Research on the guidance learning and monitoring system of autonomous learning for College English

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Abstract. This paper aims to find out the influence of guidance learning and monitoring on autonomous learning for College English. By applying the qualitative and quantitative research approach, we tested the efficiency of the guidance learning and monitoring system of autonomous learning by a semester-long teaching practice. We compared the final score with that of the previous semester. After analyzing the data, we concluded that compared with the previous semester, the grades of performance scores of the experimental semester were significantly improved as well as the final scores. This shows that the effect of implementation of guidance learning and monitoring system to autonomous learning in College English is obvious. Finally, this paper provides some strategies to improve the effect of autonomous learning, and points out that there is a harmony relationship between autonomy and monitoring.

1. Introduction
The information revolution has brought about the continuous change of teaching and learning methods of College English, which has made the deep integration of information technology and teaching. Various teaching resources have emerged in an endless stream, teaching methods have been constantly updated, and teaching platforms have been increased. College English Curriculum Requirements (2017) point out that classroom teaching should combine with autonomous learning in college English curriculum in order to stimulate personalized learning strategies and promote the development of students’ autonomous learning ability. Holec (1981) considers that autonomous learning means students are responsible for their own learning. For learners, with the help of teachers, it is necessary to determine the learning objectives, contents and methods, and then determine the learning time, place and progress, and finally evaluate their own learning effect. Dickinson (1995) believes that autonomous learning is “the attitude towards learning and the ability to learn independently”.

2. Literature review
Holec (1981) integrated autonomous learning into foreign language teaching. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the study of autonomous learning has been favored by foreign language experts and scholars. Under the influence of computer network technology, in order to cultivate students’ autonomous learning ability, a new college English teaching model supported by computer network technology has been established (Wang Shouren 2011). In order to meet students’ individual needs, many researchers have explored the blended online and offline teaching model of College
English, aiming to cultivate good habits of autonomous learning, improve autonomous learning ability of English, and finally improve students’ comprehensive ability of using English. According to Chen Jian-lin, Wang Jing (2016), this combination has become the dominant mode of College English teaching in China. Chen Dong-chun (2011) regards more specific teaching mode should be implemented face-to-face teaching of oral English in small classes plus reading and writing and translation courses in classroom teaching, while Network autonomous learning is audio-visual and oral autonomous learning. It can be seen that the current College English teaching has been deeply integrated and inseparable with information technology, which also shows that autonomous learning plays a vital important role in English learning. Therefore, many researchers prove the importance of autonomous learning from the perspectives of learning motivations, learning strategies, sense of self-efficacy, sense of social support and sense of belonging to the class and so on.

However, there are many factors that determine the level of students’ autonomous learning ability, and teachers cannot achieve the expected teaching effect by implementing blended teaching mode. Professor Xu Jin-fen (2014) pointed out that although College English teachers have attached great importance to cultivating students’ autonomous learning ability in the past ten years, the overall situation is still not ideal, and students’ autonomous learning ability will not improve with the increased grade. In the process of autonomous learning practice, there are some unpleasing phenomena (Chen Dong-chun 2006). Without clear learning objectives and corresponding strategies, many students cannot effectively manage their own time by showing no specific learning plan or poor execution of the plan. To solve these problems, teachers and teaching administrators need to monitor, intervene and help them (Hou Xiao-hong, 2013). Therefore, cultivating students’ autonomous learning ability requires teachers to explore and guide the students inner potential.

According to Metacognition Theory, cognitive subjects possess the abilities of self-consciousness, self-monitoring and self-adjusting cognitive activity. Therefore, the effective integration of Metacognitive monitoring theory into teaching practice, especially students’ autonomous learning, will achieve good results. The cognitive subjects are students, and the cognitive activity is autonomous learning. Students have self-understanding, self-monitoring and self-adjustment after a stage of autonomous learning. Finally, students’ self-monitoring ability should be strengthened (Fu Zheng, 2014).

Therefore, some scholars proposed to monitor students’ autonomous learning in order to improve the effect of autonomous learning. Some guided students to monitor their learning process and adjust their learning strategies. Some proposed the guiding principle and monitoring system of English autonomous learning to promote Metacognition. He Ming-xia (2012), starting from the autonomous learning monitoring, analyzed the current situation and necessity of the autonomous learning monitoring of College English in China, and then analyzed the objectives, types and principles of the autonomous learning monitoring, and finally focused on the contents and the monitoring strategies. Yin Hua-dong (2014) pointed out that the relationship between autonomous learning ability and academic performance was overemphasized.

In conclusion, a current prominent problem in the autonomous learning of College English is that students lack the awareness of self-management and the ability of self-decision-making. Many students do not have clear learning objectives and lack effective monitoring from teachers and classmates in the learning process, because of the low autonomous learning ability. Therefore, in order to improve students’ autonomous learning ability and comprehensive application of English language, students must first understand its purpose and create a complete and multi-channel monitoring system. Therefore, it is particularly urgent and important to construct the guidance learning and monitoring system of College English autonomous learning and apply it to the practical teaching.
3. The construction of guidance learning and monitoring system of autonomous learning

3.1. The construction of the guidance learning system of College English

In this study, Book 4 of New Horizon College English--Viewing, Listening & Speaking (second edition) is selected to design the course guidance and unit guidance. The overall objective of the curriculum is to cultivate international talents. Through systematic teaching activities, this course takes satisfying students’ personality and needs as the core of its work, helps students develop autonomous learning habits and abilities, and improves their English language proficiency and practical ability. According to the specific requirements of College English, students should achieve the following goals. From the listening perspective, students should master some basic listening skills, understand the teacher’s English teaching and daily English conversation. At the same time, when they listen to some English broadcasts (such as VOA Special English), they need to grasp the main idea and the key points. From the oral English perspective, students should master the basic oral communication skills, and can answer the teacher’s questions accurately in English in class. And they can make a speech about 3 minutes on a specific topic discussion clearly and fluently.

The teaching schedule is 14 weeks in a semester and 28 class periods aiming at finishing five units of the teaching material, i.e., Book 4 of New Horizon College English--Viewing, Listening & Speaking (second edition). Finally, we will take the formative assessment, that is, the total final assessment score is equal to 50% of the final exam score plus by 50% of the performance score. By the way, the performance score includes 10% performance score of the reading and writing class, 10% of the reading and writing autonomous learning, 10% of the Viewing, Listening & Speaking autonomous learning, and 10% of final oral examination. Unit guidance learning is based on the unit theme, including the learning tasks, questions, key points and evaluation criteria of the unit.

3.2. The construction of autonomous learning monitoring system of College English

When we refer to autonomous learning, it is by no means learning without teachers’ participation (Benson Voller, 1997:63). In the network environment, students’ autonomous learning of College English does not mean that students can learn without any constraints. Both the administrators and English teachers should carry out multi-directional monitoring on students’ autonomous learning, including the Director of Teaching and Research Section, the Director of the Autonomous Learning Center and the other administrators.

![Figure 1. The guidance learning and monitoring system of autonomous learning](image-url)
The monitoring system includes two aspects, one is the monitoring of the network autonomous learning platform and the other is the classroom monitoring. Platform monitoring mainly refers to the monitoring of students’ completion of tasks on the platform by managers or teachers, including online hours, the number of completed assignments and discussions published, and finally the effect of autonomous learning. We release homework reminder and the latest platform learning feedback to students through the class QQ group, making students know their learning progress and effect in a timely manner. At the same time, the teaching assistant of the class helps the teacher to remind and supervise the students who have not finished the homework with high quality and quantity. When referring to the classroom monitoring, it mainly includes a series of classroom activities such as the theme speech, pair discussion, group discussion and in-class quiz and so on. Finally, a “four-in-one” monitoring system is formed among individual students, teachers, administrators and students’ partners which will be shown as follows.

4. A practical study on the guidance learning and monitoring system of autonomous learning

4.1. Teaching practice of guidance learning and monitoring system
The object of this study is a total of 176 students in three classes of Grade 2014, School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Guilin University of Electronic and Technology. The teaching experiment lasts for one semester, with a total of 14 weeks and 28 hours of the Viewing, Listening & Speaking courses. There are five units taught in class, among which 4 class periods are the autonomous learning hours, and teachers just guide students’ autonomous learning. The last 2 class periods are for oral examination, and the remaining 22 class periods are for classroom teaching. The effect of students’ autonomous learning is tested in class and on the Unipus Platform. Autonomous learning began with the course guidance learning. In the first class, the teacher introduced the learning objectives, progress, contents of each unit, time arrangement of online autonomous learning, specific content and assessment approach of the course to the students in detail. After receiving the tasks, students began to make their own learning plans, determine the learning time and choose the contents of the learning sequence. After that, teachers and students discussed the suitable learning strategies. Unit guidance learning is carried out in the classroom and on the Unipus Platform respectively. The Platform is used to release assignments and check the effect of autonomous learning. Specific learning objectives and contents are defined in class and listening contents are discussed in depth. Let’s take unit 1 Enjoy Your Feelings of New Horizon College English—Viewing, Listening & speaking (second edition) as an example. There are three learning objectives, that is, learn how to describe different emotions, the listening skills of inferring, and the speaking skills of promising and refusing to help others. In order to have enough time for discussion in class, we chose Task1 and Task3 of the Basic Listening Practice part in class, and let the students finish the rest in the Unipus Platform. At the same time, in order to make students fully understand the joys and sorrows in life, we arranged the topic How do you understand happiness for oral speech after class and so we will discuss the topic in depth in class. When students gave a speech in class, the rest of the students need to listen carefully and fill in a form, which includes the topic of the speech, the general points and supporting details, and finally, they need to make an objective evaluation of the speech. This is a big challenge for students, because they have to understand the presentation and write down some points. Every week, there will be a topic related to the unit theme. During the semester, students’ critical thinking abilities are greatly trained. In order to consolidate the knowledge they have learned, students also need to complete the vocabulary test on the Unipus Platform after the unit learning. We believe that autonomous learning does not mean learning by the students themselves. It must be combined with classroom teaching. Only through monitoring between teaching administrators, teachers and students’ partners can students effectively complete autonomous learning content and obtain good learning effect.
4.2. Teaching effect

After the teaching experiments for one semester, we compared the performance scores, final assessment scores and total assessment scores in one of the classes. The statistical software SPSS22.0 is applied to calculate the mean and standard deviation, and Pairs Samples Test is conducted, which is shown as follows.

| Table 1. Paired Samples Test of Class 1 |
|----------------------------------------|
| **Paired Differences**                 |
|                                        |
| Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |
| Lower | Upper |
|-------|---------------|----------------|----------------------------------------|
| Pair 1 | Performance score1 - Performance score2 | -13.73770 | 13.57375 | 1.73794 | -17.21410 | -10.26131 | 60 | .000 |
| Pair 2 | Test scores1 - Test scores2 | 1.35246 | 11.44055 | 1.46481 | -1.57760 | 4.28252 | .923 | 60 | .360 |
| Pair 3 | Total score1 - Total score2 | -6.63934 | 8.95923 | 1.14711 | -8.93391 | -4.34478 | 5.788 | 60 | .000 |

As it can be seen from Table 1, the mean values of performance scores and total scores of class 1 are -13.73770 and -6.63934 respectively, and the standard deviations are 13.57375 and 8.95923 respectively. At the same time, all their P values are 0.000, which are less than 0.05. That is, if the P values are in the 95% of the confidence interval, it indicates that there is a significant difference of the average score between the performance score and the total score of the class 1 in the two semesters. The experimental results show that the guidance learning and monitoring of College English autonomous learning is conducive to the improvement of students’ performance scores and total evaluation scores. However, language learning is a long process and it is impossible to get immediate results in a short time, so the improvement of students’ English proficiency cannot be reflected in a short time.

4.3. Implications for College English teaching

Although the implementation of online autonomous learning guidance and monitoring of College English has made great progress in students’ performance and final grades, some problems have also been exposed. Therefore, we also put forward targeted solutions to these problems.

4.3.1. Enrich the content of autonomous learning.

From the point of view of the learning time of students, some students just spend less than 5 hours on the Unipus Platform, which means that these students only participate in autonomous learning for the purpose of obtaining autonomous learning scores. In addition to their passive status, many students even download the answers from the Internet then copy and paste them. The reason for this is that there are many factors that interfere with autonomous learning. A large part of the reason is that students only need to complete the listening which is matched with the textbook, and the content is not colorful. Some students regard their listening skills are poor, so they have to copy and paste their answers in order to get high marks. Therefore, in addition to the descriptions in the China’s Standards of English Language Ability, we can construct more materials fitted for students at different levels. There should also be a variety of forms, such as tests, exercises, high-quality audio, video, MOOCs and micro-lectures, which are both interesting and related to culture.

4.3.2. Improve network platform services.

As the platform provided for students is the Unipus Platform, which is a supporting platform by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. So, students can log in only via the campus network. Students are forced to go to libraries, Foreign Language Autonomous Learning Center or places with campus networks for their autonomous learning, which causes great trouble to students. In addition, during the peak period, the system often broke down or could not save the data when they finished the
tasks. Sometimes, even if it was safe to save the data, there was still something wrong with the scores. As a result, students had to do it again and again, wasting a lot of time with no harvest. Therefore, the service of the Unipus Platform should be improved, and the convenience and mobility of online autonomous learning should be given full play to meet the needs of students at anytime and anywhere.

4.3.3. Refine the evaluation index of autonomous learning.
At present, there is only one index to evaluate the autonomous score, that is the marks of the given teaching material in the Platform. This gave a lot of students to take advantage of the opportunity to search the answers directly from the Internet, which leads to a wicked phenomenon that the students who got the answers from the Internet gained higher grades than the students did the listening by themselves. Therefore, in addition to the achievement of the textbook content, we should also integrate the learning time length and participation in various tests and discussions into the autonomous learning, which account for a large proportion. In this way, even if students get the answers from the Internet, they can only get part of the score, which will decrease their opportunities of copying. And all teachers must be informed of the evaluation indicators, so that they must strictly follow this standard of teaching.

5. Conclusion
The online autonomous learning of College English has become an indispensable part of college English. Teachers should provide more learning strategies and methods, and curriculum guidance learning and unit guidance learning are very necessary for students to know their specific tasks. At the same time, as Littlewood (1999) believed that autonomous learning is not the same as individual learning or personal learning. It is necessary to strengthen the monitoring of students’ autonomous learning in an all-round way, not only by using the learning platform, but also by combining with classroom teaching, so as to timely detect the effect of their learning. Autonomy and monitoring are not contradictory, but a relationship of mutual coordination, promotion and improvement.

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