An Exploration on Using Mobile Smart Terminals to Promote the Reform of College English Teaching and Learning

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Abstract. College English is a compulsory basic course for higher education in China. At the same time, handling a secondary language is a must-have under the globalization. However, the students’ English proficiency has always been unsatisfactory after so many years of teaching and learning. Meanwhile, in the era of information and data, Internet has not only changed our country’s economic model, but also brought a revolution in education. Nowadays, Every college student has a mobile smart terminal at least, and we can make full use of this device to improve the teaching methods and even implement it into classrooms. Based on this opportunity, this article explores how to use mobile smart devices to improve the traditional “teaching” and “learning” for non-English majors in universities.

Keywords. Mobile smart terminal; English teaching; English learning

1. The Status of the Internet and Mobile Smart Terminals in China

On September 29, 2020, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released the 46th “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development Status” in Beijing. As of June 2020, the number of Internet users in China reached 940 million, and the Internet penetration rate reached 67.0%. As of June 2020, the number of online education users had reached 381 million, accounting for 40.5% of the total Internet users.[1] In the 45th “Statistical Report on Internet Development in China” released in June this year, it pointed out that as of March 2020, the number of online education users in China had reached 423 million, an increase of 110.2% from the end of 2018, accounting for 46.8% of the total number of Internet users. At the beginning of 2020, the schools opening across the country was postponed, and 265 million students generally turned to online courses. User demand was fully released, and online education applications showed an explosive growth trend.[2] The above points out the situation of Internet users and the Internet in education, and in the “Internet Development Report” issued by Wansu in 2018, it pointed out that the utilization rate of mobile terminals across the country is generally much higher than that of PC terminals, that is, the number of IP accessing to Internet services through mobile terminals is much higher than that of the PC. The mobile penetration rate in all provinces has exceeded 80%, and the penetration rate in 18 provinces like Jiangsu and Shanghai, has exceeded 90%, and it is still showing an upward trend.[3]

The data listed above clearly shows the the penetration of the Internet and mobile terminals. Under such circumstances, the integration of digital education into traditional education must be a social trend. That means the teaching and learning will have earth-shaking changes. Such a good opportunity it is, but disappointingly most of the students only use their smart terminals on...
entertainment videos and social Apps. Suppose this equipment is well used, it can be turned into a favorable device.

2. The Dilemma of English Teaching and Learning
In application-oriented colleges, English learning is difficult for non-English major students, and it is the same case for teachers. This reality can be reflected from the passing rates of CET 4 and CET 6 in the application-oriented colleges over the years. Of course, English ability is not only reflected in the test, but in the usage of it in communications. In terms of this application ability of non-English major students, it disappoints more.

From elementary school to high school, and even to university, English classes goes in the same way — explaining words, learning grammatical structure, teachers translating one text after another. And students spend a lot of time and energy reciting words over and over again, distinguishing between nominal clauses and attributive clauses for countless times, but they still can’t learn it well. Inability to understand, write, and speak is the dilemma of college English learning today.

In view of the current dilemma of English teaching and learning, English teaching reform is imperative. It is also in response to Minister Chen Baosheng’s point at the National Undergraduate Education Working Conference of Higher Education Institutions in the New Era that we must focus on promoting the classroom revolution and reform the traditional teaching and learning, and turning the silent one-way classroom into an interactive place for collision of ideas and enlightenment of wisdom.

3. The Essence of English Teaching and Learning
Teaching comes from learning. In the development of human society, there is the need for “learning” before the activities of “teaching” appear, and then education emerges in correspondence to the interaction between “teaching” and “learning” in human society. From the the origin of the words “teaching” and “learning” in oracle bone inscriptions, “teaching” also originates from “learning”, which means an activity of “supervising” or “promoting students to learn”. All teaching activities is centered on “learning”, and “learning” is based on “teaching”. And “learning” in an old Chinese saying refers to “awareness, returning to the nature of human”, that is, learning is a process of constantly awakening to aware of the principles Chinese follows: benevolence, righteousness, manners, wisdom and credit. Therefore, “teaching” is not just to deliver message in the teacher’s own mind and “learning” is not just learn the knowledge that teachers deliver. Teaching refers to the process of causing students to actively think in order to better understand and practice ethical principles.[4]

The nature of teaching and learning is also the essence of English teaching and learning. Above all the statements, we understand that our teaching methods in traditional education are not enough to achieve real English learning. English learning is not simply about understanding the objective world, or transforming social and historical experience into the spiritual wealth of students.[5] It is a subject that requires a lot of practical exercises. The best way to acquire a language is that learners actively use the language in the language environment. Obviously we have some objective factors under this condition. “Language environment” is not available for us, but most scholars without a language environment have also mastered English. So the conclusion drawn from their experience is: if possessing a positive attitude towards learning English and keeping interacting with the language in a large amount, one can learn English well too. The traditional model of “explaining-listening” class is obviously not suitable for English learning.

4. The Reform of English Teaching and Learning
According to the nature of English teaching, teaching is an activity to “supervise or to promote students to learn”. Therefore, the traditional teaching method must be reformed. What teachers need to do first is to effectively supervise or promote student to learn. But how to promote and supervise? “Promotion” can occur in and out of the classroom, while “supervision” is practically realized outside the classroom. To promote students’ learning, teachers need to arouse students’ interest in learning firstly and then clean out obstacles that students meet in their process of learning. In terms of “supervision”, teachers can only supervise students’ learning by assigning written tasks in the
traditional way and assignment may be arranged once a week. But now within mobile terminals, teachers can monitor students’ learning at any time through mobile terminals.

On the students’ English learning, it is obvious that just listening to what teachers deliver is not enough to learn English well. If one wants to master the language, it needs the learner to listen, to speak, to read and to write more on his own. Therefore, on the learning reform, what students need to do is interact with English frequently in person.

5. Mobile Smart Terminals Used for the Reform of English Teaching and Learning

5.1. To Arouse Students’ Interest in English by Mobile Smart Terminals

Before talking about how to arouse students interests in learning, let’s think about a question: what students can’t live without nowadays. The answer must be cellphones besides food and clothes. Therefore, to arouse interests, fully usage of the mobile phone must be made. Here are some examples that the author implemented mobile smart terminals in the current classes to arouse students’ interests.

Firstly, when we were learning the unit of Romance, the author used the online service of “Classroom Cool” and introduced “notes”. Students needed to scan the QR code and write down a favorite saying about love or their favorite way of love in English. After writing down their favorite saying, they could view other people’s love notes and give a thumbs-up to whichever saying they like best. The saying that was pushed to the top of the list would be rewarded. In this way, students read at least 80 English sentences unconsciously, and some students even memorized good sentences they saw. At the same time, the students’ interest in English has been unintentionally increased. Students can learn to appreciate the beauty of English in their interesting aspects and they will want to read English more.

Secondly, after class, for example, the author assigns homework to dub movies through the App of “English Dubbing”. Watching movie is preferable way of relaxing. If students can use their own voice to act as the protagonist of a movie, it will be an extraordinary experience for them. So this is an interesting way to practice their oral English. After their dubbing, students need to send their works onto our English learning group. In our learning group, an interesting phenomenon you can see is that students will cheer and show their appreciate for each other. The evidence of interest in English having been aroused can be seen through this phenomenon. There are various excellent apps that are free for English learners to dub. Apart from the interaction among students, the author as the teacher will also give the students some suggestions on their pronunciations or their intonations.

The above are just two examples that the author used in the daily teaching. The increasing of students’ interest in English can be clearly shown in the unit of “Work to Live or Live to Work”. In this unit, the author conducted a debate on this topic, requiring one host for the activity and 8 debaters for both pros and cons. The requirement for the host is that he/she must speak in English, and other contestants can choose between Chinese and English. Surprisingly, the participants in the three classes have chosen to use English to voice for them.

5.2. To Clean Out the Obstacles in English Learning by Mobile Smart Terminals

To solve the learning obstacles in students’ learning, the author makes full use of the mobile smart terminal. Based on the textbook, the author lets students to preview the text. The requirements for the previewing involves the following items: firstly, students needs to draw out sentences that they don’t understand when previewing, and figure out the reasons why they can’t understand the sentences. The difficult points may include words, syntax, culture, or other neglected details that lead to their confusion on sentences. Secondly, students need to make sentences for the newly learned words. From the students’ sentence making, the teacher will know whether the students really understand the words or not. Thirdly, students need to answer the questions given according to the content of the text. Fourthly, they need to summarize the main content of the article in English. At last, Students need to upload their self-study results in the QQ group. Teachers can basically use mobile smart terminals to realize mobile teaching and mobile correction of homework. In this way, the author could clearly see the state of students’ learning. And how does this solve the learning obstacles of students? Based on the self-study homework submitted by the students, the author could be targeted to solve the problems
drawn by the students in class, and can list more similar problems to consolidate students’ learning. At
the same time, according to the students’ summary of the text content and the answers to the questions,
it is well understood whether the students have mastered the ideas conveyed by the text, so as to
realize an effective ideological and political classroom. Through this combination of in-out of class,
the efficiency of teaching is significantly improved, and the atmosphere of class is also unusually
active. In our class, it not only has knowledge explanations, but also collisions of ideas.

5.3. To Supervise Students’ Learning by Mobile Smart Terminals
In supervising students’ learning, the self-study tasks above is actually a combination of supervision
and promotion. In addition, the author uses the software “A Little English”, which has abundant
English learning resources, including movies, music, street picks, and funny videos. At the same time,
there are also very good listening and speaking training settings, which can be used for intensive
listening training and single sentence imitating training. At the same time, students can also put the
unfamiliar words encountered in the video in the key vocabulary column, and students can enrich their
vocabulary. On the App, students can conduct their English listening and speaking training and
vocabulary memory. This App can automatically record the learning time, and the teacher can see the
number of days the student has studied. This software can effectively and simply supervise the
students’ learning.

5.4. The Reform of English Learning Through Mobile Smart Terminals
With the teachers’ guidance and the supervision, students’ learning becomes easier. In listening and
speaking, students can use the App of “a Little English”. For vocabulary learning, students can also
use “a little English” for word expansion. For the vocabulary tasks that the school requires, students
can use the App of “China University MOOC” to test the words they learn in the textbook. On
“Reading”, the author mainly uses articles on the public number of “Learn and Record” to expand
reading, and pushes an English article to students every day. These articles closely follow the hot news
at home and abroad on that day, and will explain in detail about the culture or new words involved in
the article. For “writing”, the software for students to use is the App of “PiGai”. Although the
software’s writing correction function needs to be improved, it is also a high-quality app that allows
students to conduct writing training and quickly give writing feedback at this stage.

6. Conclusion
Of course, the software that can be used by teachers for teaching and students’ learning on the mobile
smart terminal is not limited to those listed above by the author. There are tremendous treasures on the
mobile smart terminals waiting for us to implement in our class reform. In the author’s opinion, to
make the classroom “live”, the mobile smart terminal can definitely help us realize flipped classrooms
and improve our teaching. The rich network resources also allow students to listen, speak, read and
write in a new and funny way. The author has made a preliminary study on the introduction of mobile
smart terminals into the teaching and learning for non-English major students in universities, and will
continue to advance it into the reform of teaching and learning in the future.

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