for students to complete in groups, while the teacher’s role is to observe the status of the students' when they perform, and to solve the students’ confusion or correct the students' misunderstanding. The task assigned to students in this section is to read a contract. Students need to read the contract, extract the required information, select the best trade terms to trade, and explain the reason.

After-class review phase are mainly to summarize and review the knowledge points that has been went through and collect feedback. International trade term has many details and a wide coverage, so students generally report that it is difficult to fully digest it all. Teachers should review and sort the key points, difficulties, and core knowledge of the teaching in this chapter to help students consolidate their understanding and deepen their understanding. After class, a homework including a certain number of exercises need to be assigned, and teacher can examine teaching quality by taking reference of homework statistics.

4 Conclusion

This article uses the trade terminology as an example to construct a teaching arrangement for flip class in international trade practice. This article first explains the current limitations in the teaching of international trade practice, and analyzes the possible advantages of application of the flip class method. Then, this article takes lesson of international trade terms as an example to design the
teaching plans. The plan specifies specific teaching arrangement in the phase of pre-class preview, in-class teaching, and after-class review.

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