

Teaching or Guiding---A Major Discussion for Advanced English Lectures——Comparison between Traditional Lecturing and Flipped Classroom in Advanced English Teaching

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Abstract: As a major course for the third-year students in English studies, Advanced English has challenged numerous professional lecturers and students with its baffling text analysis and complication from vocabulary and cultural understanding. This paper will lead to discussion on the teaching process of this course and introduce revolutionary ways of lecturing like “flipped classroom”.

I. Introduction

Within approximately time of over a decade, lectures and professors in colleges and universities in China have been struggling in promoting the efficiency in Teaching the course advanced English. This course is considered one of the most difficult courses in the third year university teaching syllabus for English majors. With a wide range of vocabulary, cultural background, discussions for baffling literary phenomenon in history in the West, and often incomprehensible and complicated choices of those giants in the history of literature, the students quite often find the course unfathomable and obscure. Facing situation like this, the lectures at university levels for this course can only carry out the teaching plan and push the limits of the students. Failing the course is not exceptional as a result.

II. The Problems in Advanced English Teaching

Teaching is self is not problematic. The lectures for this course could finish their jobs successfully by showcasing the students prepared resources and correlating them with Intangible edge of knowledge. In the end, after learning this course students with good grades could possibly name a few famous authors in literature history with interest; the students who barely passed the course just want to shake away the shadow of it as a nightmare.

There is no serious mistake made in this field. The lecturers have fulfilled their tasks though almost all the teachers in this course regarded it as a thorn on the rose. After a series of academic analysis, the author has discovered that there are several aspects causing the problem.

2.1 The Limited Time of the Course

Normally there are twenty-four lessons to finish. To mention just a few, experienced lecturers need as least two years' time to finish teaching comprehensively. But as a routine, it is given twelve months—two terms—to wrap up the whole course. Consequently, in the classroom it is inevitable that the teachers have to push as hard as they could to meet the teaching target. Hence, the students are pushed with shortage of time for a major compulsory course. It is not hard to tell that they have finished it with fatigue and frustration.

2.2 Demanding Learning Ability

Advanced English means to all a complicated teaching process, massive cultural information to receive, marginal cultural aspects, correlated historical background with loads of abstractive

vocabulary. For a moderate student, averagely, he or she will strive to handle it regardless of final exam grade. With the slightest disregard, students could have failed the course even from the first level. Usually it is unsaid that to learn this course they have to read and explore much more than what the key text covers.

2.3. Interrelation of Each Texts and Cultural Movements

There are in total over twenty big writers in English and American histories that the course will discuss, let alone understanding the complicated cultural schools of thoughts and spirits of movements. Any absence for the class or absent-mindedness in class results in confusion for the next class. It generally requires the full commitment for the course from the students.

III. A Brief Introduction of “Flipped Classroom”

The problematic situation lasts till the occurrence of the “flipped classroom” first in America almost a decade ago. To briefly introduce, it is an upside down way of teaching in general, in which three major transformation are formed, concerning roles of the students and the lecturers, teaching process and knowledge construction. The new way of teaching breaks the routine and dogmatic constant input of the lecturers; instead, the students take the lead in exploring learning resources online and problem solving. Not surprisingly, the learning drive of students has been aroused and it liberates them from being a receiver of information. Furthermore, they have the freedom to adjust to their own pace if study and think critically.

To achieve the above transformation, based on flipped classroom course, advanced English teaching professionals have to reconstruct the learning environment before, during and after the class. The reconstruction takes shape only after three steps.

3.1 Reconstruction of Pre-Class Learning Environment

With the help of advanced multimedia network technology the lecturers will need to provide a platform for communication amongst the students and also between the students and themselves. It is suggested carefully designing the learning tasks of each text and conveying them to the individual to help the students make clear the learning objectives, contents, methods, resources. It is also required that the lecturers find the background knowledge resources consistent with the teaching content of this course in the high-quality and open educational resources, including text, pictures, videos to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm; meanwhile, reasonable discussion questions and exercises are designed for the understanding of the text to help students complete the construction preparation of pre-class knowledge learning, and through pre-class group discussions, students are prone to find problems in knowledge construction based on their own learning experience and preliminarily complete the process of individual cognitive construction. It is of utmost importance as the first step to start well.

3.2 Reconstruction of Interactive Environment for Classroom Teaching

The teachers collect the results of pre-class group discussions, identify valuable problems as classroom intro material, and assist students to solve problems they cannot solve in the autonomous learning environment through teacher-student interaction and student-student exchange and cooperation. The construction of the whole interactive environment should be guided by the cultivation of students' independent learning ability, fully respect for their independence in learning, and use dialogue and discussion to encourage the development of individual thinking and protect innovation. The construction of easy and interactive environment in classroom teaching eliminates the factors of disadvantage for individual learners in the process of knowledge construction.

3.3 After-class Reflection

The end of the learning task designed by the teacher does not represent the success of the knowledge construction of individual learners. Therefore, it is a necessary process for learners to reflect on what they have learned. Through reflection, individual learners can find the loopholes in

their learning, which will help them to construct a new learning objective; at the same time, the lecturers analyze the students' reflection and respond to the collected reflection questions in time to help students improve the construction of knowledge after completing the teaching task of each text.

In order to improve teaching efficiency and teaching effect, changing the roles of teachers and students, teaching procedures and knowledge construction methods, and designing and rebuilding learning environment and resources before the class are the key problems to be solved.

To change the current situation on advanced English teaching and to improve the efficiency of study, the author has been exploring using the mode of flipped classroom in the process of advanced English. Based on the reform of the "flipped classroom" advanced English teaching model, the teaching practice in the last two or three semesters has achieved gratifying results. First of all, thanks to the establishment of an online communication platform for teaching classes, the communication between teachers and students is no longer limited in the classroom but becomes very frequent, which arouses their enthusiasm and interest in learning. Second, the use of the network resources has greatly increased the students' learning efficiency. They can not only learn from the information provided by their teachers, but carry out a kind of target-oriented search for network resources. The innovation of this new teaching method has greatly expanded the range of knowledge and enriched with profound understanding of society and life. In learning this course, many students were stimulated with further academic research interest and desire, which laid the foundation for the graduation thesis writing; Third, judging from the classroom debate and test results, the depth of students' thoughts and personal understanding have been greatly improved. It is obvious that their comprehensive ability to use English has been enhanced dramatically.

IV. The Challenges Brought by the "Flipped Classroom" Model

Flipped classroom has benefited many individual learners, however at the same time it is necessary to see that it brings great challenges to teaching. They are mainly reflected in the following discussion.

4.1 Challenges to Teaching Media

The premise of the implementation of flipped classroom is to have the support of multimedia network technology. At present, not all institutions of higher education in China are able to provide equipment and network covering on campus. Without the guarantee of this new medium, flipped classroom cannot be realized.

4.2 Challenges to Teachers' Literacy

Flipped classroom requires lecturers on this course to be able to use network resources to design teaching scripts. Therefore, they should not only have solid professional skills, but also be proficient in the application of multimedia network technology so as to make vivid and interesting videos of lessons and maintain communication and interaction with students on the platform. It surely will be a challenge for some senior professors who get used to use a book and a piece of chalk in the classroom.

4.3 Challenge to Students' Self-Consciousness

Flipped classroom forces individual learners to think about problems independently after learning the content assigned by teachers and bring them into the classroom for interactive solutions. Only when they have a strong sense of discipline could they watch and study in front of computers and exchange ideas in network groups. It will not be a problem for some individuals who are diligent and eager to learn, but for students with poor self-control. It is the first concern of their knowledge construction. Lecturers who carry out the implementation of the course need to strengthen the management of it.

V. Conclusion

The author has been lecturing on advanced English for over ten years. Troubled with limited time, confusing learners for this course, the author interviewed many other professionals concerned over the years. It is strongly suggested by many that flipped classroom model should be implemented in no time while there are still others with traditional conception would like to maintain the old fashioned method. It will be advised that lecturers on this course choose the way they think wiser and efficient, according to specific teaching environment and learning subjects.

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