

Research on Learners' Expectations of College Reading Teachers' Roles in the Horizon of "Internet +"

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Abstract: Growing with the advancement of information technology, modern college students are called "digital natives" whose learning concepts and expectations of teachers have changed greatly at the age of internet plus. This paper tries to approach the learners' expectations of the reading teachers' roles by using questionnaires to over 100 college students. It's found from the survey that a reading teacher is supposed to be a designer, facilitator, supervisor and researcher in the reading class.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of internet, online courses have sprung up like mushroom. Modern college students growing along with these new technologies are called "digital natives" whose learning concepts and views of teachers have changed significantly. Starting from a survey of learners' expectations of college reading teachers' roles, the paper tries to explore college reading teachers' roles and effective teaching strategies applicable in the reading class.

2. Literature Review

With the advancement of internet and online courses, college English teaching has seen great changes. Hence, how college English reading teachers adjust their roles has become a major problem urgently needed to be studied. By reviewing the studies from 2008 to 2019 in CNKI database with "Changes of College English teacher's roles" as the theme, overall 76 papers came out with 68 published in journals, 5 master theses and 3 doctor theses. It can be seen that the topic has received wide attention and the number of studies has been increasing in recent years, but the total number is not adequate. It is noteworthy that more studies focus on the changes of teachers' roles in the multimedia-assisted teaching environment, but only 5 journal papers exploring that topic in the flipped classroom or in the blended learning mode which are widely implemented in recent years. The present studies are mainly based on a specific theory. For example, by combining ESP teaching concept, Xingzhi Jiang put forward that college English teachers should improve themselves to become more professional. [1] Besides, some studies are conducted in the multimedia-assisted teaching environment. Xiaolin Li put forward her opinions about how to change college English teachers' roles based on her own teaching experience.[2] Xiuping Li & Jie Li conducted their research from such five aspects as the theoretical foundation, the necessity and significance, the approaches and the empirical research of the changes of teachers' roles and they have made some achievements.[3] However, all of the above studies have neglected a most important element, that is, the students. In a student-oriented teaching model, the studies only based on a particular teaching concept or a teaching technique are not adequate. The right way is to start from students' needs and know about their expectations of teachers' roles, which can help teachers position themselves and change their teaching concept so as to find a suitable teaching approach. In view of this, this paper tries to find out what the post-00's, or the "digital natives", expect their college English teachers to be by means of questionnaires and data analysis.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Subjects

English Reading A1 course taught in the first semester of the 2019-2020 school year by the author is mainly for freshmen of English majors in 2019. There are a total of 113 students in three classes, more than 97% of whom were born after 2000. According to the International Telecommunication Union, young people who were born in the digital age and grow with the advancement of information communications technology are called “digital natives”. Even as a child, their life was filled with digital devices and technology information as online resources are available at hand. Therefore, compared with those brought up in traditional education environment, modern college students boast completely new features in learning concept, learning methods and learning experience. It’s worthwhile to study their expectations of teachers’ roles in reading class, so that teachers can reflect on their teaching and adjust their teaching methods.

3.2 Problems of College Reading Teaching

All the students investigated have been involved the learning process of English Reading A1 (or Extensive Reading Course A1) for a semester. The teaching process generally includes: previewing the words and expressions of the passage before the class, skimming and scanning, group discussion, reading exercises, text analysis and reading skills learning in the class, exercises and homework after the class. But at the end of the semester, it’s found that students cannot grasp the key words and expressions required by the curriculum standard, not to mention enlarge their vocabulary. Moreover, over half of the students report that they cannot understand the texts. The third problem is that the limitation of time allocated to the course, with 32 hours in a semester, which is a great challenge to the students as well as the teacher. And the biggest challenge is that some students are unwilling to read. Hence, it’s admitted that the reading class in this semester is not successful. In view of these problems, an investigation is conducted to the students with the aim of finding out what the students expect the reading class to be and adjusting the present teaching methods.

3.3 Questionnaire Design and Data Analysis

The questionnaire is sent to the 113 students by means of an online platform in mainland China. The questions mainly cover three aspects: first, how English majors see the reading course; second, what students think the teacher should do before, in and after the class; third, what abilities students expect to improve in the reading class, basis knowledge, application abilities or logic thinking abilities.

100 valid questionnaires are collected and some representative data are analyzed as follows:

First, about English majors’ awareness of the importance of English reading course, 32% of the respondents completely agree to the fundamental role of reading exercises in the improvement of English capabilities, 46% of them basically agreeing to it. Furthermore, 84% of the respondents believe that the improvement of reading abilities is a long process, in which students’ initiative plays a big part, while teachers only give effective and individualized guidance and evaluation. It can be seen that the vast majority of the students acknowledge the importance of the reading course and are aware of the subjective role of their own efforts in improving reading ability.

Secondly, about pre-class tasks, 98% of the respondents believe that teachers should know about students’ learning needs and help students understand learning goals so as to facilitate their learning activities. 96% of the students hold that teachers are supposed to share online learning resources relevant to the learning activities for autonomic learning and then check their learning results in class or discuss in groups. Besides, 96% of them think that teachers should arrange previewing tasks for students which can help students understand what they will learn in class. These investigation results are in line with the author’s expectations and also conform to the requirements of autonomic learning or flipped class which are widely advocated nowadays in China.

Thirdly, with regard to what teachers should do in class, only 6% of the respondents disagree that teacher should give students some time to read the passage. 96% of the students believe that

teachers are supposed to attach more importance to teaching basic knowledge, including vocabulary, grammar and the like. And only 2% of them don't think teachers should stress the illustration of reading skills and the same number of students disagrees to do reading and critical thinking exercises under the guidance of teachers. About how to deal with the key and difficult points in the passage, only 5% of them hold that teachers only illustrate the key language points but not all details, but 26% show their disagreement. Hence, it becomes a dilemma for teachers whether only to illustrate the important or difficult points or to cover all the details or to leave them for students learning after class. And another problem comes out that students pay more attention to learning the language points than to the reading process, which might be influenced by their traditional learning way in middle school. Therefore, it's a great challenge for teachers to change students' learning habit and concept, convincing them to show more concern about the learning process instead of the result. In addition, a third problem is whether teachers need to translate the passage or whether students need to do translation exercises when online translation tools are available at hand. The survey result shows that 78% of the respondents think that it's necessary for teachers to translate the passage and design translation exercises for students to complete which can help them understand the details.

Finally, with respect to the course evaluation and feedback, the survey shows that 90% of the respondents believe teachers should regularly assign assignments for students and give corresponding comments and suggestions to individual students. It is unexpected that 84% of them think teachers are supposed to give quizzes at a certain period to know about their shortcomings and help them analyze the reasons and evaluate their learning process.

4. Learners' Expectations of College English Reading Teachers' Roles in the Horizon of "Internet Plus"

In the traditional teaching mode, teacher's roles are divided into various types from different perspectives. American Scholars F. Redl and W. Watenbery summarized ten types of roles, that is, representatives of society, the source of knowledge, a judge, a tutor, an observer of students' behaviors, a dependable person, a substitute of parents, a leader of a team, a friend or an emotional vent.[4] And in the mainland of China teachers are mainly regarded as a knowledge imparter, a guide, a researcher, a cultivator of students' mind, a supporter of students' development, a designer, organizer and controller of teaching activities. However, at the age of internet plus, there are higher demands about the roles of teachers, with more comprehensive and multiple features.

4.1 Teachers Are Designers of the Reading Class.

It is a common phenomenon and also a difficult problem for all teachers in the reading class that some students are unwilling to read. They are generally forced to read, or read for finishing the tasks given by teachers. This is called passive reading. It's usually attributed to students' attitude, but the survey above shows that about 80% of them acknowledge the significance of reading exercises in improving their English abilities. Therefore, the point is that the reading contents cannot stimulate the interest of these "digital natives". If the reading class only focuses on the book, it's difficult for students to learn actively and effectively, so teachers need to search for the up-to-date online resources that are closely relevant to the teaching contents so that students' curiosity and thirst for knowledge will be stimulated. Then teachers should design multiple interactive learning activities since modern college students are not satisfied with the traditional teaching mode. With active mind and rich online resources available, they are completely capable of participating in various teaching activities, including group discussion, role-play, question & answer, exercises and the like, which can help them understand what they are learning more deeply.

4.2 Teachers Are Facilitators of students' Autonomic Learning,

Autonomic learning is a student-oriented learning process, which means that students can achieve the anticipated learning objectives and experience the excitement of learning process by means of self-analysis, self-monitoring, self-research and active practice. In this way, students can

be greatly motivated and achieve an effective learning recycle. It's the improvement of students' active learning awareness and the cultivation of learning habit that determines the ultimate effect of foreign language learning but not the learning environment. Considering the present situation, what teachers need to do most is to arouse students' inner motivation and awareness of the importance of autonomic learning.

4.3 Teachers Are Supervisors in the Reading Class.

As can be seen from the survey above that students want to consolidate the basics and learn reading skills, but it constitutes a challenge for the time-limited reading class in which basic knowledge like vocabulary and grammar points and students' critical and logical thinking abilities are also required to be improved at the same time. Therefore, it is impossible to cover all the procedures involving vocabulary learning, details learning and critical questions in only 32 class periods for a semester. In this semester the vocabulary learning part and exercises are given to students for autonomic learning before the class, but more than half of the students cannot finish the tasks as expected. According to the survey, over 80% percent of the students are acceptable to the evaluation approaches like quizzes and homework assessment, so teachers can design different autonomous learning tasks, apply appropriate testing methods, set strict assessment systems, and strictly monitor the results.

4.4 Teachers Are Researchers of the Reading Class.

It's shown by the survey that students have been used to the traditional learning approach, like translation method. In the context of various translation tools available at hand, it is a question needed to be studied whether reading teachers need to translate sentence by sentence in class or whether students need to translate the texts in class. Furthermore, students need to consolidate their basics, but modern teaching reforming demands that students have higher language and logical thinking abilities. Both of them are uncoordinated in some occasions. Hence, reading teachers need to think about how to balance the consolidation of basics and the improvement of reading abilities.

5. Conclusion

The advent of internet plus age is an opportunity and also a challenge for English reading teaching. As for the modern college students growing with the internet advancement, personalized English teaching, diversified teaching activities, and multi-faceted teaching feedback can meet their learning needs. Only by understanding the students' expectations and needs can college English reading teachers know how to teach effectively based on the online resources.

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