

Action Research on Improving the Quality of College English Courses

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Abstract

This paper argues on action research for improving the quality of college English courses. College English course is a compulsory basic course for undergraduates. It mainly caters for the freshman and sophomore students in all types of departments. The main purpose of the course is to improve students' English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating comprehensions. In the practical teaching experience, the author concluded a unique teaching model, so-called an integrated teaching model, which has a significant effect on the English teaching. As a result, integrated teaching model with action research can eventually contribute to the improvement of English learning.

Keywords

Action Research, English Course, Teaching Model, Reflection.

1. The Understanding of Action Research

Action research, as an effective way to improve university students' learning and teachers' teaching abilities, has been in full swing in some comprehensive universities. This article is mainly to make a general report and description of the results of using action research methods in college English class, in order to get the criticism and correction from scholars and teachers. Therefore, we discuss action research firstly.

Action Research is a teaching activity focusing on "reflection practice" and put teachers as researchers. As a teaching method, action research through planning, action, investigation and reflection to arouse students' learning interests and play a leading role in teaching fields, while also allowing students to better grasp the knowledge of English they have learned. The following is the definition of action research accepted mostly in study field.

Kemmis & Mc. Taggart (1992) revealed that action research is a way of self-reflection, through which social workers and educators improve them: first, the rational understanding and correct evaluation of the social or educational undertakings they are engaged in; Recognize and correctly evaluate; Rational understanding and correct evaluation of your work environment. The definition proposed above is accepted by most scholars.

Based on action research, Wu Zongjie (1995) claimed that teaching action research refers to an exploratory activity in which teachers investigate and study teaching phenomena in their own classrooms, and gain knowledge and improve teaching quality.

Dave Ebbutt (1983, see Hopkins, 1985) further elaborated a specific understanding of teaching action research. He pointed out that action research is a process in which teachers reflect on their own teaching concepts, the teaching methods they use, and the teaching effects they produce. Teachers research and improve teaching methods to further enhance teaching results. In terms of the process of teaching action research, McNiff (1988) described the cyclical process of teaching action research in the following five specific steps: first, teachers realized the

problems in teaching through their feelings in teaching practice; second, they put forward some targeted solutions; third, formulate and implement the teaching plan to solve this problem; fourth, evaluate the results of teaching actions. fifth, re-determine the teaching problems based on analysis and evaluation. Therefore, the paper is also based on McNiff's procedure to study college English course in order to apply the action research into English class. The following is the description of teaching mode of college English course.

2. Teaching Mode of College English Courses

College English courses are a course that must be offered by each university. In terms of teaching mode, the author is divided into three categories, namely traditional mode, new mode and comprehensive mode. The traditional mode, which is mainly based on teachers' teaching and students as passive role, who accepted some knowledge unwillingly, which has always been the dominant teaching mode occupying college English courses. As a language teacher, the purpose of teaching is to allow students to communicate and communicate in foreign languages, and use this language as a communication tool. Therefore, the excessive use of this model propels students to focus on grammar or vocabulary, which leads to the emergence of dumb English.

With the advancement of education reform, educators have also discovered the disadvantages of the traditional teaching mode, so they have launched a new type of teaching mode. Different from the traditional model, the characteristics of the new teaching model are mainly based on the principle of students acquiring language as priority and supplemented by teacher's teaching. It allows students to become masters of the classroom and enables students to actively integrate into classroom teaching. At this stage, scholars are favored for a long time. Currently, educators have found that students have incomplete or wrong knowledge when they are truly in charge. Therefore, scholars have introduced a more innovative teaching mode-comprehensive teaching mode. It regards students and teachers as the main role of the classroom, and adheres to the principle of mutual assistance between students and teachers, so that students can actively improve themselves and ensure the reliability and comprehensiveness of their knowledge. The author insists on the third teaching mode to conduct action research.

3. The Process of Action Research in English Extensive Reading Class

First, over-viewing the whole teaching task in 2019, the author undertook the College English New Vision Course, mainly responsible for the teaching of four classes, each using 8 hours of teaching time, and another class for topic discussion (mainly based on the main idea of the article). The author made a series of reflections and researches on this. Main reflection are as follow: First, the author made a detailed observation of the students' learning situation in the teaching activities. After class, we also summarized the feedback of students on the teaching and learning. Second, the preview of each text mainly exists in a small number of students, and the students' reflection on the text is generally difficult. Third, the students in the classroom are mostly without active participation, the classroom atmosphere is not active. Fourth, the teaching effect is worrying. Students who carefully review and speak are much more productive than non-active students. Fifth, students rarely review the courses they have studied. They lack reflection and summary, so there is no gain. Finally, The author lack a clear evaluation criteria for homework, which makes students curious about what they have learned. All kinds of disadvantages have run counter to our original intention of English teaching. It is urgent to solve these problems, and the key points of the solution are mainly the students' preview, review, and teacher's assessment of homework.

According to McNiff, the author designs a teaching plan as follow:

Try to dig out problem occurred in class, such as students' reluctant to study, hard to organize the English speech activity. After digging out, we need collect them and analyze them. It is essential to make some surveys to check the students' achievement.

2) Based on the problems, we need to put forward some countermeasures.

3) Then teacher should take action to deal with the problems in or out of the class after countermeasures. This is also the most important step in the whole plan.

4) After taking action, teacher should make a deep reflection on the effectiveness of students' learning as well as teachers' teaching.

4. The Improvement of Teaching Methods

Since returning to China from Australia in 2018, the author has consistently adhered to the comprehensive teaching model and added the interactive and mutual assistance links between students, not only before and during the class, but also after the class. In the teaching process, the author first selects articles in the degree of moderate difficulty, divides the students into five or six groups, and selects a team leader to arrange the students' preview arrangements. In each group, the tasks of the group members are different, but let the students actively participate in the preview activities with interest and allow them to exchange ideas interactively. Second, in the classroom, students explained the previewing content in details in front of other group members, sharing the results of their previews with each other, and giving incomplete or erroneous content to the students' statements. Teachers must give certain supplements and corrections, which is extremely crucial. In this way, teachers can learn about the students' previewing condition and the problems in the previewing process, so that the teachers can add and revise the mistakes students have made. In addition, students who have not had the opportunity to make oral presentations in each group can have themselves write the language points or ideas via teacher's email.

Therefore, we must increase the intensity of the discussion firstly. Discussion is the most effective way to learn from each other. As the saying goes: "Threesomes must have my teacher." Students exchange views and opinions on the topic of the text with each other, which not only expands the knowledge of the students, but also the knowledge of the teachers; secondly, increases the intensity of the students reviewing the text. As mentioned above, students lack the reflection and summary of post-grant articles. Based on this, the author has added the link of after-school summary in teaching practice. The operation process is: let students write reflective notes, which mainly explain the harvest, problems and reflections of the texts they have learned. In addition, before the new lesson, we must conduct a comprehensive assessment of the content of the previous lesson, in order to prevent the bad habit of losing watermelons and picking sesame seeds; again, the students' assignments are rated on excellent, good, pass and unqualified four criteria; for the evaluation of classroom discussions, the author has established a quota system. First, teachers judge in the form of a group, and then judge the discussion based on the performance of individuals in the group. For example, students who speak more frequently would get 10 marks. The assessment of assignments is divided into two parts: first, the normal study task related to assignments, which is based on the evaluation of scores; second, to check the reflection notes of students, which is mainly based on the criteria of excellence, good, pass and unqualified. Teachers should give good encouragement and reward to students who perform well, and help and support students who perform poorly.

5. The Feedback of Students in the Integrated Teaching Mode

Since the first half of 2019, students have benefited a lot from the new integrated teaching mode. In the second year of CET4 and final exam, they have achieved very good results. The passing

rate of CET4 has improved significantly compared to the past. In the analysis of the final exam results, the author finds that the students' excellent rate and passing rate have both improved significantly. Therefore, the reform of the teaching mode is not a reform through the whole class, but also a reform before and after the classroom. Before class, students should be urged to concentrate on the preview. During the class, students should focus on the study content carefully, have their own opinions, brainstorm, and communicate with each other. The role of teachers in the classroom is mainly to add the missing knowledge and correct or revise the wrong knowledge. teachers also need to answer questions and doubts; after the class, teacher must carefully review the students assignments, comment on the students' reflective notes, and give a certain assessment of the knowledge points they have learned. The integrated teaching mode, as a mode of trinity, has brought endless joy and harvest to students and teachers. In addition, the development of action research has yielded a lot of benefits for students and teachers.

6. Conclusion

With the development of various teaching modes, integrated teaching mode has been in full swing. The action research of this kind of teaching mode mainly comes from the learning status of students and collects the learning results from students. And the author really keeps in close contact with the students. In the course of teaching, the author will make a thorough investigation and formulate an action plan, and also use the action to change the old traditional teaching mode to improve the teaching quality.

Specially, we should put problems as priority and then put forward a reasonable countermeasure, mostly importantly, action must be taken on the basis of analysis and then focus on the reflection from students and teachers.

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