

Research on the Teaching Mode of Autonomous Learning in University English Teaching

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Abstract

At present, there is a big gap between Chinese English learners' language talent and globalization requirements for it. In the twenty-first century, English teaching in China must be geared to the needs of the society, the world, the modernizations, and the future. Therefore, it is most urgent for China's university English teaching to turn passive learning into active learning, prescriptive learning into autonomous learning, and closed study into open study.

Keywords: university English teaching, autonomy, autonomous learning

1. Introduction

With *the University English Curriculum Requirements (for Trial Implementation)*, a new round of English teaching reform has been launched. As a new teaching idea and a brand new teaching mode in university teaching, autonomous learning has become the mainstream ideology of university English teaching. Since the reform and opening up policies, China's English teaching has made satisfactory achievements from the overall perspective. But because of the university enrollment expansion in recent years, big English classes, serious shortage of teachers, coupled with other factors, such as traditional deep-rooted teaching methods, stereotyped teaching contents, simplified teaching modes, one-dimensional teaching test and so on, students only obtain both narrow knowledge and poor English skills. Therefore, there is a big gap between their language talent and globalization requirements for it. In the twenty-first century, English teaching in China must be geared to the needs of the society, the world, the modernizations, and the future. The above-mentioned present situation demands prompt solutions. How to change them? Although the "requirements" pointed out the direction for our teaching reform practice, it has to go through a positive and exploratory process to turn an ideal into a reality. It is worthy of our attention that Chinese college students are weak in autonomous learning. Modern college students are accustomed to a passive way of learning: teacher-centered classroom teaching. They lack independent learning and self-management abilities. It is most urgent for university English teaching reform to turn passive learning into active learning, prescriptive learning into autonomous learning, closed study into open study.

The establishment of subject consciousness and cultivation of independent personality has become an important symbol of modern international education reform. In the areas of education, more and more emphasis has been put on the "learner-centered" teaching method. People realize that it is the learner himself who decides the final learning outcomes. Any successful education must take the learners' characteristics. Any education should be people-oriented, to give full play to the subjective initiative of students and to cultivate their autonomous learning ability and lifelong learning ability. Some futurists have predicted: the twenty-first century illiterate people will no longer be those who does not know a single word, but those who does not know how to study. If students can grasp their learning autonomously, it is not only a breakthrough in foreign language classroom teaching reform, the achievement in realizing quality education, but also the requirement of cultivating all-round personnel. Autonomous learning itself is not a fixed pattern, it is both a kind of modern teaching idea, and a learning style, learning activities. Its essence is through the active participation of students in the learning process to develop their sense of autonomy, autonomy ability, autonomous habits so that they can become both people who are able to learn and people who possess a subjective personality.

Material Studied:

2. The Definition and Theoretical basis of Autonomous Learning

2.1 Definition of Autonomous Learning

Different people have different understandings of autonomous learning. Some people think that it is an ability by which learners themselves are responsible for their learning. Some regard it as personal character. Others believe it is the learners' right in the education system. Honri Holec is one of the most important scholars who introduced the concept of autonomy into foreign language teaching. Holec believes that, from the viewpoint of learners, having the ability of autonomous learning means they are able to determine the target, content, materials and methods of learning, able to determine the time, place and progress of learning, and able to assess learning results. The essential feature of autonomous learning is that learners have a whole, full, and comprehensive decision-making right, implementation right, and appraisal right to their learning, including why to learn, what to learn, and how to learn, etc. Therefore, in English teaching advocating autonomous learning, students should be regarded as the subject, while English is the object of English teaching. English teaching should be carried out from the students' perspective. When the traditional cramming method of teaching mode is turned into autonomous teaching mode which is learner-centered and aims to stimulate the learners' self-control and self-learning abilities, we can clearly see English teachers' role has been transformed into that between students and English learning, that is, learning resources, assistance, and learners.

Naoko Aoki on the definition of autonomous learning seems to be more wide: autonomous learners can control their own learning, can serve their own needs and expectations of service, can know what to learn why and how to learn, can develop and complete the study plan and can evaluate learning outcomes. Butler pointed out the importance of autonomous learning in the teaching process and believed that an effective way to improve students learning abilities is to train them to be independent learners. Autonomous learning is a big step forward away from the passive learning. It takes the student as the master of learning. It is a practice which aims to develop students' autonomy, initiative, and creativity. It is also a modern teaching idea.

2.2 Theoretical Basis on Autonomous Learning Teaching Mode

2.2.1 Humanism Learning Theory

An important representative of humanism learning theory is American contemporary psychologist Rodgers. Rodgers especially advocates the meaningful learning in the view of learning. He believes that meaningful learning is composed of four elements: the nature of learning is concerned with personal involvement and learners put the whole mind into learning; learning is self-initiated and comes from one's heart; learning is permeable, it will make the students' behavior, attitude, personality, etc. change; learning is evaluated by the learner himself. Rodgers advocated that the core of the meaningful learning is to let students "learn freely". Rodgers also paid special attention to the "learner-centered" teaching. He summed up the basic principles of teaching are: in terms of the relation of the subject to the object, students should be put in the main position of teaching, and teaching activities should be student-centered; in terms of the relationship between teachers and students during the process of teaching, it should be democratic and equal. It is also the one between tutors and learners; as far as the teaching goal is concerned, it is more important to teach students how to learn instead of what to learn; in teaching management, self-management and self-constraint are more important and students should be given full freedom; in teaching methods, teachers' guidance is second to students' self-study and students can choose their own learning methods.

2.2.2 Constructivism Theory

Constructivism learning theory is the further development from behaviorism to cognitive theory. Constructivism learning theory believes that learning is a process during which learners construct knowledge actively.

At present, what the university English teaching reform urgently needs to do is to find a teaching mode suitable for China's national conditions, suitable for the current conditions of learning conditions and can quickly improve learning efficiency.

3. Discussion on How to Improve English Learners' Autonomous Ability

Research shows that autonomy can be achieved through strategies' training, therefore, to reach the goal of autonomous learning, it is necessary to help the students learn how to learn and implement the strategy instruction in teaching. The performance of autonomous learning ability lies in the fact whether a learner can manage his own learning by himself or not. Autonomous learning can be realized by learners' self-planning, self-management, self-monitoring and self-evaluation of their learning behavior.

3.1 Strengthening the Language Practice Activities in University English Teaching

In order to promote the teaching mode of autonomous learning, the most important thing is to change the traditional teaching idea. Traditional English classroom teaching and learning are organized around exams. Teaching dominates learning. We know that inspiring and mobilizing students' initiative, enthusiasm and consciousness is a stepping stone to starting students' autonomous learning. It is directly related to the effect of students' autonomy in language learning. Therefore, a pressing matter of the moment is that teachers should consider how to strengthen students' drive. American famous psychologist Bruno said: "the acquisition of knowledge is an active process; learners should not be passive recipients of information, but knowledge-acquiring participants in knowledge acquisition" "Cognition is a process, not a result." "Teaching a person a certain subject, is not to make him write down some results, but teach him how to participate in the process of knowledge building- up." Therefore, we should pay attention to students' initiative, allowing students to participate in the process of obtaining knowledge independently, to find out learning patterns and to pursue knowledge in an exploratory way and master it. Only when students come to have intrinsic motivation to learn, will they be glad to learn and learn actively and can independent learning mechanism run for a long time.

During the process of English teaching based on autonomous learning, teachers should organize, help and guide students to carry out autonomous learning effectively according to certain teaching objectives. Specifically, what teaching activities based on autonomous learning emphasized is like the following mentioned: the whole teaching is organized on the premise of giving independent learning time to students, is aimed to cultivate students' autonomous learning ability and promote students' autonomy. It is the whole teaching process to let students decide, select, control, reflect and evaluate autonomously. The above-mentioned autonomous learning teaching is an ideal teaching process. Take vocabulary teaching for example. We should teach students how to remember words, learn words and accumulate words. In terms of words' spelling, students should learn how to remember words according to the phonetic symbols. As far as the pronunciation of the word is concerned, they can learn how to imitate. As for the meaning of a word in text, they should learn to understand them by putting them into the text or the sentence. I can get the meaning of words, to the front. They should read as much as possible and learn to understand the meanings of words during reading. While memorizing words, they should remember phrases first and words go second. Memory, according to the importance, to have. Remember the first phrase, a word. Priority should be given to remember the meaning of words.

3.2 Strengthening the Language Practice Activities in University English Autonomous Learning

During the process of autonomous learning, it requires strengthening teachers' guidance ability. Autonomous learning, is absolutely not learning freely. Teachers' responsibility is not reduced, but increased. Before each class, teachers should carefully organize teaching materials and carefully design teaching plans. Class details and timing should be considered from every possible aspect. At the same time, the individual differences of students can not be ignored, including interest differences, enthusiasm differences and differences between life goals and personality education. We will not be able to develop and cultivate students' individuality with the single education. Without individuality, there is no innovation. So, it has been an inevitable requirement to go away from the traditional teaching mode and towards diverse and personalized teaching. Only when emphasis is put on personalized teaching, and the research of autonomous learning is actively carried out, can students not be limited by learning, can students' individuality not be worn away by the school life prescribed by the ringing sound of a bell and finally can students' rich and colorful personal worlds be shown. First of all, teachers should be able to arrange proper strategies, training and applicable activities according to the specific situation of students, organize classroom activities, and ensure the plan implementation. Secondly, in the activities, teachers should be able to control the activity rhythm and time to ensure the completion and high efficiency of activities. Thirdly, In terms of how students finish their tasks and mastered strategies, the teacher should give appropriate feedbacks, enabling the students to experience success and failure so as to adjust their learning behavior. Fourth, in order to make the activities carried out smoothly and in order to make students acquire knowledge and abilities through participation in activities, teachers need to give timely help and encouragement and when necessary they themselves can participate in these activities as well. In addition, teachers are expected to give timely help to students by providing necessary knowledge and skills, etc. But at the same time, they should pay attention to helping students develop the initiatives of striving for help from both teachers and students.

In the process of autonomous learning, the students themselves know clearly what kind of learning can best meet their needs. They also know very clearly what they want to know and about what they are very confused and unclear. Therefore, teachers should lay great emphasis on students' self-evaluation, guide them come to realize whether it is reasonable and effective for them to learn and master knowledge, whether the methods used in the study are appropriate and whether they can timely feedback and regulate learning strategies and improve

learning methods step by step.

3.3 Self-study Plays a Key Role in the Process of Cultivating Autonomous Learning Ability

Dequate self-study time and space is beneficial to promoting students' autonomous learning. First of all, teaching management departments should have a correct view of curriculum, to give the students some independent development time rather than forcing them to sit in the classroom the students sit in the classroom from morning till night listening to teachers' teaching. Schedules should be flexible. Secondly, it is necessary to set up an autonomous learning center, administrate and develop it. The library and the network platform should provide rich learning resources for students, allowing students to arrange learning time autonomously, choose learning space freely, select learning materials freely, arrange their own learning plan according to their own wills, put forward any questions they come across during their learning and ask guidance from their teachers or discuss them with their classmates.

3.4 Guide students to Take Notes

In the eighteenth century, the famous writer Samuel Johnson called taking notes the "necessary pain". Notes are a permanent and systematic record. The process of taking notes is also the process of information screening and concentrating. It can develop thinking and improve the ability to capture important information, improve the capability of information processing. Notes should include keys, difficulties, doubts and new points of view. How to take notes? Students must devote themselves to listening to their teachers, tell what are the key and difficult points, which can be written down, which can be digested and absorbed. By this way, students won't get distracted and wander off and remain to be excited and active in class, thus ensuring the quality of classroom teaching. By the way, notes can help students know what are keys and difficult points during reviewing their lessons, avoiding blind review.

3.5 Timely Review after Class Is the Last Guarantee of Autonomous Learning

Classroom teaching is only part of the autonomous learning teaching. Knowledge consolidation requires timely review. Teachers can put forward different review requirements according to different levels of students. In addition, in explaining the exercises, they should ensure concise explanation and plenty of practice. They are not expected to over-repeat some simple contents which students learn well. Students should be asked to self-study and find out their weaknesses. In this way, students can become their own learning masters and can achieve what they have learned.

4. Conclusion

Autonomous learning is a very important concept in the second language acquisition and foreign language learning. But the cultivation of learners' autonomy is an indispensable aspect in English classroom teaching at present. To some extent, it is the most important training for foreign language learners. However, the process of autonomous learning teaching implementation is like that during which babies learn how to walk. It is an exploratory process. It is a difficult and slowly- adapting process to develop autonomous learning. It requires teachers' careful guidance to cultivate this ability. But once this ability is developed, it is also beneficial to students for their lifetime. It can lay a good foundation for their lifelong learning. On how to cultivate the students' self-learning ability, our teachers play a leading and illuminating role, which not only benefits students a lot but also helps to further carry out their future teaching work. Just as the saying goes: give a man a fish, he can eat fish one day; teach a man how to fish, they can eat fish for his lifetime. Whether the teaching reform of university autonomy in English class can succeed or not depends on teachers, students, management departments, and information departments, etc. As an English teacher, they must not only know theories concerning autonomy learning and autonomy cultivation, but also try to put these theories into practice. Only in this way, can the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching be realized.

In conclusion, we believe through the joint efforts of teachers and students, the change of teaching methods and learning style, fostering learner autonomy in foreign language learning will not become empty words. Therefore, in this paper, we attempt to explore autonomous learning problems in terms of teaching and learning of foreign language. "Negotiation in foreign language teaching" will explore how to create a democratic atmosphere for foreign language teaching, arouse learners' independent consciousness, inspire them to make independent choices and judgments and foster students' autonomy in foreign language learning by changing teaching methods. We believe that cultivating autonomous learners is an important goal of education. As educators of foreign languages, we should strive for the realization of the ideal work. In a word, in the process of the quality education, attention should be paid to the cultivation of students' autonomous learning ability. Students are supposed to be inspired to independently to explore and, to think in the teaching activities so that the best

teaching effect can be achieved.

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