On the Analysis about the Feasibility of Applying Flipped Classroom in College English Writing

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Abstract

Due to the limitation of the traditional teaching model and the lack of students' interest in writing, it is hard for teachers to carry out college English writing teaching in classroom. Flipped classroom, as a new teaching model, inverts the traditional classroom and shifts the teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness. It moves the classroom teaching activities out of the classroom and moves the activities after class to the classroom. Flipped classroom is a blended learning form in which information technology are used before class. In order to improve college English writing teaching, this paper analyzes the feasibility of the application of flipped classroom in college English writing from these aspects — students, the teacher, the technology platform and etc.

Keywords: flipped classroom; college English writing; feasibility

1. Introduction

English writing is one of the most important parts of college English teaching. However, English writing has always been the weak point of English teaching. In traditional college English writing classroom, the teacher may introduce writing strategies and students finish the writing assignments after class. This kind of teaching model can't motivate students' writing interest and ignores students' English writing autonomy, which lower the efficiency of English writing teaching. With the development of information technology, online teaching resources are becoming more and more abundant. In recent years, the flipped classroom has become a hot topic in educational circles. Flipped classroom inverts the traditional classroom learning process. Students study key knowledge by teaching video online resources before class, the teacher no longer uses class time to explain the concept of knowledge, but organize various tasks of activities to promote students to internalize the knowledge. Many researchers have tried to apply flipped classroom in English teaching. Then, whether flipped classroom mode is feasible in college English writing is what this paper will focus on.

2. Flipped classroom

In order to analyze the feasibility of flipped classroom mode in college English writing, it is necessary to know about the definitions and characteristics of flipped classroom.

Flipped classroom, also called inverted classroom, is a new teaching model was proposed in 21st century. Lage & Platt (2000) first proposed the idea of flipped classroom and apply it to the microeconomics course. Flipped classroom means moving the classroom teaching activities out of the classroom and moving the activities after class to the classroom. Flipped classroom is a blended learning form in which information technology are used before class, so that teachers are allowed to spend more time communicating with students instead of coaching (Barseghian, 2011). In flipped classroom teaching model, students learn autonomously at home and solve problems in class (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). In flipped classroom, students learn knowledge by watching videos before class and absorb knowledge by the cooperation between teachers

and students and among students. It meets the needs of students' individualized learning and develops students' autonomous learning ability greatly.   In a classroom with a traditional style of instruction, individual lessons may be focused on an explanation of content utilizing a lecture-style. Student engagement in the traditional model may be limited to activities in which students work independently or in small groups on an application task designed by the teacher. Class discussions are typically centered on the teacher, who controls the flow of the conversation (Ryback & Sanders, 1980). Typically, this pattern of teaching also involves giving students the task of reading from a textbook or practicing a concept by working on a problem set, for example, outside school .

Since the teaching model of the flipped classroom was introduced into China, Chinese educators have explored the definition of the flipped classroom. the flipped classroom, i.e. upside down the classroom, turns upside down the order of imparting knowledge and internalizing knowledge, changes the roles of the student and the teacher in the traditional classroom, and gives a re-planning of the usage of the classroom time (Zhang Jinlei & Zhang Jinhui, 2012:46-51). Zhang Yujiang (2012:118-121) defined the flipped classroom as a pattern where students would learn the materials autonomously (audio and video course, worksheet of learning, e-learning materials, etc.) handed out by the teachers before class, and then would participate in the interactive activities (clearing up doubts, explanation, and exploration) among the students and the teachers in the class. Zhong Xiaoliu, et al (2013) believed that under information circumstance, the flipped classroom would be like a new teaching model in which subject teacher provides learning materials or resources in the form of video or worksheet of learning which should be watched and learnt by students before class, and in which then the teachers and the students finish checking answers of the homework, cooperate to study, and interact and communicate with each other. Flipped classroom is an individualized teaching mode that requires to complete the knowledge-transference process in traditional classroom before class by students' Internet-based learning and to focus on knowledge internalization, competence upgrade and integrative comprehension in the traditional classroom (Rao Xupeng, 2015). Flipped classroom is an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom. It moves activities, including those that may have traditionally been considered homework, into the classroom. In a flipped classroom, students watch online lectures, collaborate in online discussions, or carry out research at home and engage in concepts in the classroom with the guidance of a mentor. The teaching mode shifts from the traditional teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness.

Based on the above-mentioned definitions, the flipped classroom reverses the following aspects:

First, the flipped classroom reverses the traditional in-class and out-of class activities. Students must finish knowledge learning before class and the teaching mode of flipped classroom is a process of knowledge internalization, but in the traditional model of classroom instruction, the teacher is typically the central focus of a lesson and the primary disseminator of information during the class period. The teacher responds to questions while students defer directly to the teacher for guidance and feedback. In a classroom with a traditional style of instruction, individual lessons may be focused on an explanation of content utilizing a

lecture-style. In-class lessons accompanying flipped classroom may include activity learning or more traditional homework problems, among other practices, to engage students in the content. In flipped classroom, more time can be spent in class on higher-order thinking skills such as problem-finding, collaboration, design and problem solving as students tackle difficult problems, work in groups, research, and construct knowledge with the help of their teacher and peers (Bennett et al, 2013).

Second, flipped classroom reverses the roles of the teacher and the students. The flipped classroom is a new classroom teaching structure in which the teaching structure is upside: traditionally, teachers teach students in class in daytime, students do their housework after school at home, but in the flipped classroom, students finish the process of internalization of absorbing and mastering knowledge and students learn new knowledge after school at home. Students should consolidate their knowledge in class and finish learning knowledge after class (Jin Ling, 2013:8-13). A teacher's interaction with students in a flipped classroom can be more personalized and less didactic, and students are actively involved in knowledge acquisition and construction as they participate in and evaluate their learning (Abeysekera, et al, 2015; Alvarez, 2011).

Comparison of Class Time in Traditional versus Flipped Classrooms

(Bergmann & Sams, 2012: 15)

Traditional Classroom		Flipped Classroom	
Activity	*Time*	*Activity*	*Time*
Warm-up activity	5 min.	Warm-up activity	5 min.
Go over previous night's homework	20 min.	Q & A time on video	10 min.
Lecture new content	30-45 min.	Guided and independent Practice and/or lab activity	75 min.
Guided and independent Practice and/or lab activity			

According to the table above, in the traditional model, students would gradually come into class confused about some of the homework problems from the previous night. Generally the first 25 minutes is spent in a warm-up activity and going over those problems the students didn't understand. And then 30-45 minutes would be spent in presenting new contents and spent in the remainder of the class with independent practice or a lab. In the flipped classroom, the time is completely restructured. Students still need to ask questions about the content that has been delivered video (Bergmann & Sams, 2012: 15), so the first few minutes is spent answering students' questions. This allows the teacher to clear up misconceptions before they are practiced and applied correctly. And the remainder of time is spent dealing with more extensive hands-on activities.

3. Previous studies about flipped classroom

With the development of flipped classroom teaching model, there are many studies about its   theories and applications at home and abroad.

In 2007, Bergmann & Sams (2012) recorded their lectures and posted them online in order to accommodate

students who missed their classes. They note that one person cannot be credited with having invented the inverted or flipped classroom. Furthermore, they assert that there is no one 'right' way to flip a classroom as approaches and teaching styles are diverse, as are needs of schools. In 2011 educators in Michigan's Clintondale High School flipped every classroom. Principal Greg Green led the effort to help teachers develop plans for flipped classrooms. He worked with social studies teacher, Andy Scheel, to run two classes with identical material and assignments, one flipped and one conventional. The flipped class had many students who had already failed the class—some multiple times. After 20 weeks, students in the flipped classroom were outperforming students in the traditional classrooms. Further, no students in the flipped classrooms scored lower than a C+. The previous semester 13 percent had failed. The traditional classroom showed no change. Clintondale had been designated as among the state's worst 5 percent. The next year when teachers used a flipped model in the 9th grade, the English failure rate dropped from 52 percent to 19 percent; in math, from 44 percent to 13 percent; in science, from 41 percent to 19 percent; and in social studies, from 28 percent to 9 percent. After 2011 the now-flipped school's failure rate dropped from 30 to 10 percent. Graduation rates soared above 90 percent. College attendance went from 63 percent in 2010 to 80 percent in 2012. Results on standardized tests went up in 2012 and then dropped, although complicated by student body changes. Clintondale teachers found that shorter videos (3–6 minutes) were the most effective for students. The school uses audio files, readings and videos from the Khan Academy, TED and other sources. Students favored the changes. Students unable to watch the videos at home watch the videos in school. (Rosenberg, 2013). Hung (2015) conducts an experiment study on flipped classroom in English and the results indicates that flipped classroom can help English learners develop better attitude and attain better learning outcome than traditional classroom.

The research on flipped classroom in China is based on the studies abroad. The early researches on flipped classroom in China are mainly theoretical researches. Zhang et.al. (2012) first introduced flipped classroom which was defined by them as a classroom that swaps the arrangement of knowledge imparting and knowledge internalization comparing to traditional classroom. In the flipped classroom, the roles of teachers and students have been changed and the class time should have a new plan. Information technology and activity learning construct an individuation and cooperative learning environment for learners to create new learning culture. They also completed the model of flipped classroom based on the previous researches. In 2011, Li Jingchuan et al (2012) did an experiment and a survey in Jvkui Middle School of Chongqing City. They applied flipped classroom in eight subjects such as Chinese, maths，English, physics, chemistry, politics, history and geography. Their statistic data show that 82.9% of students like or like it very much; 88% think it improves their learning interest; 88.9% believe it increases their learning confidence; 88% think it is easier to remember the knowledge points; 96.6% think it can help them to take notes better; 63% think it can help them to finish the homework efficiently; only 17% students think it increases their study burden. Zhong, Song and Jiao (2013) build a famous teaching model of flipped classroom which includes four phases: teaching preparation, memory understanding, application and analysis, and overall evaluation. While flipped classroom have proven to be effective in secondary schools for quite some time, recent work has shown that flipped

methods could be equally effective in improving student learning at the community college level as well. The flipped classroom model allows faculty to engage students in innovative ways, both inside and outside the classroom, and to employ a range of modern teaching tools and approaches. This proves to be advantageous for diverse classroom environments with students who have different learning preferences.

Based on the studies abroad and at home, it can be easily found that the flipped has changed not just our classrooms. Teachers from around the world have adopted the flipped classroom model and are using it to teach in all curriculum areas to elementary, middle, and high school students as well as adults (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). So in the following the feasibility of flipped classroom in college English writing will be analyzed.

4. Feasibility on the application of classroom mode in college English writing

Flipped classroom is quite different from the traditional classroom. In the traditional model of classroom instruction, the teacher is typically the central focus of a lesson and the primary disseminator of information during the class period. The teacher responds to questions while students defer directly to the teacher for guidance and feedback. In a classroom with a traditional style of instruction, individual lessons may be focused on an explanation of content utilizing a lecture-style. Student engagement in the traditional model may be limited to activities in which students work independently or in small groups on an application task designed by the teacher. Class discussions are typically centered on the teacher, who controls the flow of the conversation (Ryback & Sanders, 1980). The traditional college English writing often happens after class. Generally, the students are assigned a writing task and asked to finish writing after class, and then turn in their writing essay. But the flipped classroom intentionally shifts instruction to a learner-centered model in which class time explores topics in greater depth and creates meaningful learning opportunities, while educational technologies such as online videos are used to deliver content outside of the classroom. In a flipped classroom, content delivery may take a variety of forms. Often, video lessons prepared by the teacher or third parties are used to deliver content, although online collaborative discussions, digital research, and text readings may be used (Abeysekera, et al, 2015; Marco Ronchetti, 2010; Greg Topp , 2011). So in order to effectively adopt flipped classroom in college English writing, it is necessary to analyze the feasibility of flipped classroom mode in college.

First, flipped classroom is the product of the multimedia era, which aids teaching by using modern technology such as network, therefore, the multimedia technology platform is a prerequisite for the implementation of the flipped classroom. Most college students have their personal computers and almost all students have access to a computer and master the basic method of operation, which laid a foundation for the implementation of the flipped classroom.

Second，compared with the primary and secondary school teachers engaged in elementary education, college English teachers have a relatively high degree of education and the ability to accept new things quickly. Most of the College English teachers have certain language knowledge and their teaching system.

Third, English teachers are familiar with computer operation and the application of the computer network, and they have a relatively solid foundation in making courseware, multimedia resource search, access to

resource and video processing, which provides the technical foundation for the implementation of the flipped classroom. Meanwhile, college English teachers can make their own teaching videos based on students' features and the difficult points in teaching to stimulate students' interest in learning. To a large degree they can combine their own language learning experience with innovative teaching in college English, which has laid a good foundation for the development of human resources in flipped classroom.

Fourth, college students, as adults, have autonomous learning ability and somehow can express themselves in English in classroom. Also, the correcting net (which is called Pigai Net in Chinese) is widely used in China. The teachers can use the net to give assignments to students and set a deadline for students to finish the assignment. The students can get feedback or guide from the net or from the teacher and then correct their writing again and again until they reach a good achievement they are satisfied with.

5. Conclusion

As a new teaching mode, the flipped classroom in our country is the combination of multimedia teaching and the students' use of the internet. This kind of teaching mode is that teachers will make multimedia courseware, and students can learn from the contents of multimedia courseware under the guidance of teachers. After class, students use their spare time to finish their homework, and then further consolidate their study on their own learning platform. Compared with the traditional teaching, the flipped classroom is a multimedia teaching mode which combines pictures, sound and words. The contents presented before class are more rich and colorful. Baaed on the above analysis, it can be concluded that it is feasible to apply flipped classroom in college English writing.

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