Micro-Class Teaching of the Tourism English Course: The Smart Education in China Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: Smart education becomes an inevitable trend of the global education. With the rapid international tourism development, a new issue on exploring ways to cultivate qualified tourism graduates with proficient English skills from vocational colleges in terms of smart education is raised in China. Therefore, this paper aims at discussing China's current teaching problems of tourism major core course-*Tourism English*. There are four characteristics of micro-class, namely short-time, fine and concise, interesting, and small-volume resource. The researcher finds raised issues in the teaching classroom include monotonous teaching methods, lack of practice field, inappropriate teaching materials and short of professional teaching staff. In conclusion, to solve these problems, the researcher gives three recommendations on Tourism-English micro-class teaching as follows: (1) Realize multiple and open teaching mode, and three dimensions openness of time, space and structure; (2) Increase financial and construction support from the college; (3) Establish the evaluation system of the tourism students' learning achievements in micro-class teaching. As highly information-based smart education has just started, we should make full use of micro-lesson to improve English Teaching level in vocational colleges, to cultivate students' autonomous learning ability and to cultivate innovative and creative professional tourism talents.

Keywords: Micro-class Teaching, Smart Education; Tourism English Course, Vocational College

Introduction

Smart Education was first proposed by the philosophers who intended to awaken and develop human wisdom. In China, Tsien Hsueshen connected wisdom with network space and for the first time put forward the concept of "Cyberspace Wisdom", that is "the wisdom of the network interaction space". In 21st Century, IBM Company elaborated the essence of wisdom education (Rudd et al. 2009).

Starting from the service of global economic development perspective, it suggested five roads for smart education development: students' technology immersion, diversified personalized learning path, knowledge and skills of service-oriented economy, global integration of systematic cultures and key-role in 21st century economic development. Zhu (2012) in the article "Smart Education: a new realm of information education", analyzed the basic connotation of smart education: the construction of smart learning environment (Smart Learning Environments), smart teaching method application (Smart Pedagogy), promote learners to learn smartly (Smart Learning), so as to enhance their expectations, namely talents cultivation of high intelligence and creativity, who will use smart technology appropriately, participate in various activities and constantly create products and values; who will flexible adapt, shape and select the environment of learning, living and working.

How to use information technology to trigger and promote education transformation is a challenge as well as opportunities. In 2012, China's Ministry of Education officially issued the "10-Year Development Plan on Education Informatization (2011-2020)". Through a series of education information innovations, we need to adhere to the principle of learner-centered, appropriate use of information technology and learning resources to cause deep changes in the way of teaching and learning. Providing rare opportunity to promote learners' wisdom, smart education has become the update pursuit for information education. In *The Report on the Government Work* (2015), China's Prime Minister Li Keqiang for the first time put forward the "Internet+" Action Plan, which emphasizes on the development of new forms on Chinese Internet and encourage the integration of internet and traditional industries, contributing to great response in the field of education and education industry.

With the progress of social economy and the development of global tourism, the goal of training in vocational colleges in China needs to aim at the cultivation talents with comprehensive quality and vocational ability. Therefore, the objectives for the training of tourism majors at college level is to master English skills, understand tourism laws and regulations and be familiar with the tourism business. Therefore, for tourism majors, good command of English is a compulsory requirement for them. Graduates majoring in tourism are mainly engaged in the field as tour guides, travel agency manager, English translation, secretary, and administrative staff in theme parks and scenic spot.

Tourism English as the core course for tourism specialty, under the background of education development, is an urgent task in the new era to achieve the depth of integration of micro-class teaching and information technology implementation, to improve the Tourism English course teaching quality, to stimulate students' learning motivation so as to cultivate tourism talents with innovative and creative ability.

Definition of Smart Education

Smart Education and Digital Education

Digital education is a new form of education based on digital technology in the information environment (Yang and Xie 2013). Smart education is the further development of digital education. In other words, it also belongs to the category of digital education, and it is the advanced development stage of digital education. The relationship between the two is the smart education is an integration of networking, cloud computing, big data, mobile communications, digital enhancement education reality and advanced information technology (Enhancede-Education). Smart education is different from traditional digital education, in terms of the development target, technology and application of core technology, construction mode, learning resources and methods, teaching methods, scientific research and management, evaluation and other aspects. It shows overall characteristics and trend of integration of intelligence, personalization, openness and collaboration (Yang 2014).

Smart Education and Informatization Education

Nan (2002) defines educational informatization as, the so-called education information, generally refers to the use of modern information technology in education, development of education resources, optimizing the process of education, cultivating and improving students' information literacy to promote the modernization of education process.

Zhu (2004) believes that smart education is a new realm of contemporary educational information, and is deepening and upgrading quality education in the information age, knowledge era and the digital era. Smart education has become an important development strategy and long-term task in the process of informatization education in the international community. All-rounded development in information educational policy, system, and mechanism will provide a good environment for smart education development. The sustainable development of smart education will further reflect the strategic advantages of information education and strengthen the status of informatization education in the whole global education system.

Smart Education and Education Modernization

Education modernization is to arm people with advanced ideas of modern education, science and technology, equip them with ideas, contents, methods, and equipment to improve education to the world's advanced level. On the other hand, it gradually cultivates new workforces and high-quality personnel to participate in competition of international economy and comprehensive national strength. (Shi et al. 1994).

In this regard, Gu (2012) pointed out that the education modernization includes the modernization of educational ideas and content, system and equipment, means, methods and management. It presents the education characteristics of democracy and fairness, lifelong and full-time, personality and creativity, diversity and innovation, internationalization and openness, scientific and legal system. Smart education is highly development in education to meet the needs of the information society. The

core features of the education modernization include fairness, lifelong, innovation, openness, individuality and others.

Smart education is not only a new realm of education in the information age, but also an important goal of educational modernization. Smart education is also reflected in the smart education environment, which includes smart teaching and learning, smart education management, smart scientific research and educational services, education evaluation and other aspects of intelligence. Information technology is to promote all-rounded education reform under the smart education background. Since the core of education modernization is the modernization of people, smart education aims to cultivate a large number of modern talents with 21st century skills, innovative awareness and innovative ability.

Characteristics of smart education

IBM (Rudd et. a1 2012) believes that smart education has five characteristics, which are adaptive learning and project learning for students; collaborative technology and digital learning resources for teachers and students; computerized management, monitoring and reporting; better information for learners and online learning resources.

Yang (2014) states his views in two perspectives. In his opinion, from the ecological perspective, smart education is the harmonious information education in technology promotion environment. The core characteristics can be summarized as the depth integration of information technology and teaching, global education resources sharing, openness on-demand learning, green and efficient management, and data-based scientific analysis and evaluation. From another technical perspective, smart education is an information-intensive engineering system with core technology features which include context awareness, seamless connection, all-round interaction, intelligent control, on-demand offer and visualization.

Micro-class definition and characteristics

The word micro-class comes from western countries. Penrose first named micro class as knowledge burst and to produce a more focused learning experience (Shieh et al. 2009). Educause (2012) believes that micro-lesson is a single, strictly defined theme to be shown with short audios and videos, and when it is used as line, mixed or face-to-face teaching, these videos become ornament of learning activities, which will strengthen course learning. In China, Hu (2011) first put forward the concept "micro lesson". He noted that the micro class is in accordance with the new curriculum standards and teaching practice, taking video as the carrier, focused on the key points during the teaching process and learning activities.

Micro class characteristics are concluded as follows. Firstly, teaching time is short. According to students learning and cognitive characteristics, "micro class" time is generally designed to be 5-8 minutes; the longest is not more than 10 minutes. In comparison with traditional 40-to-50-minute lessons in the classroom, the micro class is more focused on students learning. Secondly, teaching content is concise. In comparison with a traditional classroom teaching, a micro class usually only deals with certain knowledge or skill points which is much more helpful for students in acquiring knowledge and skills. Thirdly, content is fun. Micro-class applies video as the carrier, using text, picture, audio, subtitles and other forms, which is more intuitive and informative than text, graphical display and slides in traditional courses. It can improve the learning interest of the students. Fourthly, resource capacity is small. The format of micro class video is generally streaming media. With a small occupied space, students can watch the course online and can download various multi-media digital terminal equipment and mobile remote lectures for personalized learning. Teachers can observe, evaluate and reflect students' course activity online. Unlike in traditional classroom, teaching methods generally rely on simple PPT and notes, video recording occupies a large space of memory and download is difficult (Gen 2015).

Micro-class Teaching of Tourism English Course in Vocational Colleges

With the development of international tourism industry, China's demand for foreign tourism talents is increasing. In the information age, China needs to develop smart education urgently to cultivate tourism talents with innovation and creativity to adapt to the new era. As for vocational colleges, they should take up the mission of the times, and cultivate new tourism talents to meet the needs of the society. The authors found that as Tourism English is a core course for tourism majors in vocational colleges in China, there are still some problems in the current teaching process.

Teaching Method is Monotonous

Tourism English teaching is mostly based on the traditional teaching. In this way, it is difficult to exert students' creativity, and ultimately affects the quality of teaching and the students' creativity (Miao 2013). At the same time, with the rapid development of information technology, the traditional teaching mode has been unable to meet the needs of the tourism industry in modern teaching and personnel training mode. Therefore, there is a need to innovate the teaching methods and learning ways, so as to improve the effectiveness of the teaching of tourism English.

Lack of Practice Places

The Tourism English is a practical course and related to fields such as restaurants, hotels and tour guides. However, can the teaching process be strengthened by only ensuring the correct teaching practice, establishing and perfecting the practice room and venue? In the actual teaching, the limited training conditions affect the knowledge acquirement and teaching effectiveness. (Diao 2011).

Teaching Materials Selection is Not Reasonable

Tourism English in vocational colleges should be emphasized on practice, but in the actual teaching process, the authors found that majority textbooks of colleges are written using text language, focusing on written exercises and grammar explanation, but lack listening and speaking explanation and exercises. It will be detrimental to students' English language application ability and intercultural communicative competence improvement (Pan 2013).

Lack of Teachers

At present, the development of information technology requires teachers to embrace with information technology skills. However, in the actual teaching process, the author found that most teachers lack the relevant knowledge of micro teaching and professional skills which influence the effectiveness of teaching.

Tourism English Micro-Class Teaching Suggestions in Vocational Colleges

In the new era of information development, there is a need to meet the trend and create innovation. Micro-class teaching of Tourism English should arise to the level of smart education. In the concept of smart education, we need to design micro class according to the nature of the smart education.

Achieve a Diverse and Open Teaching Model

To break the traditional and single teaching mode, we need to reform the multiple teaching modes, and create the learning path of individuation and diversification. In the vocational colleges, micro class of Tourism English should be designed for vocational students, based on their learning characteristics. This is to enhance students' practical operation and application ability, especially in creation, innovation ability promotion. It is necessary to note that students are the organizers of the study, and full attention should be given to the students' potential, creativity and ability cultivation. Through autonomous learning, collaborative learning, research learning, and deep learning a breakthrough in learning mode for students can be achieved (Shu 2014).

Micro class in Tourism English teaching is to innovate the classroom teaching mode that includes the realization of three dimensions openness of time, space and structure. With the idea of smart campus, students can access network learning, realize classroom interaction and remote interaction between teachers and students (Chen and Wang 2015). Through the network, virtual training in the national tourist attractions could be available for students in tourism resources. Thus, students could handle tourism problems in business practices and could be inspired to think and discuss practical questions in tourism industry. In this way, we could train students' critical and creative thinking.

Increase School Support and Construction

Information technology is to reduce the technical threshold of education. In the information age, micro lesson design and production will be the urgent requirements for each college. Although there are classroom records, but in the modern time, the micro class needs to focus on the advanced method and not the simple recording or repetition of classroom teaching (Chen 2012). The micro course of Tourism English, which is presented in front of students, should be the high degree of unity of educational, technical and artistic. Therefore, in order to produce high quality micro class of Tourism English program, the college should focus on the construction of smart campus, increase the micro class recording and production of financial strength and technical support.

In addition, the college should increase the training of English teachers in the production of micro teaching skills. Micro-class cannot be simply regarded as the computer and the repetition of the course. Colleges should invite experts in tourism industry on the micro-class teaching training for teachers regarding the concept, contents, structure and characteristics of the micro lesson, and helps English teachers to master and apply the teaching methods of the micro class. Furthermore, we could encourage English teachers and the tourism industry to jointly set up and develop micro-class research team of Tourism English program, to establish the micro-class group of Tourism English and to form the unique characteristics of the micro-class.

Establish the Evaluation System of Students' Learning Achievement on Micro-Class

"Promoting construction by evaluation" is an important method of school teaching and course construction (Wang 2006). In the smart time today, curriculum evaluation on Tourism English program is to fully utilize the information and data. It aims to combine the micro lesson learning and learning effectiveness as well as to ensure students' micro-class learning is not in a slack, but stricter learning requirements with more scientific teaching methods.

Through the supervision of the students learning process, learning behavior and the effect of records on the micro-class of Tourism English, we could accumulate students' learning big data and scientific analysis as the foundation of evaluation development. In the actual micro-class learning, there are three recommendations can be made: firstly, through students' video process in the Tourism English program, we may pop up questions and ask students to answer timely to evaluate their feedback. For example, in the chapter to "Meet the Passengers", after the welcome greeting introduction, we may ask students to answer corresponding questions. Secondly, students could get "free" evaluation on the micro-class if they are familiar with the content of the course. This allows students to request their score without watching the video directly, but they need to pass the test. If some students do part-time job in the hotel and they are very familiar with the hotel check-in procedures, they can directly request for testing. The third way is based on the analysis and evaluation of the learning process of the students, which is the core of the smart evaluation. We need to assist the students to realize that, under the environment without the teachers' supervision, the whole information system is observing students' learning behaviors for the final analysis and judgment.

Conclusion

Highly information based on smart education has just started in China, which makes the design of micro-class under the Tourism English program lack systematic theoretical guidance and rich practical experiences for reference. We need to continue exploring and studying the content and as for English teachers in vocational colleges, they need to know how to integrate the concept of smart education in the micro-class of Tourism English program and how to enhance it to the higher level of

smart education. We should make full use of micro–class to improve the level of English teaching at vocational colleges in the process of cultivating students' autonomous learning ability, innovative and creative ability.

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