On EFL Teachers' New Roles in E-learning

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Abstract—**With the development of computer network and information technology, E-learning has become one of the most important teaching modes. The article introduces the historical background of E-learning, and compares the features of traditional college English with EFL teachers' new roles in E-learning. It points out that EFL teachers' roles should be transferred and reformed in E-learning.**

Keywords—E-learning; EFL teaching; teachers' new roles; college English

I. INTRODUCTION

As the computer science and technology develops, E-campus, Micro-lecture, MOOCs, and Flipped Classroom plays an increasingly importance in teaching and learning. The widespread application of information technology effectively promotes deep transformation of the higher education and profound change of people's life, study and work, which puts forward new challenge to education reform and talent training and provides more space for education innovation and leap-forward development. In recent years, various countries and regions have implemented national strategy of educational technology, making best of the information technology innovation, integrating and sharing of the great advantages of high-quality educational resources, expanding opportunities for people to receive education at various levels, which has been improving education quality and human resource development. To accelerate the development of education, we should adapt to the current world of information technology innovation and application trend, construct life-long education strategies to catch up with the developed countries.

E-learning appeared under the booming development of computer information technology and wireless network, which means that teaching can be carried on with no limitation of time and place. E-learning includes learning online, network training, virtual university, virtual classroom, digital collaboration, and Tele-learning under technical support, which exerts a far-reaching the traditional teaching methods. And E-learning has played an important role in the current world nowadays [1].

II. BACKGROUND

According to *College English curriculum requirements* released in 2007, college English is not a language course providing basis knowledge about English, but also a competence-enhancing course contributing to broadening students' horizons through learning various cultures in the world. To design college English course better, the teachers are encouraged to apply extensively the advanced information technology to English teaching and learning. Moreover, the researchers and teachers should develop as many computers and web-based courses as possible for easier access to favorable language learning environment and facilities. However, whether the language course is computer-based or classroom-based, the teaching should be students-oriented. Therefore, it is necessary to take the development of students' language performance and their intercultural communication competence into full consideration. However, College English teaching has always been teacher-centered, with the old "chalk and talk" and "cramming" teaching mode. English teachers patiently explain text knowledge of English and grammar structure or exam skills, and students sitting there passively accept these knowledge, with few effective auxiliary facilities, for which the teacher is very difficult to mobilize students learning enthusiasm and initiative to carry out class practice activities, let alone personalized style in the context of E-learning.

A. Some relevant documents promulgated by National Ministry of Education to carry forward the development of educational informationization.

In January 2004, the new *"College English curriculum requirements (for trial implementation)"* was promulgated by Ministry of Education to improve quondam single teaching mode based on teacher instructions. Also the attachment formulates that the credit proportion students gained in the computer learning should account for 30%-50% of the total credit during English learning. In 2007, "College English curriculum requirements" put forward that the teaching aims for college English was to train students' comprehensive applied abilities…and meanwhile to enhance their self-regulated learning and comprehensive cultural literacy to meet the needs of society development in China and international communication.

With the promulgation of *"College English curriculum requirements (for trial implementation)"* and other relevant requirements, the press one after another exploited college English teaching materials based on E-learning English teaching and integrated audio-visual course system, such as *"Experiencing English"*, *"College English (new version)"*,

"*New Horizon College English*", " *New Era interactive English*" and so on. Most of these teaching materials provide learning resources for E-learning.

B. *The urge of enrollment expansion of colleges and universities in China needs to increase the teaching methods and means, and enrich further the educational resources.*

The large-scale enrollment expansion of colleges and universities in China began in 1999. For instance, the number of new students' enrollment of colleges and universities in China was 1,080,000 in 1998 and 2,750,000 in 2002, with an increase of 154.6%. The number of students in colleges and universities totaled more than 20,000,000 in 2004, 21,446,570 in 2009, and 23,085,000 in 2011, 25,365,647 in 2012, 26,474,679 in 2013, 27,365,647 in 2014. The enrollment expansion caused some problems, such as the lag of hardware and software facilities. Influenced by the factors of enrollment expansion in Colleges and universities, there is a certain gap among the current college and university students in English. The survey shows that the following phenomena are common in vocational college students' English learning, such as low achievement satisfaction in English learning, lacking in English learning atmosphere or English learning intrinsic motivation, poor in application of English learning methods.

C. *The characteristics of post-90s and their learning style*

The current undergraduates are post-1990s. They are facing great-leap-forward development between computer network and information technology. Therefore, they can make full use of information technology (like instant messenger Fetion, MSN, QQ etc.). At the same time, they are better at applying information technology to their study. So they are called Netizen, Internet geek, Instant-Message Generation [2],Digital Native [3], the Net Generation[4]. The communication mode has been completely changing traditional information acquisition mode only from books. Computer network and information technology rebuilt the current undergraduates' habits of network learning and communication online, for which the thorough transformation of traditional college English teaching mode should be imperative.

D. *The trend of internationalization in higher education worldwide*

In 1994, American education expert Carol Twigg published an important paper The Need for a National Learning Infrastructure[5]. From her viewpoints, learning should strive to go beyond the traditional campus boundary. She suggested that it was necessary to create a new students-centered learning system, through which the students can adapt to the concept of learning in changing settings.

The following questions for college English teachers are unavoidable: how to change teaching methods and the teachers' roles, how to design curriculum in E-learning, how to implement English teaching in the E-learning, how to carry out process control and take formative assessment into account, how to improve the ability of using computer network and information technology, etc.

III. EFL TEACHERS' NEW ROLES IN E-LEARNING

In 2004, the "*College English curriculum requirements (for trial implementation)*" pointed out the change of teaching mode was not only teaching activities or teaching methods, but teaching theory. It was the transformation from taking teachers-centered, simply imparting knowledge and skills of teaching, to taking the students-centered, paying more attention to cultivate students' language skills and the ability of autonomous learning. With the economic globalization and higher education internationalization, the main goal of foreign language teaching has transformed from developing students' language skills and quality training to cultivating a large number of talents with international views, familiar with international rules, able to participate in international affairs and the international competition, as "*national medium and long-term educational reform and development program (2010-2020)*" expected. It also stipulates that wider education-related exchanges and cooperation at various levels in different fields should be carried out to improve our education internationalization. Therefore, promoting fundamental shift for teaching contents, objectives, methods and means, and certainly accelerating the transfer and reform of college English teachers' roles in E-learning is of great value.

A. *The traditional knowledge-imparting expert to teaching and learning resources exploring leader in E-learning*

Traditional college English teaching in China is teachers-centered, which focuses on imparting knowledge. Influenced by the Chinese autocratic feudal dictatorship political system, social rituals and religions, the teacher is the authority on everything. As the Chinese saying goes "To be a scholar is to be the top of society", which properly suggests that knowledge is extremely important for kids, and implies that the teachers play a decisive role in children's growth healthily. For thousands of years, there is no doubt about the teachers' roles that it takes a teacher to transmit wisdom impart knowledge and solve doubts.

With social progress, development of computer network and information technology, teachers' responsibilities should be changed accordingly. One of the Chinese famous masters named Zhai Hongshen once said knowledge was only required to retrieve in the 21st century, which indicates that computer network has been able to store up knowledge, but it doesn't know how to use knowledge. Knowledge itself is not power. Learning how to use knowledge can turn dead knowledge into active force. Putting it in another way, using knowledge is power, which challenges roles of college English teachers to impart knowledge.

In E-learning, teachers should break through the imprisonment of classroom, textbook and knowledge-oriented teaching, help to make the best of all kinds of teaching resources, and live up to their name "a teaching and learning resources exploring leader", combining teaching inside and outside classrooms. The graphical materials required for the development of teaching resources can be downloaded from the Internet, and created by yourself using some tools, such as Camtasia Studio, ACESee Photo Manager, Coredraw X6, Hornil StylePix, Cool Editor, Aurora Media Workshop, Flash, ISEE, Mediacoder, and PowerPoint, etc. On the other hand, the

teacher should encourage students to install some APPs in students' smart phones if possible. For instance, "*Bai Ci Zhan*"for English word memorizing, *podcast* in Apple for listening, *Ever speak* and *100TOEFL* for speaking, "*Read for Fun*" for reading, "*Pi Gai Wang*" for writing, and "*Fun Dubbing*" for English dubbing can be applied to English teaching and autonomous leaning.

Teachers can send mass text messages to students by Fetion to timely access to the latest requirements for their assignment. Teachers and students establish micro-blogs, through which they can connect each other dynamically. Creating QQ group or WeChat group can not only store and share teaching resources, but also share some helpful network links, such as MOOCs, https://www.coursera.org/, https://www.edx.org/, http://mooc.guokr.com/, http://open.163.com/. Clicking the link you will access to open class all over the world. Skype software can help to reach people in every corner of the world. The instant messaging software MSN Messenger works in the similar way.

B. The traditional task-implementing follower to the one in charge of teaching consultant in E-learning

Traditional college English teaching in China implements teaching tasks step by step, according to the teaching syllabus and teaching plans, during which teachers act as the director with teaching strategy unified and the authority of teachers affirmed. As a result, teaching resources are cooped up, personalizing teaching environment and conditions can't be provided, the teaching and learning can't be diversified, and the role of "teaching consultant" is far behind.

Under the circumstances of E-learning, teachers should actively cooperate with other, organize a better teaching team, enhance the rational understanding of curriculum orientation, curriculum development, curriculum design, add or omit appropriately some college English teaching contents, and integrate related background information collected by students to make the learning students-centered. Teachers act as information consultants by assisting students to design learning program, collecting and collating relevant learning materials to not only develop students' ability to search and construct required knowledge actively, but also help teachers break through the plateau of their teaching career.

For instance, before explaining Unit 6 *From Failure to Success* in Book 4, *21st Century Practical College English*, the EFL teachers could ask students how to find the materials related to success or failure online, and what lessons they can learn from the people's experience. In their spare time online, the EFL teachers could ask every group to find and share what they have found in Webchat or QQ group to gather as many teaching materials. Moreover, the EFL teachers could also add some links for the students' reference if necessary. Last but not the least, the teachers should ask the students to summarize how to find the related teaching materials online with the help of their group members or their teacher.

C. The traditional teaching organizer to task-driven teaching designer in E-learning

In traditional college English teaching mode, teachers are mainly responsible for finishing the teaching tasks, though they may participate in making teaching plan and curriculum or designing teaching process. No matter how to organize the teaching, the purpose is to turn the course content to students' learning experience. Under such circumstances, however, it is still difficult for teachers to design teaching tasks and organize teaching process consecutively by themselves in a creative way, even though they have fully surveyed the needs of students.

In E-learning, the English-teaching team should design more certain context-based tasks, through which the idea that the teaching should be transformed from knowledge-imparting to knowledge application will be deeply rooted in teachers' minds, even if some of may be used as make-ups or not touched at all. And the teachers should spare no efforts to encourage college students to take part in designing context-based tasks, some of which will be chosen for teaching materials after being carefully qualified. However, the teachers should be careful in choosing instructional methods, for some teaching modes which are helpful for some students with low prior knowledge may have less effect on others with high prior knowledge[6].

For instance, there are some *Practical Writing* tasks in *Vocational College English* textbook *An Integrated Skills Courses* (2nd Edition), one of which is to ask the students to write an *Invitation Letter*. While designing tasks, it is better to obey the approach of analysis, discussion, material searching, and writing. First of all, the 5-student group should analyze and discuss the format of the English invitation, and the difference between Chinese and English invitation letters. Then the group members share what they find, and the other groups add something more. After that, let each group discuss again, based on the network or textbook to search for more writing materials, write, modify, and hand in their composition. In addition, it is helpful to set some other situations as an exercise for homework, making the team members independently submit online and correct their writing by peer assessment. The whole activity can cultivate students' awareness of participation, the ability to analyze problems and make decisions, obtain the necessary discourse strategies and skills, and improve their intercultural communication competence.

D. The traditional teaching context designer and rule-maker to facilitator and cooperator to construct knowledge and competence in E-learning

Under the circumstances of traditional college English teaching, it is imperative the students should do the assignment, with so little preoccupation for the needs of the students, let alone self-regulated competence construction. As is known to us all, teaching is not a one-way of knowledge imparting in a passive way but an interactive round-way to construct knowledge and competence for both teachers and students through active perception.

In E-learning, a certain group of students will be instructed to learn based on the data collected online or from the social reality, and encouraged to discuss in the form of cooperation and inquiry learning to develop their ability to understand, analyze, solve problems, and obtain knowledge in a self-regulated way. During the whole process, teachers play the role of one of the facilitators, letting students enjoy creating, and

helping them participate in activities to acquire knowledge and capabilities [7].

With regard to classroom activities in E-learning, EFL teachers should also have awareness of collaboration and involvement. Therefore, it is necessary to for EFL teachers to consider how to participate in student-designed group activities, brave to show their own strong and weak points in classroom and to admit their own inadequacies. In the process of the design and implementation of classroom group activities, the EFL teachers should provide help and guidance to students at various English levels in time when in need. EFL teachers' participation and cooperation is necessary and appropriate monitoring and guidance of the group activities is also badly needed. To encourage as many students as possible to participate in the activity is necessary in case the teaching activity becomes a talk show of the EFL teacher or some students better at English, or the monodrama embarrassment with few students participating in the activity. Whiling cooperating with the students, the EFL teachers should actively cultivate the students' speaking and listening consciousness to improve their performance skills.

E. A traditional controller who guides students to appropriate behaviors to a coordinator in a teaching-learning team in E-learning

The premise of the traditional college English teaching is to control the speech acts of language learners to guarantee the normal teaching-learning order, to guide them to appropriate behaviors, and boost their all-around development of moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetics and labor education, for which the teachers are called "gardeners". However, the mission of "gardeners" is to trim the redundant branches or twigs, making them colorfully and gracefully, through which students' personalities were nipped in the bud in a sense.

In E-learning, internet brings about unlimited storage capability of information, which can be retrieved easily. Students with various styles and different proficiency could be encouraged to form into a group thereby to highlight their advantages and individuality. As for the teacher, they should coordinate and guarantee the cooperation among the students with quite different personalities, which will exert a profound impact upon students' capability of getting on well with others and arranging work orderly in the future.

F. A traditional judge for summative assessment to a real-time-feedback maker in E-learning

Assessment of learning is EFL teachers' indispensable work, but also one of the most important aspects in teaching. Whether it is to examine their homework or quiz, the EFL teachers can evaluate students' achievements through the way of individual correction and collective feedback. Scientific assessment system is not only conducive to the students to adjust learning strategies, strengthen their learning motivation, better their learning methods and skills, improve the learning efficiency, and enhance the students' performance competence, but also beneficial for the EFL teachers to obtain immediate feedback, and improve their teaching.

Although many traditional college English teachers advocate combination of formative assessment and summative assessment in E-learning, many schools are still inclined to the latter. Besides, more attention should be drawn to strengthen formative assessment during the preparation process, such as task preparation, rehearsal, and the techniques or technology adopted for presentation, aiming to encourage students to acquire new technology to obtain and make the best of information. On the other hand, through practicing again and again, teachers would be turned into real-time-feedback makers in E-learning who focus on student's acquirement of knowledge and capability in a self-regulated way.

IV. CONCLUSION

E-Learning is convenient and efficient, with advantages, but it still cannot be applied universally for lack of face-to-face communication. E-learning provides the learner with a new way to learn, anytime, anywhere, and a possibility for lifelong learning. E-learning changes the teaching effect and relations between teaching and learning, good to achieve some goals of education, but it cannot replace the traditional classroom teaching or school education. E-learning, which is not confined to time and space, more flexible for learning and teaching, richer in teaching resources, is convenient for EFL students to transform from the passive receivers of knowledge to the active constructor of knowledge and ability. However, it also challenges some college English teachers in China, requiring them to transfer and reform their roles in accordance with E-learning to harmonize the interaction between teachers and post-90s students to realize informationization and internationalization of higher education.

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