A Discussion about College Teachers' Roles in English Viewing, Listening and Speaking Autonomous Learning

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[Abstract] With the application of autonomous learning in university English teaching in recent years, research on teachers' roles is attracting more and more attention. This paper analyzes the six (6) roles that college English teachers should play in the new autonomous learning theory, including: *learning concept reform, teaching goal setting, teaching content design, resource using guide, mental consultant and outcomes assessors.* The focus of the study attempts to explain that teachers must fully understand the meaning of their own existence, to realize coexistence and conversion of multiple roles, to fully exert teachers' influences, and to improve English teaching efficiency. Meanwhile, the study examined teachers' roles through experimental investigation. By comparing the experimental group and the control group, we further confirmed the six roles of teachers in autonomous learning mode are of great significance.

[Keywords] university English; autonomous Learning; teachers' roles; monitoring

Education is a long-term social undertaking; learning is a lifelong personal process. Alvin Toffler states that "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." The future society will be one of continuous learning, one that requires lifelong education, constant self-improvement and ever-refining survival adaptability. In today's world, due to the development of information technology and communications, knowledge transfer is no longer the ultimate goal for school teaching. An individual's ability to learn has become an important indicator of an individual's quality and capacity. With the advent of the information age, a historic transformation is underway and affecting people's way of living and learning. However, the first step for transition from "examination oriented education" to "quality education" in the current Chinese College English has become a new concept of education. Due to the passive opinion formed in secondary schools that students are only studying for exams, many college students who are new to the university are motivated to learn passively. At the same time, the current method for college English teaching is still constrained within three realms: the classroom, the teachers and the teaching materials. Basic information exchange between teachers and students is in a one-way transfer rather than a two-way communication.

The lack of variety in teachers' character and the missing emotion in communication during teaching and learning make it difficult to achieve any teaching goals. This adversely affects the quality and effectiveness of college English teaching. College English learning autonomy based on the social environment does not mean free study without any restraint or monitoring, but refers to self-directing, self-planning, self-motivating, and self-monitoring with the active assistance and involvement of teachers who utilize network technology as well.

Teachers' Roles

As higher education in Chinese colleges and universities develop and a learning society forms, changes need to be made in teachers' roles. Teachers must be able to engage students and create an atmosphere of active learning and enable students to learn autonomously. College English teachers should focus on guiding student learning rather than solely teaching. The role of a teacher should be as director behind the curtain rather than an actor on the stage. This mainly requires changes in the following aspects.

Learning thought Reform

Thought is the forerunner of action, and teachers should guide students to change their ideas, so that students truly become masters of learning. The traditional Chinese concept of learning is that "teachers

talk, and students listen." What the teachers tell, the students listen to. Teachers are actively taking a dominant role and simply making students a passive recipient. Many students do not take the initiative to think and question what the teachers teach. They also have become accustomed to accepting that unified standard and unquestionable answers. Due to neglect of self-learning, students gradually develop a dependency on books and teachers, they have difficulty asking questions, analyzing situations and solving problems. This antiquated way of teaching and learning is limiting college students' thinking space, affecting their responding ability, and making them lack individuality and innovation.

The Great Chinese educator Confucius said, "Gentlemen do not control." Likewise, students' minds should also no be controlled, which has two meanings: First, students have their own thoughts, their own feelings, and their own subjective initiative; second, students should become knowledgeable. They should be broad-minded and pluralistic thinkers who can move in multiple directions rather than be confined to one aspect. So in college English classroom teaching, teachers must first change students' ideas, and help them truly understand the significance of reading, listening and speaking. English is not simply a discipline; more importantly it is a skill. It not only requires students to be able to read and listen, but also requires them to speak and write, and be able to use this language to communicate in various social activities. Therefore the purpose of teaching viewing, listening and speaking is to develop students' practical English ability.

College English viewing, listening and speaking teaching relies on modern audio and visual techniques, closely integrating sight and sound. It's both teaching purpose and teaching methods. For college English classes, teachers must first allow students to explore on their own necessity and importance of reading, listening and speaking English teaching, and enable students to speak actively and learn voluntarily. Only when university students realize the importance of viewing, listening and speaking English learning can students truly become the masters of college English.

Teaching Goal Setting

Once the teachers set teaching tasks and goals, students will gain a better direction and motivation in autonomous learning. University students should not be aimless in the implementation of English study. Their study plan should be well-planned, organized and prepared according to the directions and goals provided by teachers. After all, students are in the learning stage. Students' knowledge reserves are imperfect, and thus have limited ability to develop their own learning tasks and objectives.   However, there must be a both direction and goals set for students. In addition, autonomous learning is not the same as "self-study." Most of the students will find it difficult to become independent learners by themselves without proper guidance from teachers. Thus, setting reasonable learning objectives become the teacher's primary task, which increases the probability that independent learning will be effective.

Teaching Content Design

Viewing, listening and speaking content should not simply be listed in the classroom, but should be embedded into appropriate sectors through careful design, so that teachers can promote and interpret classroom content. Audio and video tools have proven to attract the attention of students, thus maximizing students' limited initiative. Audiovisual College English Lessons effectively combine video and sound to bring students visual and auditory experience and let them interact with a variety of classroom activities. At the same time, teachers can recommend students to watch related audiovisual information or arrange a fixed time to play movies in English to enrich students' spare time. English teachers may also be guided to form English learning interest groups, which allow students to sing songs in English, read English poetry, tell English stories, and celebrate traditional Western festivals, increasing students' exposure to English and their opportunity to use English.

Resource Guide

English teachers should focus on improving the quality and ability of students by guiding students to make full use of libraries, Internet, multimedia and other learning resources, encourage students to develop the habit of information collection and resource integration. Learning resources not only refers to

a variety of learning materials, but also includes a variety of learning tools and conditions, such as multimedia, the internet, radio, television, video and so on. English teachers should serve as a good resource provider, and actively develop and use English textbooks and other than practical and colorful materials to strengthen students' enthusiasm and flexibility of English learning. Teachers need to truly understand students' needs in independent learning processes, as well as provide them with both support and guidance. In a traditional classroom, students can only acquire limited knowledge from textbooks and teachers. But in autonomous learning, English teachers should guide students to take advantage of all resources available in libraries, society, and multimedia to gather knowledge. This will not only help students diverge their thinking, broaden their horizons, and develop their ability to gather information, but also provide support for students to gain better understanding of materials and generate innovation.

Mental Counselor

In the autonomous Learning mode, teachers should act as a psychological consultant, and fairly treat students as they encounter difficulties in the learning process. Since psychological factors of learning a foreign language is one of the main factors that influences learning, teachers should help students overcome psychological factors that may hinder their foreign language learning, and accurately grasp the internal relations between foreign language learning and students' psychological world. Teachers should help students overcome the psychological barriers of English learning by using teaching strategies effectively to stimulate students' motivations for, beliefs of, interests in, and will to study English, and thus improve their foreign language learning efficiency. Also, teachers should answer any questions that students encounter while learning, and offer advice to students of language learning skills to help them develop learning strategies.

Learning Outcomes Assessors

Learning evaluation is an integral part of teaching activities, both in the traditional teaching model and the autonomous learning environment. Students' learning process requires teachers to make full use of the assessor's role in evaluation and give proper assessments–both formative assessment and summative assessment–to promote a positive learning effect. Even though students assess their own learning outcome to some degree in autonomous learning, their assessment may lack some accuracy because of the limitations of their knowledge. Thus, teachers' assessments are more accurate and objective because they evaluate through the learning process, learning strategies, learning outcome, and learning progress. This not only reflects the urgency of student needs, but also enables teachers to get feedback from students and to adjust their teaching schedules, so as to effectively grasp the implementation of learning process and to achieve the goal of improving English teaching.

Research Methods

The role of College English teachers who utilize viewing, listening, speaking and autonomous learning will help improve students' learning results. There are two classes attending this experiment in Liaodong University which is newly established.   For this study class B1106 was selected (28 students major in Information Technology) as the experimental class, while class B1104 as the control classes (27 students major in Information Technology).

Table 1
Collage Entrance English Exam Score Comparison between Experimental Classes and Control Classes

Class	Average score	Highest score	Lowest score	Standard Deviation
Experimental class	96.85	121	69	12.60
Control class	98.44	123	71	13.10

From table 1 we can see, there is no significant difference in English proficiency between the experimental class and the control class. The experimental class and control class used the same textbooks: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, "New Horizon College English" (new version) textbook series. There are 2 classes every two week. Both the experimental class and the control class have adopted a well-equipped college English autonomous learning center with excellent multimedia for Autonomous learning.

Among them, the experimental class teachers are engaged more deeply in the learning process. Teachers actively guide students to change their thoughts of English learning, unconsciously telling them the importance of autonomous learning, and helping students to develop a clear learning objective. Meanwhile, in the autonomous learning, English teachers designed a variety of viewing, listening and speaking content for students to learn autonomously and reasonably embedded them in all aspects of the learning process. For the control class, the teacher's presence is more blurred. Students learn English in accordance with the multimedia teaching software step by step. In this process they rely entirely on their own choices and decisions for English learning.

Two classes used the same evaluation methods. They used summative assessment method which was composed of 30% listening, and 70% final exam score. In the experimental class autonomous learning process, teachers reformed learning thought, set teaching goals, designed teaching content and acted as resource using guide mental counselor and learning outcomes assessors After the experiment, we compared and analyzed the final exams and the passing rate of CET-4 of the two classes two years later .

Experiment Process

As autonomous learning is a long and dynamic process, this experiment lasted from September 2011 to July 2013, a total of four academic semesters. It is a very comprehensive and objective study of English teachers' role in autonomous learning. Additionally, the problems in a teacher's role in the implementation process could also be more fully explored. Specifically as follows:

First, the study clarified the meaning of autonomous learning and helped students to set long-term and short-term goals, including semester and weekly goals. Students were required to pay attention to the tone of voice and other similar aspects as well as emphasized the importance of reading after school and learning English by comparing Chinese and English sentence structures. This will help students understand and master the learning process, reduce their confusion and anxiety, keep their enthusiasm for learning and motivation. To this end, we regularly developed learning objectives for students to help students better integrated into the learning process.

Second, we carefully designed the viewing, listening and speaking content for autonomous learning. English teachers controlled the rhythm of English learning properly. For example, students were required to do a unit test after completion of each unit, and then English teachers decided whether to start the next unit. Each unit test scores was an important component for total score.

Third, students were guided to choose resources that could improve their learning abilities like memorization, recitation, and writing. For Example, teachers can recommend students to start from relatively slow speed English, enjoy English programs in various fields like economy, politics, arts, and sports, select programs whose words are easy to understand at first, whose repetition rates are high, and those that contain generally no more than 90 words per minute to practice. When there was no difficulty in listening in this particular program, students could turn to normally-paced American radio broadcasts.

Fourth, for the students in the experimental class, we stressed the psychological counseling role of teachers, so that they were more willing to seek for help from English teachers when faced with psychological problems. Teachers would be more inclined to give students psychological sense of security and spiritual inspiration in a variety of ways in order to create a more relaxed learning atmosphere and encourage students to think actively.

Finally, after the experimental class completed a self-learning task, teachers effectively organized feedback and made an overall evaluation. Teacher evaluation first reinforced the advantages of the students in the learning process so as to improve students' autonomous learning enthusiasm, and then would highlight the problems and solutions in the future.

Academic Performance Assessment

The following tables recorded the performance assessment. The passing rate of CET-4 by the time in September 2013 in the experimental class is 35%, in the control class is 18/%. As can be seen from Table 2, the experimental class average score is 22.61 points, while the control class average score is 18.89 points, which is 3.72 points lower than the experimental class. It is clear in Table 3 that the experimental class average score is 71.11 points, while the control class average score is 61.78 points, which is 9.33 points lower than the experimental class. Furthermore, there is a great difference between the two classes in the passing rate of CET-4. These numbers indicate the effectiveness of the autonomous learning model of the experiment class is significantly higher than that of the control class. This also shows that college English teachers playing full role in the learning process will help improve students' achievement.

Table 2

The Listening Test Score Comparison between Experimental Class and Control Class

Class	Average score	Highest score	Lowest score	Standard Deviation
Experimental class	22.61	26	18	2.01
Control class	18.89	24	12	3.21

Table 3

Final Examination Comparison between Experimental Class and Control Class

Class	Average score	Highest score	Lowest score	Standard Deviation
Experimental class	71.11	83	56	7.06
Control class	61.78	81	23	13.99

Conclusion

The most important goal of English teaching is to develop students' autonomous learning ability. Autonomous Learning does not weaken the role of teachers; on the contrary, a teacher's role has changed both inside and outside the classroom with higher request, "autonomy" and "monitoring" is not a contradiction, they interact with and depend on each other. University of English teachers should be fully aware of the importance of their role, and thus meet the requirements of foreign language teaching reform. Active and proper monitoring will improve the university autonomous English learning achievement. Teachers must recognize the necessity and urgency to readjust their role in teaching to better meet the needs of Autonomous Learning. Improving learner autonomy is conducive to the realization of students' lifelong learning ability and the promotion of English teaching objectives.

Two years of teaching practice proved that college English teachers participating actively in viewing, listening and speaking autonomous learning can help improve students' achievement. This not only highlights the "student-centered" teaching concept, promote the personality development of students, and enable students to fully explore their personal potential, but also provides teachers with new teaching methods so that teachers are more clear about their roles as learning thought reformer, teaching goal setting, teaching content design, guiding resource utilization, mental consultant, and outcome assessors in the future.

Acknowledgment

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