

## College English Teaching Under Web-based Context and Autonomous Learning

### ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ANGLAIS EN LIGNE ET L'APPRENTISSAGE AUTONOME

LI Changyu<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Prof., Foreign Languages Department, North China Institute of Science & Technology, China

\*Corresponding author.

Address: Foreign Languages Department, North China Institute of Science & Technology, Beijing Yanjiao, 101601, China

Email: frank1588@163.com

Received 11 July 2011; accepted 25 August 2011

#### Abstract

Web-based English learning is a complicated systematic engineering. At present, universities and colleges are generally short of web-based teaching resources. Under such circumstances, the paper probes into the possibility and maneuverability of web-based English learning implementation, and discusses the appropriate combination of classroom English teaching and web-based English teaching so as to establish web-based teaching environment, highlight shared web-based English learning, and realize students' blended learning and individualization learning. It is a brand-new and eternal research subject of web-based English learning to make full use of network resources, cultivate students' autonomous learning abilities and improve teaching quality and students' learning efficiency.

**Key words:** College English; Teaching pattern; Web-based teaching; Autonomous learning; Learning strategies

#### Résumé

L'apprentissage de l'anglais sur le Web est un processus compliquée et systématique. A l'heure actuelle, les universités et les instituts supérieurs sont généralement à court de ressources pédagogiques sur Internet. Dans de telles circonstances, la presse fait débat sur la possibilité et la maniabilité de la mise en œuvre de l'apprentissage de l'anglais basée sur le Web, sur la combinaison appropriée de l'enseignement en classe et sur le Web afin d'établir les conditions d'enseignement en ligne et sur

comment souligner l'apprentissage de l'anglais partagé et de détecter l'apprentissage mixte et l'apprentissage d'individuation des étudiants. Cultiver la capacité d'autonomie des étudiants en améliorant la qualité pédagogique et l'efficacité d'apprentissage des étudiants: faire pleinement usage des ressources du réseau au sujet de l'apprentissage de l'anglais basé sur le web, ce qui représente un sujet neuf et une recherche éternelle.

**Mots-clés:** Anglais de l'enseignement supérieur; Modèle de l'enseignement; Enseignement en ligne; Apprentissage autonome; Stratégies d'apprentissage

LI Changyu (2011). College English Teaching Under Web-based Context and Autonomous Learning. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 7(3), 103-108. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/j.ccc.1923670020110703>. 319 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020110703.319>

Under the guidance of theories of foreign language teaching, College English has as its main components knowledge and practical skills of the English language, learning strategies and intercultural communication. It is a systematic whole, incorporating different teaching models and approaches. *College English Curriculum Requirements* issued by The Ministry of Education in July 2007 explicitly points out that "One of the purposes of the teaching model reform is to promote the formation of students' individualized learning methods and the development of students' autonomous learning competence. New teaching models should make students choose materials and methods suited for them to study, acquire the guidance of learning strategies and help students improve the independent learning abilities gradually." Web-based English education is complicated system engineering; and with the current teaching resources of the network unceasingly rich, the paper examines the traditional classroom teaching and the disadvantages of college English, discusses the features

and advantages of web-based teaching, and puts forward the research goal and methods of college English web-based teaching and students' autonomous learning. The paper is intended to study how to adjust students' college English learning strategies under the web-based teaching environment, and how to cultivate their autonomous learning competence in order to realize the individualized learning to improve the learning efficiency.

## **1. THE DEFICIENCIES OF TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM TEACHING AND THE CHARACTERISTICS AND ADVANTAGES OF WEB-BASED TEACHING**

At present there is a common phenomenon "time-consuming and inefficient" in college English teaching of China, which originates from the traditional English classroom teaching model that is based mainly on the theory of behaviorism, whose school holds the view that psychology only studies overt behavior and is against studying consciousness and internal psychological process, and regard individual behavior as the individual being adapted to the responsive system of the external environment—"stimulation-reaction learning system" that the cause is considered to be the response to the external stimuli and is not related to internal psychological process caused by stimulation, that is to say, learning has nothing to do with internal process. Therefore, in this theory support, teaching model is basically teacher-centered: the teacher is not only person who teach the knowledge, taking the initiative and monitoring the whole process of teaching activities; students are taught the object and passive recipients of external stimulation; the teaching media is auxiliary demo tool of teachers; teaching textbooks are students' main source of knowledge. This classroom teaching model can give play to the teacher's leading role to facilitate teachers organize and monitor the whole process of teaching activities, but because of teachers' complete dominance about classroom teaching, learners' learning cognitive main role would be ignored and students' innovative thinking and innovative capacity would not be cultivated and developed.

College English online education, based on modern Internet technology, provide comprehensive and three-dimensional English teaching and learning environment for students to improve students' language application ability. Through network resources and network technology, web-based English teaching embodies the characteristics of teaching flexibility and pertinence, and individualized features of autonomous and mixed learning, which the traditional English classroom teaching is in lack of. In the traditional classroom English teaching, teachers can't take into account students' learning interests and individual characteristics and even their differences

so teachers can't meet the learning needs of students; but web-based English teaching can achieve individualized teaching and learning through the network platform and network courses, so that students can adjust their learning strategies at any time according to their own needs and interests and regularly evaluate their own learning situations and level to adjust effectively their study plan and progress and cultivate their better autonomous learning ability. If web-based English teaching can be combined into traditional English classroom teaching, English teaching effects and students' learning efficiency will be greatly improved.

## **2. THE THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND APPLICATION VALUE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH WEB-BASED TEACHING RESEARCH**

College English teaching reform is intended to change the traditional teacher-centered classroom teaching structure, construct the web-based teaching environment and build a new teaching pattern based on the student as a cognitive subject and the teacher as the leading role to achieve the combination of classroom teaching web-based teaching, so that we teachers can fully embody learners' learning autonomy and thus gradually realize the all-round reform of education ideas, teaching concepts, teaching contents, teaching models, teaching means, teaching methods and even learning strategies. Under the web-based environment, the web-based teaching platform can incorporate organically teachers, learners, teaching materials, teaching media and web-based courseware together. It will be one of college English teachers' major issues how to create the advanced and optimized teaching model based on web-based platform so as to improve the quality of teaching.

Doctor Mark Warschauer, American computer-assisted language teaching expert, thinks that the development of computer-assisted language teaching successively goes through three theoretical innovations: Structural Perspective, Cognitive Perspective and Social-cognitive Perspective. In 1960s and 1970s, computer-assisted language teaching is mainly based on the theory of structuralism (Structural Perspective). Such linguists as Leonard Bloomfield, Charles Fries and Robert Lado etc are the spokesmen for Structural Perspective, and they think that there are certain inherent laws in language, which is a system with relatively stable structure combination and emphasizes the analysis of language structure and system, and they hold that language learning process is a process of "stimulation—reaction—consolidation". Teachers can transmit systematic language knowledge to learners, and learners can form language habits and master language structure through repeated

imitation and practice. Noam Chomsky and Stephen Krashen are the spokesmen for Cognitive Perspective, and they think that learners cannot just acquire language ability by the imitation of language behavior and the formation of the language habits, but language learners utilize inherent cognitive to analyze, judge, reason and deduce lots of language input materials so that they can form gradually a set of relatively complete language knowledge system in the brain and use such language knowledge to communicate. So in college English teaching, teachers should provide lots of comprehensible language input and develop learners' inherent constructive competence of language system instead of infusing specific language habits. Dell Hymes and Michael Halliday are the spokesmen for Social-cognitive Perspective, and they think that in the process of language learning, stimulation from the external environment and the development of inherent cognitive ability go together, while understanding of language teaching is one-sided and extreme according to Structural Perspective and Cognitive Perspective. Dell Hymes and Michael Halliday point out that language is a social-cognitive phenomenon and language cognitive ability must be acquired through social communication. Social-cognitive Perspective attaches great importance to the development of social communication to language competence and cognitive ability; and in fact, we can say Social-cognitive Perspective is the organic integration of Structural Perspective with Cognitive Perspective. Social-cognitive Perspective illustrates the relationship between teaching, media and language learners, and provides the scientific theoretical basis for web-based college English teaching. With Social-cognitive Perspective as the guide, web-based English education can improve learners' interests of learning and subjective initiative, help learners to adjust learning strategies, change learning concepts and cultivate their language communicative competence in order to improve the effect of language learning.

Under the web-based environment, web-based education is intended to take advantage of modern education ideas and learning theories, and give full play to the advantages of network resources, to provide a kind of web-based teaching and learning environment for educators and learners so as to transfer digital contents and carry out the learner-centered education activities. The research of web-based education application covers the research of educators and learners, web-based teaching and learning process, web-based education resources and education supporting system design and developing and even the assessment of web-based education etc. The theoretical modules of web-based education support platform generally include four parts: the web-based teaching supporting subsystem, which provides support for all links of teaching implementation process; on-line learning supporting subsystem, which can provide information service, resources service, personnel services and facilities services; web-based education management

subsystem, which can deal with the management of users of web-based education supporting platform and the department of teaching affairs administration, and release the administrative information; web-based education assessment subsystem, which may conduct quantitative and non-quantitative evaluation to web-based teaching, learners' learning strategies, web-based education management and service. The current research into web-based education theory mainly focuses on the design of learning environment based on network and the exploration of learning methods and teaching models; and with the constant exploration of web-based teaching research, people have begun to probe some corresponding teaching models based on the network environment.

---

### **3. THE RESEARCH GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION METHODS OF COLLEGE ENGLISH WEB-BASED TEACHING AND STUDENTS' AUTONOMOUS LEARNING**

---

#### **3.1 The Goals of the Research**

By reforming the traditional English classroom teaching we should combine web-based English teaching into English classroom teaching and attach importance to of asynchronous teaching; and we construct web-based teaching environment to implement individualized learning and mixed learning, and online guidance and on-line question-answering, and improve learners' self assessment of learning; and we should strengthen the development and application of web-based teaching system and management software to achieve individualized teaching; and we should enhance the monitoring of web-based teaching system and teaching feedback to realize the self assessment of learners' learning. English education network the possibility and, find English classroom teaching and network of English teaching with point, building up a network teaching environment, highlights the web-based English education environment, in order to realize the sharing students learning and personal learning mixed, the training of the students' practice and innovation ability.

So we should strive to achieve the possibility and operability of web-based English education, capture the appropriate combination of classroom English teaching and web-based English teaching by building up web-based teaching environment and highlight the sharing of web-based English education environment in order to realize students' mixed learning and individualized learning and develop students' practice and innovation capabilities.

#### **3.2 The Implementation Methods**

We can make use of the experimental base of college English web-based teaching and students' autonomous

learning to construct network teaching platform to realize the integration of classroom teaching and web-based teaching and students' individualized learning. So we can use the random sampling method to carry on the questionnaire survey on college English classroom teaching research, college English web-based teaching research, college English web-based education management research, college English web-based education evaluation system, students' self assessment survey research based on college English web-based education, an analysis of college English examination achievement and students' learning strategy research based on college English web-based education. And then we may use SPSS software packages to conduct quantitative and correlation analysis of the survey data and results, analyze the research results so as to make a thorough analysis of the relationship between English classroom teaching and web-based English teaching and search for their best link point. On the meanwhile, according to the survey data analysis we try to write the concluding report and even the relative papers about the survey.

#### **4. PERFECT COLLEGE ENGLISH WEB-BASED TEACHING ENVIRONMENT AND IMPLEMENT LEARNERS' INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING AND MIXED LEARNING TO FOSTER STUDENTS' AUTONOMOUS LEARNING COMPETENCE**

The construction of web-based English teaching environment should be based on the modern education thought and advanced foreign language teaching theory, and we must take into account the basic principle of the environment construction and network teaching platform, supply the multi-functional and comprehensive system and environmental services to provide strong technical support for web-based English education. In web-based English teaching we must consider the teaching organization form and change the traditional one-way transmission "teacher — students" into interactive structure model "teacher — media — students" to embody fully the interactivity and dynamics of English teaching; and we should optimize the system environment, break through the limitation of time, provide vivid and three-dimensional language situations to give play to the learners' creative thinking.

Through the media software carrying information content, we can try affective education style instead of traditional essay teaching style to optimize the educational effect and promote the coordinated development of intelligence factors and non-intelligent factors to improve students' comprehensive quality; we must build a cultural atmosphere of the language teaching environment and

strengthen the understanding of information science to enhance their practical abilities of information application; and we must proceed with the reasonable allocation of network resources to make web-based English teaching system compatible and achieve resources sharing. Therefore, it becomes possible to combine web-based English teaching into English classroom teaching by constructing web-based English teaching environment so as to realize learners' individualized learning and mixed learning.

#### **4.1 Enhance the Development and Application of the Network Courseware for Teaching English and Attach Importance to Teachers' Asynchronous Lecturing**

Whether in web-based English teaching model or in English classroom teaching model, language learning depend at least in part upon teaching and explanation, and this listening teaching model still plays an important role in web-based English teaching. But as for the traditional teaching model, it is difficult to develop and cultivate students' ability of language application, while asynchronous teaching model embodies interactivity and autonomy, and is widely used in web-based English teaching, and teachers will pay more attention to the training of language skills than the teaching of language knowledge, which can help students foster self-learning ability and master and adjust learning strategies to improve students' language application ability. Therefore, courseware development, courseware use and courseware learning should embody fully courseware's interaction, enormous information resources and intuitiveness, take into consideration learners' characteristics, so that learners can browse teachers' contents any time and anywhere and make sure of the language knowledge acquisition and language skills training in order to achieve better teaching results.

#### **4.2 Actively Develop and Put Into Use the Network System Software for Language Teaching Management to Achieve Individualized Teaching**

The network language teaching system management software includes the courseware editing system, the question bank management subsystem, the teaching control subsystem, the test management subsystem and students test information processing subsystem. Through the establishment of language teaching platform and the use of system management software, we can eliminate the drawbacks of larger-class English teaching and better realize learners' mixed learning and individualized learning. Thus, under such "natural" language environment, learners can show stronger interest in English learning and achieve better effects so that learners may get good training about the abilities of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. In addition, through the language teaching system of testing, learners can use random testing, off-line testing, on-line testing to

understand and master their English-learning conditions and even existing problems in learning so that they can act accordingly and adjust learning strategies and learning plans.

#### **4.3 Construct the Web-Based Teaching Environment to Realize On-Line Guidance and Question-Answering**

On-line learning is not equal to a complete state of separation between students and teachers, and web-based teaching stresses the guide-subject pattern of teaching, but teachers' leading role is not allowed to ignore in the full play of learners' initiative and creativity and the cultivation of learners' innovative thinking and innovation ability. So through online guidance and on-line question-answering forms, teachers can clarify learning objectives and tasks and help learners make learning plans, and master the characteristics of the network course and on-line learning methods, make clear the specific steps and methods of the course learning and self-assessment methods; and teachers can get more feedback information about student learning, set up the specific on-line question-answering plans, answer questions on a regular basis and focus on analyzing the process of learning to stimulate students' independent thinking and help students overcome their timidity psychology.

#### **4.4 Strengthen the Monitoring of the Web-Based Teaching System and Teaching Feedback to Achieve Learners' Self-Assessment of Learning**

The management and teachers can take advantage of the web-based English teaching platform and teaching monitoring system to conduct the real-time monitoring of teaching and testing, and they can make the observation, analysis and research and management and regulation of the teaching process. Due to the limitation of the network resources, the lack of teaching supervision and management and teaching evaluation is a common problem in the web-based English teaching. Therefore, the management of teaching affairs and teachers should formulate the concrete and detailed plans, give the detailed implementation process, and make the formative assessment and summative assessment about on-line guidance, online question-answering, course assignments, self-learning counseling, regular testing, test evaluation, teaching monitoring and teaching feedback, which may reduce the negative influence of network teaching and achieve real network teaching to capacity; and in the course of guide teaching, the guide teaching mode of network-guiding-self-teaching-instructing should be applied consciously, with the network as a base, the students as the principal part. And teachers should try to get rid of the traditional and teacher-centered classroom teaching model and give consideration to both the learning of English language knowledge and the training of language skills so as to stimulate learners' learning initiative and enthusiasm and improve their language

application ability.

## **5. THE SUGGESTIONS ABOUT COLLEGE ENGLISH WEB-BASED TEACHING**

Gu Yueguo, assistant principal of Beijing Foreign Languages University and standing Vice President of Network Education Institute, said: "Now, people have common views about network education and have no longer doubt about its tremendous education potentials, and even show great enthusiasm about it. In this case, we need more scientific attitudes, bold exploration and hard practice, and even calm self-anatomy. There is no eternal truth in the world but just eternal exploration and practice." As a brand-new teaching and learning models based on the Internet, network education embodies the complete individualized learning and mixed learning. Therefore, college English teachers must reform the traditional classroom teaching model, focus on training learners' learning interests and the guidance and adjustment of learning strategies to improve learning efficiency, so much as that we can give full play to the learners' subjective initiative. At present, in web-based English teaching, we should pay attention to the following major problems:

First, cope with the relationship between English classroom teaching and web-based English teaching. We should distribute and adjust properly the time allotment and proportion of two kinds of teaching models and establish students-centered teaching structure in order to improve learners' learning efficiency and develop students' language application abilities and autonomous competence.

Second, construct the web-based teaching platform, design and use multimedia network courseware suitable for our students and strengthen network learning evaluation and management. The web-based teaching set students free so that they have no time limit and have more time for autonomous learning. Therefore, teaching administrative departments will try to improve the evaluation and supervision system of web-based teaching on a regular basis to learn about students' learning status and level, so that they can have their own plan to complete learning tasks and readjust their learning strategies and methods of study to improve their learning efficiency.

Third, teach and guide regularly learners' adjusting learning strategies for them to have a good command of good learning methods so as to ensure network teaching effects. Web-based teaching liberates both teachers and students, but highlights learners' individuation and initiative, and also increases the burden of teachers. Therefore, in web-based English teaching, teachers should diagnose learners' feedback and help students adjust learning strategies timely.

Finally, colleges with excellent network conditions

can practice web-based English teaching experiments, explore the features and advantages of web-based English education and train properly backbone teachers.

---

## CONCLUSION

Web-based English education is complicated system engineering. With the current teaching resources of the network unceasingly rich, the paper focuses on the possibility and operability of web-based English education implementation and the combination of classroom English teaching and web-based English teaching by building up web-based teaching environment and highlight the sharing of web-based English education environment in order to realize students' mixed learning and individualized learning and develop students' practice and innovation

capabilities. The use of network resources for language teaching and improving teaching quality and students' learning efficiency are the new and eternal research subject of web-based English education.

---

## REFERENCES

- Higher Education Department, The Ministry of Education. (2007). *College English Curriculum Requirements*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Krashen, S.D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- M. Warschauer & R. Kern (2000). *Network-based Language Teaching: Concepts and Practice*. Cambridge: University Press.