A Preliminary Exploration into Effectively Combining Computer Technology with English Teaching

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Abstract. Since the reform and opening up, the number of people learning English is soaring in China, and great attention has been attached to English learning. However, the achievement of large investment is not so satisfying. Chinese English learners are labeled as “dumb users of English”. After analyzing the status of English teaching in China, this paper discusses the problems and proposes several computer-assisted English teaching methods, such as hierarchical teaching, tiered exercises and guidance outside the school and “Internet +”, to tackle these problems.

Keywords: English Teaching, Hierarchical Teaching, Tiered Exercises And Guidance, Internet +, Computer-Assisted

1. Status of English teaching in China

1.1. English is highly valued
Nowadays, English has become a lingua franca with the trend of globalization (see Figure 1). With the deepening of reform and opening up in China, English has become more and more important for the sake of international communication [1-2]. Since 1983, English has been a compulsory subject of the National College Entrance Examination and the score is involved in the final score. In addition, English is also tested in postgraduate examination, job interviews of foreign companies or some national companies, civil service examination for some positions and so on. For Chinese students at school, English is a compulsory subject [3-4]. What’s more, more and more Chinese students choose to study abroad, in which case English is crucial for their application of schools and daily life abroad (see Figure 2). Therefore, English has been widely accepted as a key subject by all levels of society.
1.2. *Various English textbooks, learning methods and training courses*

It can be said that English learning has boosted multiple industries, and promotes the prosperity and development of them. For example, a wide variety of tutoring products have been produced to supplement school English courses or for early education[5-6]. Also, tutoring institutions have been flourishing. Children have been exposed to English since kindergarten, and some parents even pay a lot of money to send their children to international kindergartens.

1.3. *Pain and perplexity of English teachers*

For English teachers, English teaching is becoming more and more demanding since greater importance has been attached to English learning. Teachers’ pressure comes part from parents who value English learning and want their children to achieve good grades in English. It implies that the macro context is exam and score oriented. Additionally, students have preliminary English accumulation in advance for good academic results, but since there is no uniformity in the market for effective learning courses, learning standards and inspection standards, students’ English proficiency varies greatly. Faced with severe polarization of English proficiency and the dilemma between
competence and score, English teachers often feel powerless. As a result, the work of English teachers is hard. They manage to strike a balance between score and competence. However, although it is accepted that English is a tool for communication, there lacks an environment for communication since English is not a second language but a foreign language in this country. Students do not use it in daily life. This context makes it hard for teachers to improve students’ communication skills and for students to acquire this language naturally. Besides daily routines, teachers should actively research and change teaching methods, explore effective teaching modes and method in response to the call of superiors.

2. Using computer technology to try to open a new door to English teaching

In English teaching, English teachers have been making two attempts: First, English teachers try not to get involved in time-consuming and ineffective work and not make students do mechanical and repetitive training. And relieve them from opposing an overload of exam papers for the only sake of scores. English teachers should advocate and train students to think actively and learn to take initiative in study. Second, they explore how to make each student get the most out of a 45-minute class and every student makes full use of each one minute. In order to achieve these two goals, we adopt a stratified computer-teaching model and arrange assignments layer by layer. In recent years, English teachers have begun to try to effectively combine computer technology with traditional teaching.

2.1. Vocabulary teaching

2.1.1 Disadvantages of the traditional word spelling test. Vocabulary is the foundation of learning English. "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed", summarized by linguist David Wilkins. It is precisely vocabulary that has become a stumbling block for many students, and has become reason why students lose interest and confidence in English learning. Word quiz seems to be one of teachers’ most important routines and the students’ first learning task. Vocabulary is a necessary foundation. In the eyes of an English teacher, it is most important to recognize words when you see them. It is really difficult to spell every word correctly, and not to miss a letter. Many English teachers personally believe that it is exactly this kind of high requirements have caused many students to retreat and lose confidence and interest.

2.1.2 Establishment of vocabulary teaching focus. Many years ago, English teachers made bold attempts: English teachers focused on the pronunciation and meaning of words. The English teacher told the students clearly that pronunciation and Chinese meaning were firstly checked, and then the spelling. However, English teachers always feel that English teachers are not doing enough in this part. The word memory field of mintel's computer technology and network make English teachers more convinced of their views. In classes, English teachers ask students to do comprehensive assessments, learn words, do simultaneous tests, and do spelling exercises based on their situation with the assistance of computer. English teachers provide individual guidance to students who have difficulty learning words. English teachers ask the students to look at the letters while listening to the
pronunciation. After pronouncing the word and memorizing the meaning correctly, students can do spelling exercises.

2.2. *The establishment of classroom teaching focus*—*sentence teaching*

Computer technology has helped English teachers get rid of time-consuming vocabulary teaching. In the classroom, English teachers have more time to help students memorize sentences. With the help of Mint and the basis of words, English teachers in the classroom help students use certain methods to memorize sentences. For example, there are a lot of places of interest in Beijing. In this sentence, the English teacher helped the students to remember like this: Remember the phrase: a lot of, then places of interest, then in Beijing, and finally compose the whole sentence. In this way, most students can master most sentences in the classroom, which greatly reduces their memory burden.

2.3. *Hierarchical teaching in computer classrooms*

There is a big difference between students' ability to accept and understand. In terms of non-intellectual factors, such as students' attention and self-control, there are also great differences. Therefore, in this case, letting the teacher carry out teaching at different levels is desirable but not possible. In smart classroom equipped with computer and other equipment, this ideal can be realized. Students’ courses will be customized according to their aptitude. English teachers can arrange students of different levels to learn contents that suit them, so that every student has something to do. In this way, teachers really become the mentor of the students, allowing the students to truly learn independently.

2.4. *Tiered exercises and guidance outside the school*

Computer technology not only helps English teachers solve the obstacles in vocabulary teaching, but also helps them to achieve maximum levels of teaching, so that they can get rid of heavy and meaningless repetitive labor, such as checking students’ spelling. In this way, English teachers have improved teaching efficiency. The most important thing is that it opens a door for English teachers, a door to the vast world of hierarchical teaching. By trying, English teachers can find that the Internet can be used to supplement the hierarchical teaching. For example, they can set up an e-mail box and blog, which is open to all students and parents, to provide targeted guidance. Computer technology has opened the door for English teachers to hierarchical teaching. However, English teachers are just at the exploration stage. Now, teachers are considering how to make good use of computers and the Internet, and how to use the network to provide personalized after-school tutoring for students to achieve the best teaching results. It is can be seen from the following figure that the overall performance of students will be better in a computer-assisted classroom compared with regular class. Additionally, the workload of English teachers and academic burden of students will be greatly reduced.
2.5. "Internet +" empowering English teaching

The change of computer technology brings to English teaching is not only the above. With the advent of the "Internet +" era, computers as a powerful tool have enabled "Internet +" to facilitate English teaching. Online courses have blossomed everywhere. The advent of MOOC coincides with the new concept of "Internet + Education" in China. For a long time, it has been a dream for students to hear the courses of expert teachers all over the world. Even if they are fortunate to attend these classes, it takes a lot of manpower, financial resources and energy. Now, meeting a world master requires only a computer. Students only need to log on to the Internet through a computer, and they can listen to the courses of the world masters for free online anytime, anywhere. The advent of MOOCs has greatly reduced the learning costs of students, and has also increased their enthusiasm and initiative for learning. For students, they can enjoy good educational resources through this new form of learning. Under the application of "Internet + English teaching", English teaching will become increasingly diversified, and students will also be benefited in such an educational model.

3. Conclusions

With the application of computer technology in English teaching, more and more effective teaching methods are bound to be adopted, which are of great significance to improve the quality of English teaching and the learning efficiency of students. It is very important to think how to effectively apply the computer, internet assisted English teaching platform, online, and cross-temporal hierarchical teaching to solve the problems occurred in English teaching and learning in China.

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