

A Study of Evaluation Mechanism of Project-Based Learning Model in College English Teaching

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Abstract

In recent years, Project-Based Learning (PBL) model has been attached more importance to College English teaching in China, many researches focus on the application of PBL, but few touch on evaluation mechanism. This paper aims to analyze four core elements of evaluation mechanism: notion, subject, content, and method. Further discussions about the evaluation mechanism are based on teaching practice and a questionnaire. It is proved that scientific and effective evaluation mechanism can guide and motivate students' project-based learning and ensure the quality of college English teaching.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning (PBL); evaluation mechanism; College English teaching.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a teaching model based on experiential philosophy, project-based learning (PBL) has attracted extensive attention in the field of education. Many recent studies have shown that experiential learning can provide a theoretical framework for PBL model (Stoller, 2006). The core of PBL model is to enable learners to complete learning in real tasks, so as to stimulate learners' internal learning motivation. Fried-Booth (2002) defined PBL as "a student-centered teaching model based on the creation and completion of final results." The teaching concept of PBL is highly consistent with the concept of communicative teaching method, so it is also widely accepted in foreign language teaching since 1970s. As a systematic teaching model, PBL contributes to the development of students' language skills, cognitive structure, and comprehensive quality. Moss & Duzer (1998) pointed out that PBL helps to promote students' learning by doing and stimulate learning enthusiasm and motivation through contextualized real tasks.

Chinese scholars believe that PBL is a systematic teaching method with teachers as the guide. Students act as the leading role to explore problems with their teammates and display their output project. With society as the background, projects are regarded

as the media to cultivate students' professional abilities. Since 2000, the domestic college foreign language community has begun to introduce PBL to promote the change of teaching mode. Some research papers have been published in important domestic journals, including applied research (Gao Yan, 2010), empirical research on teaching effect (Chen Xiaodan, 2013), theoretical and practical research (Wang Haixiao and Xia Jun, 2015) etc.

Though learning reflection and project evaluation are also an important part of project-based teaching model, few researches touch on evaluation mechanism. A scientific and reasonable evaluation mechanism can guide and motivate students' project-based learning. Therefore, this paper focuses on four core elements of evaluation mechanism: notion, subject, content and method.

2. Evaluation Mechanism in College English Teaching

2.1 Evaluation Notion

The College English Teaching Guide published in 2020 clearly points out that college English course is an education with both instrumental and humanistic nature. Instrumental nature refers to language form and expression while the core of

humanism is human-oriented, carrying forward human value, and paying attention to the cultivation and all-round development of human comprehensive quality. Socialist core values should be integrated into College English teaching content. In addition, by learning and using English, students can understand the foreign cutting-edge scientific and technological development, learn the world's excellent culture and civilization. Meanwhile, it also helps to enhance the national strength, spread Chinese culture and promote extensive exchanges with people of all countries, and enhance the national soft power.

The objective of college English teaching highlights the notions of "development-oriented" and "human-oriented". "Development-oriented" requires strengthening the evaluation functions such as guidance, feedback, improvement, and incentive, so as to promote the development of evaluation subjects. "Human-oriented" attaches importance to students' leading role in the process of learning. The core of the evaluation notion is whether PBL can promote students' development.

2.2. Evaluation Subject

The roles of teachers and students in PBL have changed significantly just as Stoller expressed, "project-based learning is student-centered", "project-based learning emphasizes cooperation rather than competition". Teachers transfer their role from authority to guide while students change from passive learners to active ones. In the planning stage of the project, teachers can guide students to decide which tasks will be completed by individuals and which will be completed by groups, and then arrange the corresponding evaluation accordingly.

2.2.1 Combination of group self-evaluation and mutual group evaluation

Cooperative learning is an important feature of PBL. Group self-evaluation emphasizes the completion of personal task and making contribution to the group. It provides each team member with a vertical evaluation of personal development and change. In contrast, mutual group evaluation covers the evaluation of the group's report, achievement display, cooperation effectiveness and so on. This way emphasizes the horizontal comparison of advantages and disadvantages between groups, provides effective proof of cooperation for the group and highlights the intention of competition. In combination with the two evaluation ways, competition and cooperation can strike a balance in PBL evaluation.

2.2.2 Combination of student self-evaluation and teachers' evaluation

In the process of project learning, self-evaluation centers on the students' performance, learning ability and learning efficiency. It aims to provide students with opportunities for self-reflection

and self-development, so that students can find deficiencies through self-assessment and reflect their own progress and changes.

Meanwhile teacher's evaluation attaches more importance to the evaluation of language expression, learning effectiveness and comprehensive performance, which aims to provide professional guidance and motivate students to generate inspiration and creativity in their academic work. The two kinds of evaluation influence and interweave each other, and promote equal relationship between evaluators and evaluation objects.

2.3 Evaluation Content

Evaluation content includes three aspects: language ability, thinking ability and comprehensive ability.

Language ability serves as an instrumental evaluation dimension, including the evaluation of writing and oral communication ability in the project works and achievement display. They can be measured by accuracy, diversity, and appropriateness of English expression.

Thinking ability is the humanistic evaluation dimension of project results, which reflects students' values, logical and ideological depth. It focuses on the evaluation of students' understanding of project.

Comprehensive ability mainly includes three specific indicators: research ability, interpersonal ability and innovation ability. The evaluation of research ability covers the formulation of research plan, collecting and sorting out information, the application of research methods and so on; interpersonal ability evaluation includes communication ability, cooperation ability and so on; the evaluation of innovation includes topic selection, display form, demonstration method and so on.

2.4 Evaluation Methods

2.4.1 Formative evaluation+ Summative evaluation

Robert Stake, the representative of pluralistic curriculum evaluation view, once said, "The chef tastes the soup, which is formative evaluation while the guest tastes the soup, which is summative evaluation." This statement points out the differences between formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Compared with the summative evaluation, the formative evaluation can enable teachers to understand students' thinking, so that they can adjust the project, eliminate misunderstandings or guide students to work in a new direction. Teachers should constantly evaluate from the moment they introduce the project until they undertake the next project. With the progress of the project, teachers should adopt various methods, ranging from discussion, quiz, simple observation to conversation, so as to understand students' learning experience and make adjustments in time.

In formative assessment, teachers should pay attention to setting the project timeline and key points. Without setting, it will be difficult for teachers and students to complete the project. One project can be divided into different stages, so that all parts of the project can be better controlled. Students can complete their learning objectives in an orderly manner, and teachers can easily judge the stages where students will take more time. These key points are an excellent opportunity to test the learning results, make improvements, and adjust the direction.

At the end of the project, there are two main purposes of summative evaluation. The teacher's evaluation is to measure the students' learning situation in the way of summary and evaluate the quality of the project, so that the next project can be done better. In order to evaluate students' learning situation at the end of the project, teacher may score according to a scoring standard or ask the students to do an executive task for test, or ask other teachers to help them evaluate students' learning. They will also evaluate the project itself to determine the extent to which the project helps students achieve the expected learning results.

2.4.2 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria should include three categories: knowledge, skill and process. Each criterion is evaluated according to the completion degree or growth level of 3 -5 levels. The project completion level can be weighted and included in the score. Knowledge is usually more important than skills and process.

The process of constructing project scoring criteria allows teachers to think about learning objectives and completion criteria. Once completed, it becomes a useful tool to share project expectations with students, parents and colleagues, and perhaps off campus experts who can provide real feedback on students' performance.

2.4.3 Evaluation tools

Feasible evaluation tools include: brainstorming; rubrics; project records; portfolio assessment and so on.

1. Brainstorming: It can be applied into group evaluation. Using brainstorming can find out what students have mastered and what they care about. Through unrestricted free association and discussion, brainstorm aims to generate new ideas or stimulate innovative ideas.
2. Rubrics: An established set of scoring criteria used to rate a student's performance on tests, portfolios, writing samples, or other performance tasks, which is organized in increasing levels of quality by criterion.
3. Project records: It can guide students' direction and reflect efficiency. Try to use a simple form to record students' work tasks in words, including

who is responsible for completing the deadline and task completion of each project. This can also include other elements, such as the timeline containing the specific key notes of the project, and allow individuals or teams to mark daily work logs to report the completion of individuals and teams.

4. Portfolio assessment: A portfolio is a tool which demonstrates a student's learning progression overtime. Portfolio can allow teachers to: measure students' growth over time; give ownership of learning to students; emphasize the importance of process and product; develop short and long term goals; provide stimulus for conferencing and self-reflection.
5. Mindmap: The establishment of mind map is conducive to students' all-round and systematic description and analysis of the problems they think about. It is very helpful for students to think deeply and creatively about the problems they study, so as to find the key factors or links to solve the problems.

3. The Application of Evaluation Mechanism

3.1 Introduction about the teaching practice

PBL model has been applied for two terms in college English teaching by the research group of North China Electric Power University (Baoding) since 2020. College general English is a compulsory course for all non-English majors. It usually has 64 class hours in one semester. The current textbook is "New Standard College English Integrated Course 3" published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. The research group adopts PBL mode in five classes with the capacity of 30-60 students. The teaching practice of PBL runs through 16 weeks of a semester and conducts six projects around unit theme, ranging from personal development to patriotism. There are three parts for each unit:

Before class: setting up scenario and output tasks, input materials and learning guidance, conduct online counseling and evaluation.

In class: introduce the learning objectives of the course (integrating the content with ideology and politics), autonomous learning inspection, explanation of key and difficult points, output project decomposition, achievement display, evaluation feedback, practice Q & A and vocabulary test.

After class: consolidate the practice of language points, assign review or transfer tasks, evaluate and feedback.

Final score is composed of two parts: formative assessment (40%) +summative assessment (60%). The output projects are embodied in formative assessment and each project accounts for 5 points.

3.2 Teacher's role

During teaching practice, teachers should play a role of scaffolding to understand students' advantages and needs. In order to establish scaffolding, teachers should know the content that students have been able to complete independently and make good use of it, so as to ensure that scaffolding can not only meet the needs of students, but also enable them to exercise and strengthen their mastery of the next level of skills.

3.3 The result of questionnaire

In order to testify the teaching effect of PBL in College English, a questionnaire with 15 questions was conducted in 2021. 526 students from six teachers' classes were involved. Questions 1-6 mainly cover the content, form, students' feelings and satisfaction on PBL, and questions 7-15 mainly aim at the effect of each project and the overall effect of this semester. Both quantitative evaluation and qualitative evaluation were involved. The questionnaire shows that 481 people are satisfied, accounting for 91.44%, which proves that the implementation of PBL project is effective.

3.4 Evaluations on PBL's implementation effect

Through two years' teaching practice, the research indicates that the interviewed students fully affirm the teachers' project activities based on the use of teaching materials, and believe that PBL model plays a positive role in improving learning motivation and communication ability, and cultivating team spirit and autonomous learning ability. Moreover, PBL model also can promote expansion skills. These skills include the development of cultural awareness, logical thinking and other literacy, which are positively affirmed by students. The development of language knowledge, language skills and cultural thinking is an important content in foreign language teaching. PBL method represents the unity of instrumentality and humanity in foreign language learning.

However, in the teaching practice, there is still large room for improvement. Students' understanding of PBL method is also a complex and long-term process, which is affected by learning motivation, learning experience and other factors. There are significant differences in students' acceptance of PBL. In the process of implementation, more attention should be paid to the passive student. Due to low English level, they have difficulty in completing project activities independently, and lack of positive experience of project activities. In this regard, it is necessary to teach students in accordance with their aptitude. Only in this way can they stimulate their enthusiasm to participate in PBL and enhance their learning autonomy.

4. CONCLUSION

Project-based learning is a kind of personalized and open learning. In the process of the project, students will experience a series of gradually

developing activities, ask questions, investigate and study what they find, ask more questions, and then do more research until they get new cognition, The result of cognition or the expression of cognition should be original. It is a novel solution made by students or project teams to demonstrate. Considering the various processes and diverse results involved in project-based learning, it is easy to understand why evaluation is more complex than scoring with judgment questions or multiple-choice questions. This is the significance of studying evaluation mechanism.

In short, in the implementation of College English project-based learning, the scientific and effective evaluation mechanism should be established. Appropriate evaluation notion, multiple evaluation subjects, multi-dimensional evaluation contents, and integrated evaluation methods can construct evaluation mechanism and ensure the quality of project-based learning.

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