Modular Teaching of College English in Light of Formative Assessment

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Keywords: Modular teaching, Formative assessment, College English.

Abstract. The mode of modular teaching emphasizes practicality, integrates theoretical knowledge into practical training of each module and attaches importance to ability cultivation. The application of this model in college English teaching focuses on the practice of students' practical language skills. According to the teaching objectives, the teaching content is divided into several modules and integration of the tasks is guided by formative assessment, and each segment of learning activities such as group communication, problem exploration, achievement testing and autonomous learning are evaluated to improve the effect of the modular teaching of college English.

Introduction

The mode of modular teaching began in the early 1970s. It is a teaching mode mainly based on on-site teaching and centered on skill training. The form and the content of the module is determined by the particular task of a certain occupation. So it can be called task module. Modularized teaching mode is a field teaching activity that attaches importance to ability cultivation, emphasizing practicality.

At present more and more colleges and universities are trying to apply modular teaching to the teaching reform of various disciplines in that this teaching mode put great emphasis on integrating theoretical knowledge into practical skills training of each module. This teaching mode is also applicable to College English teaching. The teaching content can be divided into several teaching modules and a certain topic can be integrated into various tasks in the prescribed class hours, highlighting the active atmosphere of classroom teaching, and improving students' practical application ability of English.

Each module as the teaching mode is relatively independent and each module will be made after concentrated training under a learning module, therefore in each module an effective evaluation method is very important to guarantee the quality of module teaching. It is necessary to establish a focus on formative assessment mechanism to examine and evaluate student learning in each module, stimulating students’ interest in learning and developing autonomous learning ability. The aim of this teaching mode is to put theoretical knowledge into practical skills training in each module in which the evaluation of students’ performance is given priority.

Literature Review

Definitions of Formative Assessment

Formative assessment refers to the evaluation of improving learning results and improving teaching effects in the teaching process. Formative assessment can promote students' independent learning, stimulate students' learning motivation, and provide valuable feedback for teachers. Often providing teachers and students with information about the teaching process can promote teachers and students to carry out effective self-correction, so that teaching becomes a system of self-correction. Compared with the summative assessment, formative assessment pays more attention to the learning process, which is the real-time evaluation of students' knowledge skills, learning strategies and emotional attitudes, which coincides with the modular teaching's emphasis on students’ ability cultivation.
Theories on Constructivism

Constructivism holds that the basis of knowledge construction is the collection of perceptual materials and the expansion of knowledge categories. The accumulation of knowledge is based on the construction activities of the subject. Vygotsky, a psychologist in the former Soviet Union, proposed in his theory of "zone of near development" that learners gradually complete this learning process under the guidance of teachers and with the help of peers. The essence of teaching is to stimulate students' immature psychological functions. Constructivism theory holds that learners should give full play to their subjective initiative rather than passively accept knowledge in the learning process. Constructivism attaches great importance to the development of learners. The teaching process should always be student-centered. Formative evaluation, based on constructivism theory, emphasizes stimulating students through evaluation, promoting them participate in the evaluation, enabling them to gain confidence, and thus providing continuous motivation and spiritual support for further study (Zeng Ping, 2007).

Related Researches at Home and Abroad

The study of formative assessment abroad began at the beginning of the 20th century. Taylor first proposed the concept of education evaluation in principle of scientific management. He emphasized that the evaluation process is essentially a process to determine the degree to which the curriculum and teaching plan actually reach the education goal (Chen Yukun, 1999). In the field of teaching, most scholars believe that formative assessment can help students improve their learning level and teachers adjust their teaching strategies. Most scholars recognize the positive effects of the evaluation methods such as daily performance scale, file bag, classroom activities, classroom observation, questionnaire survey, interview, electronic file, student self-evaluation, student mutual evaluation, pen and paper test, etc.

Domestic scholar Dong Aihua (2010) expounds the necessity, principle and implementation plan of the formative assessment in new teaching model of college English. He points out that formative assessment make up for the deficiency of the traditional summative assessment and effectively promote the teaching and improve students' autonomous learning ability. Huang xiaodan (2017) elaborates the necessity, components and application principles of formative assessment in English major teaching and argues that integrating diversified assessment methods into English teaching is the main mode of formative assessment in English teaching. Lu Xiaoyue (2017) explores and analyzes the application effect of formative assessment in English teaching. It is believed that this kind of evaluation greatly stimulates students' initiative and confidence in learning, and can find out the deficiency and potential in learning. Formative assessment has achieved gratifying results in the research of college English teaching, but there are few researches on the application of formative assessment in modular teaching mode. This paper attempts to expound the specific implementation and function of English modular teaching guided by formative evaluation.

The Application of Formative Assessment in Modular Teaching Mode of College English

Each unit in the textbook is divided into four modules: autonomous learning module; group communication module; problem exploration module; achievement testing module.

Autonomous Learning Module

Teachers assign tasks to the students for this unit, including preview of the text, mastering new words and understanding the general idea of the article. Students should manage their learning style and time after class. Students learn actively in a conscious state. Problems encountered in self-study can be discussed with teachers and peers in class. Students should make their own study plans and reflect on their studies. The purpose of this module is to cultivate students' good learning habits. Students can master effective language learning strategies through purposeful and informative learning materials and experience the effect of getting twice the result with half the effort.
Group Communication Module

Teaching is carried out in the form of round-table games. The material for the round table game is based on the content of text in each unit. In this way, students can make self-evaluation and mutual evaluation. Round table game is a method in which students sit around a round table asking and answering questions between partners within a group. The questions discussed are compiled by the teacher before class according to the topic of the text. Each member of the group receives a note with a question on it, and takes turns to ask and answer questions related to the text. Through such in-depth interactive communication, students and teachers can have the real sense of mutual assessment and self-assessment and students can be tested how well they preview and understand the text before class. This kind of teaching method is the real revolution in classroom teaching. Active classroom atmosphere enable every student to get a chance to speak. Since the questions discussed by students are all from the text, the students who have fully previewed or have a good understanding of the text will answer the questions raised by their peers with reasonable basis and get praise from their peers. On the contrary, the peer will give negative evaluation. No matter whether the evaluation is good or not, the mutual evaluation between students does not appear to be empty and unreasonable, which stimulates the divergent thinking of students. Students will be eager to make greater contributions to the discussion, so they will take the initiative to read and think carefully after class. The active classroom atmosphere forms a virtuous circle.

Problem Exploration Module

The problems encountered in self-study before class should be taken to class in this module stage, and discussed through communication with teachers and peers. In the process of solving the problem, the teacher gives real-time evaluation. Students are expected to put forward a variety of questions boldly and teachers should make targeted analysis. In the process of discussing problems, students' initiative to learn will be greatly enhanced, which further promotes the process of independent learning and forms a virtuous circle in the learning process, benefiting students infinitely. Students gain confidence from the encouragement of their teachers and peers and take the initiative to study.

Achievement Testing Module

In this module stage, unit quiz is carried out as the medium to check students' mastery of knowledge of in this unit. The process of students taking an written examination is the process of self-evaluation. At the same time, it is also the process of students' mutual assessment to check the examination papers among groups. It is helpful for students to reflect on and regulate their learning process so as to promote the continuous development of language competence. Through evaluation, students can learn to analyze their own achievements and shortcomings, define the direction of their efforts, and establish self-confidence.

Conclusion

The application of formative assessment in modular English teaching conforms to the operation rules of modular teaching mode. Starting from the goal of modularization teaching, the learning process including autonomous learning, group communication, problem exploration, achievement testing is involved into the examination content and students’ emotional attitude and spirit of cooperation are considered as a standard of evaluation. Teacher's guidance and peers’ evaluation play an important part in the learning process. Evaluations from teacher and peers are conducive to promote the smooth development of modular teaching, so as to achieve the modular teaching mode proposed the emphasis on the process of students' specific practice, that is, to achieve the purpose of putting what is learned into practice.
Acknowledgements

This research was financially supported by the Leading Group of Educational Science Research in Jilin Province in 2018 in the third “five years projects”. The title of the research project: A Study in the Learning Experience of College Students by the Mixed Teaching Mode whose number is GH180235. It’s also supported by Changchun University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in 2018, titled College English Teaching Mode and Practice under MOOC Background, whose number is XJ201821.

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