Study on Teaching Mode of Business English in Flipped Classroom

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Abstract: International economic development has put forward new requirements for the cultivation of business English talents in China. The prosperity of the Internet has created conditions for it and has been imposing an important impact on business English teaching modes, among which flipped classroom is a new teaching method which makes full use of diversified learning resources, encourages students to explore and learn independently, and cultivates students' ability of cooperation and communication. By analyzing the essence of flipped classroom and the characteristics of business English teaching in flipped classroom, this paper explores the impact of flipped classroom model on business English teaching in Chinese universities, and furthermore, business English teaching strategies with respect to flipped classroom have been suggested.

1. Introduction

With the development of Internet technology and global economy, China has a strong demand for international business talents with qualified foreign language skills, which facilitates the establishment of business English as a major in universities at home. Business English is a major in cultivating compound application-oriented talents with solid English knowledge, professional international business skills and broad international vision as well, which enables graduates to be qualified in business and trade, management, finance and other fields in international environment [1]. To be adapted to the development trend, the design of flipped classroom as a new teaching mode in the Internet environment has delivered fresh air to education reform in universities in China.

Flipped classroom is also called reversed classroom, flipping classroom, or inverted classroom, in which students are asked to finish their knowledge learning by watching the pre-recorded teaching video prepared by teachers or other means and doing prescribed exercises outside class, while under the guidance of teachers, the classroom develops problem-based communication and interaction to promote the internalization of target knowledge. This innovative teaching mode can better meet students' needs of individualized learning and thus hopefully achieve better educational results.

In order to meet the new requirements of social development for business English talents, it is necessary to explore the features of teaching mode of business English in flipped classroom in network environment. This paper introduces business English teaching mode in flipped classroom, analyzes its features with respect to teaching mode, class organization and evaluation mode, and provides some strategic suggestions for business teaching and learning in flipped classroom, which is hoped to encourage and enlighten teachers to improve their business English teaching skills and cultivate more qualified inter-disciplinary talents with solid business English knowledge.

2. Overview of Business English and Flipped Classroom

2.1. Business English

Business English specializes in studying the rules and characteristics of English application in the field of international business. In 2007, Business English was for the first time approved by the Ministry of Education in China. More and more universities in China have set up Business English as a specialized subject. In 2012, it became a formal major in the undergraduate catalogue of colleges and universities. Up to 2017, 323 colleges and universities in China have set up business Eng-

lish undergraduate courses, with the number of students reaching tens of thousands and 540 colleges and universities having set up the direction of business English for English majors, and the number of undergraduates in the universities has reached more than 200,000 [2]. Business English graduates have been mainly employed in national ministries, large state-owned enterprises, multinational companies and other business field. In recent years, they have maintained a high employment rate, which fully shows that there is a huge market prospect and demand for business English talents [2].

The basic features of business English are comprehensiveness, extensiveness and practicability. Comprehensiveness means Business English is a synthesis of knowledge and skills in both business and English. The orientation of business English majors in colleges and universities is to cultivate compound application-oriented talents who possess professional knowledge and theory of economics, management and law, strong cross-cultural communication competence, and higher humanistic quality and are able to use English in business field in the international environment, with solid English language skills, broad international vision and special international business knowledge [2]. Business English emphasizes the application of the comprehensive application of knowledge and skills mentioned above. Extensiveness means that Business English is a kind of specialized English used in the business environment and it involves a wide range of knowledge in both business and English. It not only involves the use of common English vocabulary and syntax, but also deals with the use of business vocabulary and syntax with specific meanings and contexts. As a language for special purposes, business English emphasizes its practical application and the final aim of learning business knowledge and English language is the better use of them in business practice [3]. Therefore, the core feature of business English is practicability.

2.2. Flipped Classroom

Flipped classroom began in 2007 at Wood Park High School in the United States, where two chemistry teachers uploaded pre-recorded PPT and lectures to the Internet and used them to make up for absent students. This method was welcomed by the students and subsequently was popularized in primary and secondary schools in the United States [4]. In 2011, the teaching method of flipped classroom entered Chinese classroom for the first time [5]. Up to now, many schools in our country have implemented the concept of flipped classroom, and more and more universities have been trying to adopt this teaching method to develop online teaching. But on the whole, the method of flipped classroom is still on the stage of experimental exploration at home and abroad.

Flipped classroom is also called reversed classroom, flipping classroom, or inverted classroom. According to this teaching mode, students preview the lessons by watching the pre-recorded teaching video and doing some prescribed exercises outside classroom under the guidance of teachers, and the classroom develops problem-based communication and interaction to promote the internalization of the knowledge perceived [5]. Flipped classroom, as a teaching mode, makes full use of the diversified learning resources, encourages students to explore and learn independently and cultivates students' ability of cooperation and communication. This innovative teaching mode can better meet students' needs of individualized learning and hopefully achieve better learning results.

Flipped classroom subverts traditional teaching philosophy and teaching process. It emphasizes learner-centered teaching according to learners' aptitude, cooperative and communicative learning under teachers' direction in class. It changes traditional "spoon-fed" teaching into active learning, promoting learning of new knowledge before class and the internalization of knowledge through group cooperation and problem-solving in class. The roles of teachers and students are reversed in flipped classroom, in which students are autonomous learners who actively internalize knowledge perceived, while teachers are instructors, providers of resources, organizers of classroom activities, and are responsible for individualized guidance and answering questions, solving learners' problems.

3. Features of Flipped Classroom

3.1. Autonomy

The new teaching mode of Flipped Classroom enables learners to impart knowledge outside the classroom and internalize knowledge in classroom, and encourages learners to make full use of the teaching video and network resources provided by teachers to complete the initial cognition of knowledge and then share their learning experiences, discuss problems, get guidance from teachers and internalize their knowledge through cooperative team work in class. In this process, learners autonomously choose their learning methods, monitor their own learning process and evaluate their learning results with their subjective consciousness, through multi-participation assistance, according to their own needs. This autonomy can not only lighten the psychological burden of learners to a certain extent, but also help learners to effectively achieve better role transformation in real situational teaching. The essence of the flipped classroom determines the spontaneity and freedom of the learner's learning behavior.

3.2. Cooperativeness

The mode of Flipped Classroom emphasizes the cooperative learning of students in class, reversing the traditional teaching mode and process and the roles of teachers and students. This kind of cooperative learning enhances the interaction between students, as well as between teachers and students. Teacher's role has changed from a knowledge lecturer to a helper and organizer in classroom activities, which provides more time for teachers to interact with students and for students to cooperate in their teams, promoting the efficiency of cooperative learning.

3.3. Inquiry

The mode of Flipped Classroom generates inquiry learning, in which learners are active to explore what they are learning, acquire knowledge, solve problems and judge the authenticity of things through independent inquiry activities. On the one hand, students need to independently complete their knowledge perception before class and understand the knowledge deeply according to the characteristics of individuation in class. On the other hand, in classroom teaching, the students' ability to think, analyze and solve problems is cultivated through designed activities in group work. This is just the goal of inquiry learning.

3.4. Individuation

The teaching mode of Flipped classroom advocates autonomy and individuation to meet learners' characteristics, individual needs and development potential. Students are learning center in flipped classroom and they complete the self-construction of knowledge with the help of teachers. Teachers design learning activities and provide personalized guidance for learners to consolidate the knowledge perceived before class. After class, students complete their work independently, communicate and explore together with teachers and students in view of difficult problems, and arrange the time and their study progress according to their own schedule. Flipped classroom shows obvious feature of individuation before class, in class and after class.

4. Teaching Mode of Business English in Flipped Classroom

4.1. Teaching Mode

In flipped classroom, teaching mode changes from the traditional teacher-led form to student-centered one, and correspondingly, learning mode changes from spoon-fed style to autonomous and independent learning. Before class, students independently teach themselves with the help of videos and learning materials designed by teachers.

In class, according to the results of students' autonomous learning, teachers and students jointly complete inquiry and interactive communication activities. Meanwhile, the roles of both teachers and students have changed. On one hand, teachers have become learning promoters and mentors,

different from traditional knowledge transmitter and classroom managers. Students, on the other hand, have become active researchers, different from passive recipients of knowledge. In traditional classroom, for most of the time, the teacher is lecturing and teaching knowledge. While in student-centered flipped classroom, the teacher, who needs to decide and adjust the classroom teaching context and steps, plays an important role in helping solve problems and organizing class activities.

4.2. Class Organization

The organization of flipped classroom has also changed from individual lecturing to cooperative inquiry. In traditional classroom, for most of the time, the teacher is teaching knowledge and the knowledge is also learned by students individually, and thus there is little interaction in the classroom and it is difficult for teachers to understand the learning situation of different students in time. Yet in the flipped classroom, main activities are to give answers to different problems students encounter in autonomous learning and to solve problems in presentation and group discussion. This can not only achieve targeted teaching and individualized teaching, but also cultivate students' ability in communication and cooperation.

In addition, the flipping class also transcends the limitation of time and space. In the Internet+ environment, different students can use the same online teaching video and materials as the main learning resource at any time and in any place simultaneously, which successfully overcomes the limitation of time and space.

4.3. Evaluation Mode

Flipped classroom has changed many aspects in teaching such as roles of teachers and students, teaching mode and classroom organizational form, and has cultivated students' abilities of independent learning, cooperative learning and inquiry learning. Correspondingly, its evaluation system should also be pluralistic. Learners' performance is not merely evaluated by a test paper. The combination of formative evaluation and summative evaluation has been adopted to emphasize the assessment of students' learning process, covering the whole process of pre-class task, classroom activities, after-class task and final test.

From traditional classroom to flipped classroom, there have been great changes in teaching mode with respect to teaching mode, class organization, and evaluation mode [6]. The changes in teaching mode from traditional classroom to flipped classroom is shown in Table 1, adapted from Li (2017) [6].

Table 1 Changes in Teaching Mode from Traditional Classroom to Flipped Classroom [7].

	Traditional Classroom	Flipped Classroom
Roles of Students and Teachers	T: classroom manager, knowledge transmitter	T: promoter, conductor
	S: passive receiver	S: active researcher
Classroom Organization Form	teachers' interpretation, students' reception	Group research, discussion, practice
valuation Mode	paper test, summative evaluation	Multi-angle, formative evaluation

5. Case Analysis

5.1. Case Description:

In teaching Unit 3 "Business Negotiation Skills" in the course of Business English Reading, the teacher prepares relevant teaching materials, designs proper activities and assigns corresponding work before, in and after class according to the learners' levels in language and business practice skills.

In the stage of autonomous learning before class, the teacher issues related learning resources and tasks in advance through the Internet platform, which include (1) learning resources, such as case-related background information, learning videos on business negotiation skills, searching

channels and websites required for the information of negotiation, (2) learning tasks such as listing out difficulties and problems that will occur during business negotiation, generalizing important tips in business negotiation, developing a plan for negotiation steps, and preparing questions raised during self-teaching before class.

In the stage of classroom teaching, some steps are organized by the teacher to fulfill the learning tasks: (1) the students are asked to discuss about their questions in groups and give presentation about their self-teaching outcome and discussion results; (2) the students have practice simulation, students are divided into groups and act as different negotiating parties according to the negotiation plan and steps, and the teacher records the negotiation process of students, and makes their activities video clips; (3) the teacher answers the questions that students cannot solve in the discussion, comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the students' activities, and evaluates the achievement of students' autonomous learning; (4) The students give feedback and are encouraged to ask the teacher whatever questions they meet in class in teacher-learner interaction period; (5) with all problems solved, the teacher sums up the lesson, and assigns homework to do after class—to check through the recorded video clips of their presentations and simulation negotiation activities and make self-assessment; and have a real situational negotiation activity applying the practical negotiation skills learned in class.

In classroom teaching stage, the teacher evaluates the students' performance, gives comments on their activities, and marks their performance while they are presenting, discussing, communicating and simulating situational negotiation activities. And the teacher's records in any stage will be prepared for their final evaluation.

In the stage of after-class assessment, the students do their homework and deliver their outcome to the teacher through Internet; and the teacher marks, records and evaluates their work and gives feedback to the students for further improvement.

5.2. Case Analysis:

In the above teaching case of flipped classroom, the teacher prepares learning materials, designs classroom activities and assigns homework around the focal topic of this unit—business negotiation skills. Activities designed in every period show the features of teaching mode in flipped classroom.

(1) Teaching mode

In every teaching step in the flipped classroom above, the teacher is no longer a lecturer but a learning promoter and mentor, and the students are active researchers, business negotiators and problem solvers, which is quite different from traditional teaching mode.

(2) Class organization

In the process of simulated business negotiation teaching, the teacher is no longer dully introducing knowledge of negotiation but makes business negotiation real and live in the classroom. The students are no longer talking only on paper, but simulate real situational negotiation activities in practice and solve problems with the help of the teacher, which changes the organization of traditional class. This helps students to understand the overall business negotiation process and business knowledge and skills profoundly.

(3) Evaluation mode

The evaluation of the students' performance is multifold. Students' work done before class is checked and recorded by the teacher in class presentation; students' in-class activities are marked and evaluated by the teacher; students' homework after class is checked and commented by the teacher in feedback.

The evaluation of tasks before class is conducive to ensuring students' autonomous learning efficiency. The evaluation contents of classroom activities are conducive to ensuring the activity of students' participation in communication. And after-school tasks evaluation can promote students' application of knowledge and enhance their deep understanding of knowledge.

6. Teaching Strategies Suggested

According to Professor Wang Lifei's [1] orientation of business foreign language discipline, the

study of business English can be started from the following four aspects: Language knowledge and skills, Business knowledge and skills, Intercultural communicative competence and Humanistic literacy. In view of the nature of flipped classroom and the features of business English discipline, some tactical methods of teaching business English in flipped classroom in Network environment could be included and generalized. Four teaching strategies should be suggested according to the above four modules and the characteristics of flipped classroom.

6.1. Design of Classroom Requirements Related to Language Knowledge and Skills

Business English is a cross-discipline between business and English [1], and teachers have two basic tasks in this course—to ensure that the students learn English language well and to cultivate students' solid language knowledge and skills in business field.

In designing activities before, in and after flipped classroom, teachers can outline different requirements and design different activities to enable students to accumulate a vast number of business vocabularies and sentence patterns and master their specific usages in business environment, and provide students with chances to cultivate their practical ability of business English listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation and field work negotiation.

Before class, teachers can inform the students in advance of the language knowledge they need to master so that students can learn by themselves independently by using a variety of network resources [7]. In classroom, teachers design various kinds of practice activities according to students' learning situation. For example, they can use network multimedia to create specific business context for students to help them carry out business simulation negotiation and other exercises, which can not only promote the internalization of business knowledge, but also train students' language ability [8]. It reflects the practical feature of business English. After-class reading is necessarily assigned to students to broaden their scope of knowledge and promote their language ability. After class, teachers can provide students with some learning resources, such as teaching video and professional research literature for reference and study to broaden their horizons. Sometimes, teachers will also provide some extra-curricular internship opportunities, like translation practice, to enrich students' practical experience [9].

6.2. Preparation and Application of Business Knowledge and Skills

To learn business English is not only to master the language in business field, but also to possess the necessary practical business skills in business discourse translation, business document writing and business negotiation, etc. To make sure the student master knowledge of economics, management, international trade, and finance and have a high-level ability of information gathering and information analysis in business field, teachers should prepare correspondent materials with respect to business knowledge, and apply the knowledge in the design of classroom activities to provide students with chances to practice business skills in real situational interaction.

Teachers can use a variety of network resources and business videos to cultivate students' sensitivity to business information. Students are asked to do some activities to solve real business problems, and teachers can provide a variety of guidance, comments and answers to solve the students' puzzles, enhancing students' mastery of the business knowledge and improving their business skills.

6.3. Cultivating Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence

In the mode of flipped classroom, teachers should cultivate students' cross-cultural consciousness and international communicative competence [1]. In teaching design, students are asked to master the knowledge about culture and international business etiquette to apply it to the actual situation. Based on foreign language ability and communication skills, students learn the knowledge of culture and business etiquette of various countries in the world by using network resources, to establish cross-cultural consciousness, and in the process of solving the practical problems in real situational activies, students' intercultural competence has been established. And at the same time, teachers' comments and suggestions help students improve their communicative competence.

6.4. Integrating Learners' Humanistic Literacy in Practice

Different from other professional classes, what is important and special for business class is the permeation of humanistic literacy in teaching scope. Humanistic literacy refers to humanistic knowledge and skills, including political, economic, philosophical, literary and ideological literacy, Chinese and foreign cultural literacy, innovative thinking, and moral quality. Humanistic skills refer to the ability to use humanistic knowledge to solve practical problems. These are also very important in the practical use of business English.

In pre-class learning, teachers can prepare materials with humanistic knowledge for the students to read a lot, understand social events and establish a correct moral outlook so as to improve their humanistic quality. In class, activities designed can focus on the cultivation of humanistic skills, using humanistic knowledge to solve practical problems in international business field. Students can improve their humanistic skills in this way.

7. Conclusion

This paper mainly talks about teaching mode of business English based on flipped classroom in Internet+ environment. By overviewing business English and flipped classroom, this paper analyzes features of teaching mode in flipped classroom, makes a case analysis of business English teaching in flipped classroom, and explores some strategies in business English teaching in flipped classroom in Internet+ environment.

In the environment of flipped classroom and Internet, the teaching mode of business English can focus on four aspects of knowledge and skills, including English language knowledge and skills, business knowledge and skills, cross-cultural communicative competence and humanistic literacy. Teaching strategies proposed should be consistent with the four aspects, and teachers should design classroom requirements and activities and prepare teaching materials with respect to language knowledge and skills, provide chances for the students to apply the acquired knowledge into practice, cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence and integrate learners' humanistic literacy in practice.

Flipped classroom is a miniature all types of business occasions, and can integrate diversified learning resources and inspire students' ability of independent thinking and practical operation in business field. Thus, in Internet+ environment, flipped classroom is effective in promoting students' mastery of business English knowledge and skills.

Study on business English teaching mode in flipped classroom will facilitate the development of business English teaching, and the application of flipped classroom in business English teaching is hoped to benefit business English majors, achieving better results in both teaching and learning in China.

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