Task-Driven Self-Development of College English Teachers in Online Teaching and Learning during the Coronavirus Outbreak

Peng Yuanzhen

English Department, North China Electric Power University, Baoding Hebei 071000, China

ABSTRACT. *College English teachers have been undergoing self-development, despite the reluctance and anxiety at the beginning of the spring semester, due to the fulfillment of virtual teaching and learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. The self-development is driven by external pressure to handle the unexpected situation and it has been integrated into teachers' competency in language teaching and computer technology. It is fulfilled by internalizing the teaching experiences in the process of giving virtual classes.*

KEYWORDS: *College english teachers, Self-development, Experience, Online teaching and learning*

1. Introduction

In a bid to contain the spread of the coronavirus, gatherings are forbidden, resulting in the shutdown of schools and universities. Thanks to the development of the Internet, teachers and students accomplish the teaching and learning on the air, with home teaching and learning dreams fulfilled. Teaching and learning completely dependent on the Internet has been put on agenda for the first time. The adaptability shown by teachers and students is undoubtedly amazing. Schools and universities take the initiative to start the whole project. Teachers all of a sudden are put in the position of learners in terms of computer and Internet technology. College English teachers, with education background specializing in humanitarian and arts study, are no exception. College English teachers have to play the role of a technology student, aiming at integrating technology into English teaching and learning.

2. Cooperation between Teachers and Students

Take College English Teaching and Learning in North China Electric Power University. Two weeks before the date for the beginning of the spring semester, teachers were informed to attend training courses on how to use certain platform like *Ketangpai*. Q&A sections are continuously active following the courses, revealing teachers' enthusiasm and anxiety simultaneously. College English relevant courses involve in-class interactions between students and teachers, including asking and answering questions, giving presentations or short impromptu speeches etc, which presses teachers to adopt an APP with vocal communication functions. Teachers resort to QQ, DingTalk, Tencent Meeting or other useful applications in addition to the recommended terminal *Ketangpai* or *Ismart*. Interactive activities are instituted either by written responses or clicking on the microphone button. Worries voiced by teachers do not stand because Chinese students, considered to be shy, aren't unwilling to share their ideas on the Internet, not as nervous as when they are seen by a large audience in the classroom.

The above description of overcoming shortcomings by both teachers and students sheds light the potential of the success of online English teaching and learning. Under these circumstances are College English teachers encouraged to proceed despite the fact that they are still in a position to supervise students' real state of learning in class and after class. Therefore, in-class check-up and after-class homework are necessary measures to press students to commit themselves to study on their own. In addition, the final score of a certain course must involve in-class performance and after-class homework assessment, meaning both of them should account for a certain percentage in the final score. This approach not only causes pressure but also offer inspiration for students to move on with their study of English. Hence, coordination between teachers and students is a necessary step for the implementation of online English teaching and learning.

College English course features improvements via interaction. As far as my own recent teaching experiences are concerned, teachers' inclination to work over the Internet and students' willingness to learn over it are

integrated driving force to make online teaching and learning possible and successful.

3. Preparations in the Face of Online Course Challenge

In order to fulfill the mission of online College English teaching, teachers feel the need to master techniques concerning manipulation of certain software and hardware. College English teachers in China are usually humanitarian and arts studies oriented, meaning they are less inclined to follow the trend of high technology and insensitive to manipulations of high technology products. Before relevant English courses were launched, it is not hard to see English teachers' hidden wish for the quick control of spread of the coronavirus and also for back-in-classroom teaching and learning style. Nevertheless, situation did not change in accordance with teachers' subjective intentions.

Being obliged to give virtual courses, College English teachers brace themselves for the approaching challenge. We shared anxiety and experiences in working Wechat groups. Teachers not blind to new technology offered valuable experiences on which application to adopt for better use in English courses, in which interaction between teachers and students are an inspiration for teachers to give more and students to contribute and take more.

Colleagues' collaboration plays a crucial role in the preparation for the launch of College English course. For example, teachers are assigned to make detailed plans for designated sections. Team spirit sparks enthusiasm for being involved in a task, either big or small, either difficult or simple.

4. Solutions to Online Teaching Obstacles

Giving online courses is a brand new challenge to most of College English teachers. Unexpected problems definitely occur in the process of giving an online class. First concern is that students do not have the designated textbooks, which would normally be put in their dormitories. The solution to this concern is contact the publishing press for help. Fortunately, I-smart and U-campus applications provide timely online corresponding materials, equivalents of textbooks. Teachers have to be familiar with every section in the online study room in a bid to assign students corresponding tasks to carry out in class and after class.

Listening section is usually accomplished on the computer in designated computer laboratory classroom at given time. Apparently, this convenience has to be abandoned this semester. Teachers can resort to I-smart for listening practice or offer students other audio or video English materials to practice and improve their listening ability. As a consequence, teachers' workload doubles or triples.

Another obstacle is that there is no way for students to discuss in pairs or groups in class. They work on speeches on their own. Solution is that brainstorming can be fulfilled in class, but preparation for the in-class speech is given as assignments.

In conclusion, English teachers learn to make adjustments as a reaction to the changing situation. Experiences turn to wealth we can return to whenever we need to.

5. Reflections on the Advantages and Disadvantages of College English Online Teaching and Learning

As of April 1st, the ongoing Online College English teaching and learning has lasted for 30 plus days. Now that teachers have a general idea of what online classes could be like, anxiety due to uncertainty has been decreasing. It seems appropriate to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of online College English classes.

There is no question that the Internet helps solve the obstacle of giving classes according to the syllables and students waste no time in accumulate credits to graduate. Also, teachers' self-promotion both for technology management and language proficiency has been fulfilled, meaning a strong sense of achievement for teachers. Finally, it is convenient for teachers to give personal feedback to every student via the Internet.

However, disadvantages cannot be simply ignored. The lack of face-to-face communication and lack of supervision are obvious setbacks of online teaching and learning. The latter one will lead to the discussion of another issue: how can be final examination carried out online? Certainly, eyesight is bound to deteriorate due to long-time being hooked on the Internet. Therefore, if conditions permit, human beings would choose to go to physical classrooms to meet one another instead of sitting in the about three-quarter-meter room and talk to the air without seeing facial expressions or eye contacts.

6. Conclusion

Despite multiple applications and easy online access to English materials, the role of physical College English classrooms cannot be downplayed. There is a social thing in the classroom teaching and learning style. Human beings need to stay together with human beings, which is innate in social beings. No matter how fast and how well technology develops in the 21st century, beings' activities cannot be judged in terms of efficiency. Language teaching and learning, especially College English teaching and learning, demands face-to-face interaction, supervision, and emotional motivations.

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