

Design and Research of College English Pre-class Tasks Based on Flipped Classroom Model

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Abstract: It's one of the most important elements that the design of pre-class tasks is scientific or not and students could finish the acquisition of knowledge before class or not, which decides whether the flipped classroom model succeeds or not. The paper points out the essential differences between previews of traditional teaching and pre-task tasks of flipped classrooms. And it also gives deep analysis and research on the elements, methods of flipped classrooms. Moreover, using a specific case, it demonstrates how to design college English pre-class tasks based on flipped classrooms. All of these will promote the application research of flipped classrooms in the college English practice teaching.

1. Introduction

The Flipped Classroom means to reverse students' time and space in knowledge imparting and internalization. Videos made by teachers through educational techniques are the main learning resources. Teachers design pre-class learning tasks through information and technology means. Students need to learn teaching videos before class and complete pre-class tasks. Teachers help students to internalize knowledge and finish the homework through collaboration, exploration and interaction. In this way, students can become the true masters of learning. The flipped classroom model includes two stages: pre-class and in-class. The success of knowledge acquisition by students before class is one of the important factors that determine the success of flipped classroom.

The author makes a literature review on articles about flipped classroom, and finds out that scholars pay little attention to the in-depth research on how to rationally design the pre-class tasks of flipped classroom so as to help students acquire knowledge and realize the flipped teaching in the college course. Therefore, based on the literature review and combined with the characteristics of the flipped classroom, this paper distinguishes pre-class learning tasks from the traditional pre-class preview, makes in-depth analysis and research on the methods and principles of designing pre-class tasks, and applies them to the teaching of college English course, thus promoting the flipped classroom model in the practice and applied research of college English teaching.

2. Literature Review

With the upsurge of flipped classroom in the world, in 2012, domestic scholars began to research on flipped classroom teaching. In 2014, the National Foreign Languages Teaching Advisory Board under the Ministry of Education pointed out in the *College English Curriculum Requirements (Draft)* that the goal of College English teaching is to develop students' autonomous learning ability and cultivate students' English application ability. Articles on teaching methods and means stipulate that teachers are encouraged to make full use of information technology; they can build and use micro-courses and mu-courses, apply high-quality resources to expand the teaching content, and implement hybrid teaching mode based on classroom environment as well as the online course flipped classroom. Flipped classroom has been listed as one of the six important educational technologies that affect learning, teaching and innovative research, and has become a new teaching mode concerned by the educational circle.

At present, domestic research on the implementation of flipped classroom in universities mainly includes theoretical research and practical application research. From articles published, theoretical

research papers outnumber practical research articles; papers on macro research are more than researches on specific details. In the aspect of theoretical research, scholars mainly focus on studying the basic theory of flipped classroom, including the connotation, development, characteristics and functions, and analyzing the typical flipped classroom teaching mode at home and abroad. For example, Jin-lei Zhang and his colleagues wrote the *Research on the Flipped Classroom Teaching Model* in 2014; Hong-jie Zhu and coworkers published the *Flipped Classroom and its Effective Implementation Strategies* in 2013; Zhe-nan Guo wrote *What Can't be Flipped in the Flipped Classroom* in 2014. They explain the connotation of flipped classroom from the perspective of teaching process, the constructivism theory, human development process and so on. Hai-yan Lu (2013) and others compared the flipped classroom with the traditional teaching model, pointing out the advantages of the flipped classroom. Hong Wang and others published the *Design of the flipped Classroom Teaching Model* in 2013. They analyze domestic and abroad experience on flipped classroom in depth. Based on Robert Talbert's flipped classroom structure, the flipped classroom teaching model composed of information technology and activity learning is proposed.

In practical application research, flipped classes are mostly applied to science and engineering courses. As far as specific subjects are concerned, there are more studies on flipped classes in English, computer, politics, educational technology and other courses. For example, Yan-hui Cui and others wrote the *Flipping Classroom and its Application in College English Teaching* in 2014. They analyzed the feasibility and operability, and studied a specific case of flipped classroom in the college English course. Xiao-dong Wang and colleagues published the *Application of Flipped Classroom in College Teaching* in 2013. They took the English course for education specialty students as an example, combing the teaching process of flipped classroom, compares and summarizes the students' professional English competence before and after the flipped classroom, and puts forward improvement suggestions. Gang Yang and his colleagues wrote *Top Ten Excellent Cases of the Flipped Classroom* in 2012. They give a general introduction to ten cases of flipped classroom in Maryland, Minnesota, Texas and other places. From these applied research articles on flipped classroom, it is not difficult to find that researchers do not pay enough attention to in-depth and detailed research on the specific use of flipped classroom, such as the design of pre-class tasks and the carrying out of specific classroom activities.

3. Design of College English Pre-class Tasks Based on the Flipped Classroom Model

3.1 Difference between pre-class tasks and traditional preview

Many teachers simply equate the pre-class task of flipped classroom with the traditional preview, but they do not know that there are essential differences between the two activities. The traditional pre-class preview asks students to learn by themselves. The teacher does not provide guidance; students' preview situation and results have little connection with classroom learning. The pre-class task of flipped classroom is designed and arranged by teachers according to different teaching objectives; it is interrelated with the content of classroom teaching. The feedback of pre-class tasks helps teachers to find out students' problems in learning. The teacher can explain or discuss these issues in class, and provide personalized answers to students through appropriate interaction. Through the in-depth study before class, students can have basic understanding on the pre-class learning content; their classroom participation and learning enthusiasm can also be improved.

3.2 Design of pre-class tasks for the flipped classroom model

If teachers want to design successful pre-class tasks and realize the flipped classroom, they need to face various challenges, including the setting of teaching objectives, the grasp of task contents, the diversity of task forms and the control of task difficulties.

The first step is setting teaching objectives. Teaching tasks are designed based on teaching objectives, which involve the teaching and learning effects. Therefore, teachers should clearly understand the overall objectives of the whole course and accurately summarize and analyze the specific teaching objectives of each unit. Nowadays, textbooks are characterized by abundant

contents, large amount of information and multiple questions in each unit. Teachers should formulate specific objectives for each unit. They do not need to include all the five skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation in the pre-class tasks. Questions should be specific and meaningful. The second step is to determine the contents of tasks. The task should be feasible and in appropriate quantity; the contents should be related to students. The teacher needs to use language and examples familiar to students, and let students realize the importance of the learning contents; the contents should meet the needs of students. Thirdly, the forms of tasks should be diversified. According to students' characteristics and hobbies, as well as equipment in the classroom, the teacher can use ppt, video, pictures and homework to attract students' attention. Both individual and group tasks can be arranged to enhance students' interest. They can also help students to acquire and internalize knowledge by creating situations and organizing interaction. Fourth, the difficulty levels of tasks should be controlled. Easy tasks should be arranged before difficult ones. The tasks should conform to the linguistic cognition rules; teachers should first predict whether students can complete their learning tasks or not. Tasks with moderate difficulty degree can provide the sense of achievement. The teacher should also help students to overcome difficulties and enhance their confidence. Tasks that are too easy or too difficult cannot be effective.

3.3 Design of pre-class tasks for college English flipped classroom

Based on the research and analysis of pre-class task design, and considering the current teaching objectives and learning environment of the college English course in China, the author believes that pre-class tasks in the flipped classroom model should be designed based on the principle of preliminary understanding and language memory, so as to realize students' understanding and input of basic language points. The main purpose is to lay the foundation for the output of subsequent tasks. Combining with the practice of the flipped classroom model in the college English course, the author illustrates this issue by taking Unit 6 of College English Listening and Speaking Course 1 (New Edition) published by the Shanghai Language Education Publishing House as an example (Table 1).

Table1 Explain how to design pre-class tasks in college English flip classroom mode.

Theme of the unit	Unit 6 Shopping
Teaching objectives	Students should be able to understand daily conversations about shopping, and use English in shopping scenes, including selection, inquiry, paying the bill and returning the goods.
Learning materials	Common vocabulary and expression on shopping scenes; one listening material (audio) about choosing clothes; two oral dialogues (videos) about inquiry, bargaining and paying the bill.
Pre-class tasks	Supplement common vocabulary and expressions about shopping; dictate the text of the audio material; imitate dialogues in videos and write a relevant situational dialogue.
Testing the tasks	Weather audios and videos are interesting, understandable and can be played smoothly.
Implementing the task	Problem collection

The first step is to determine the teaching objectives. The teacher needs to determine listening and speaking skills students need to grasp according to the unit theme "shopping".

The second step is preparing learning materials. According to teaching objectives, and combined with the students' cognition level, the teacher needs to collect learning materials and make a micro-video about 15 minutes. As far as this unit is concerned, besides providing relevant audio and video materials, the teacher should also explain key vocabulary and related expressions in the PowerPoint, such as discount, on sale, credit cards, reserve and so on.

The third step is to set up pre-class tasks. According to language points and contents of the video

of this unit, and combined with the difficulty of completing tasks in terms of vocabulary and related expressions, the teacher should set pre-class learning tasks. Three tasks are designed for this unit. First, through brainstorming, students are required to write down words and expressions on shopping as much as possible. Second, students' listening skills are trained through dictation. Third, students are asked to imitate and write shopping scenes in groups to improve their oral expression ability. These tasks are not only close to students' life, but also in line with students' cognitive levels. They can help students to realize the internalization of knowledge.

The fourth step is examining pre-class tasks. According to the goals, the teacher should check whether the setting of pre-class tasks is reasonable and feasible, try to find problems and make constant modifications.

The fifth step is the implementation of task learning. The teacher should upload or distribute micro-videos; students are required to solve problems through watching videos, group discussions, and communicating with teachers. They can also record their questions for the classroom discussion. Teachers should pay attention to collecting students' problems.

It can be seen that the teachers' scientific and rational design of pre-class tasks as well as students' smooth acquisition and internalization of pre-class knowledge play a vital role in the successful realization of the flipped classroom mode and in the improvement of teachers' teaching and students' learning effects.

4. Conclusion

With the development of information technology, compared with traditional classroom teaching, the flipped classroom model, as a new teaching mode, has realized the "flipping" and "innovation" in teachers' and students' roles, in teaching forms and class contents, and in the technology application and evaluation methods. It has also been more widely applied in different subjects. In order to promote the effective implementation of the flipped classroom in the college English course, this paper analyzes relevant issue based on practical teaching as well as the characteristics of flipped classroom pre-class tasks, and seeks the common points of college English pre-class tasks design, in order to improve the effects of flipped classroom, and promote the applied research on flipped classroom in the practice of college English course.

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