Task-Based Teaching Mode in College English Teaching

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Abstract: *With the acceleration of globalization, college English teaching faces the challenge of cultivating students' comprehensive language skills and cross-cultural communication abilities. Task-based language teaching (TBLT), as a student-centered teaching mode, promotes the use of language in real and meaningful contexts through the design of authentic tasks. This study aims to explore the application and effectiveness of task-based teaching modes in college English teaching. Through literature review, teaching practice, and effect evaluation, the study finds that TBLT significantly improves students' language proficiency, motivates learning, and enhances autonomous learning capabilities. This research provides new ideas and practical guidance for the improvement of college English teaching.*

Keywords: *College English teaching, task-based language teaching, teaching mode, teaching effect evaluation, language proficiency, learning motivation*

Introduction

In the context of globalization, the importance of English as an international lingua franca has become increasingly prominent. College English teaching not only needs to impart language knowledge but also enhance students' ability to use the language in real-life situations. However, traditional English teaching methods often overly emphasize mechanical memorization of grammar and vocabulary, neglecting practical language use, resulting in students lacking confidence and competence in real communication. Thus, exploring more effective teaching modes has become an urgent task.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a task-oriented teaching mode that stimulates students' learning motivation and enhances their comprehensive language application skills through the design and implementation of real and meaningful language tasks. This study aims to explore the application and effectiveness of task-based teaching modes in college English teaching. Through systematic teaching practice and effect evaluation, this study seeks to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the reform of college English teaching.

1. Development of Task-Based Language Teaching and Its Application in Language Teaching

1.1 The Origin and Development of Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) originated in the 1980s as an innovation to traditional language teaching methods. Its theoretical foundation can be traced back to communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes the practical use and communicative function of language. The development of TBLT has been influenced by second language acquisition research and cognitive psychology, advocating for the design of real language tasks to promote learning and use in actual communication.[1]

Several key theorists and practitioners have made significant contributions to the development of TBLT. N. Prabhu first systematically proposed the concept of task-based teaching in the Bangalore Project in India, demonstrating its feasibility and effectiveness in actual classrooms. Subsequently, Jane Willis and David Willis further developed the framework of task-based teaching, proposing specific task design and implementation steps. Scholars such as Ellis have continually refined the theoretical system of task-based teaching through empirical research, establishing it as a vital method in modern language

teaching.

1.2 Core Principles of Task-Based Language Teaching

The core principles of TBLT emphasize learning language through completing specific tasks, focusing on the process and practical outcomes of language use. These core principles include:

Real-Task Orientation: TBLT requires tasks to have real-life significance, reflecting authentic language use contexts. By completing these tasks, students can apply what they have learned in actual contexts, enhancing their language application abilities.

Learning Process Orientation: TBLT focuses on the language learning process during task completion, not just the final task outcome. During task implementation, students interact, collaborate, and receive feedback, continuously adjusting and improving their language use.[2]

Task Chain Design: TBLT emphasizes the coherence and systematization of tasks by designing a series of related tasks. This approach helps students accumulate language knowledge and skills through each task, ultimately achieving comprehensive language proficiency.

Student-Centeredness: TBLT is student-centered, respecting individual differences and learning needs. Teachers act more as guides and supporters, helping students learn independently and solve problems during task implementation.

1.3 Advantages of Task-Based Language Teaching in Language Teaching

TBLT has several advantages in language teaching, making it a crucial method in modern language education.

Enhancing Practical Language Application: TBLT designs real and meaningful tasks, allowing students to use language in actual contexts. Through task completion, students can reinforce their language knowledge and improve practical language application, boosting confidence and fluency in communication.

Increasing Student Motivation: TBLT emphasizes the fun and challenge of tasks, setting tasks related to students' lives and interests to stimulate their learning motivation. Students experience a sense of achievement and satisfaction from task completion, becoming more actively involved in learning.

Promoting Comprehensive Language Skills Development: TBLT integrates training in multiple language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, through holistic language use. For example, in a "planning a travel itinerary" task, students need to research information (reading), discuss with peers (speaking), listen to opinions (listening), and write plans (writing), achieving comprehensive skill development.[3]

Fostering Autonomous Learning: TBLT emphasizes students' autonomy and creativity during task completion. Students need to plan tasks, solve problems, and evaluate outcomes independently, which helps develop their autonomous learning capabilities, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Providing Effective Feedback Mechanisms: During the TBLT process, teachers can observe and record students' task performance and provide personalized feedback promptly. Through teachers' feedback, students understand their strengths and weaknesses, continuously improving their language proficiency.

By incorporating these principles and advantages, TBLT offers a dynamic and engaging approach to college English teaching, fostering students' language abilities and preparing them for real-world communication challenges.

2. Application of Task-Based Teaching Mode in College English Teaching

2.1 Teaching Objectives and Task Design

In college English teaching, the task-based teaching mode centers on students' practical language application abilities, achieving teaching objectives through carefully designed tasks. Teaching objectives should be clear and specific, encompassing the comprehensive development of language knowledge, language skills, and language application abilities. For example, a typical teaching objective might be to improve students' oral expression abilities in real contexts, enhance listening comprehension skills, or improve writing techniques.

Task design is a crucial element of the task-based teaching mode. Effective task design should have the following characteristics:

Authenticity: Tasks should be based on real-life language use scenarios, allowing students to experience the practical application of language while completing the tasks. For instance, designing a mock interview task where students practice self-introductions and answering common interview questions.

Challenge: Tasks should have a certain level of difficulty and challenge to stimulate students' learning interest and motivation. For example, requiring students to engage in cross-cultural communication and discuss etiquette and customs from different cultural backgrounds.

Relevance: Task content should be related to students' interests and life experiences, enabling them to use the language in familiar contexts. For instance, designing a task on the theme of environmental protection, where students investigate the current state of campus environmental practices and propose improvement suggestions.[4]

2.2 Teaching Methods and Activity Arrangements

The task-based teaching mode emphasizes promoting students' language use through diverse teaching methods and activity arrangements. The following are some common teaching methods and activity arrangements:

Group Cooperative Learning: Students are divided into groups to complete tasks together. This method not only improves students' language use abilities but also fosters teamwork and communication skills. For example, in a "planning a trip" task, students can discuss travel routes, budget planning, and itinerary arrangements in groups.

Role-Playing: By simulating real-life scenarios, students take on different roles and engage in language interaction. For instance, in a task simulating a company meeting, students play roles such as managers, employees, and clients, discussing the company's market strategies and business development.

Task Presentation and Feedback: After completing tasks, students present their results and receive feedback from teachers and peers. This method allows students to showcase their learning outcomes and identify areas for improvement through feedback. For example, after completing a task on environmental protection, students can create a PowerPoint presentation and receive evaluations and suggestions from their peers and teacher.

Problem-Based Learning: Design problem-based tasks that guide students to learn by solving real-world problems. For instance, in a task discussing social issues, students need to investigate and analyze a social phenomenon and propose solutions.

2.3 Teaching Resources and Support Tools

Effective teaching resources and support tools are essential for the successful implementation of the task-based teaching mode. The following are some common teaching resources and support tools:

Multimedia Resources: Utilize videos, audio, images, and other multimedia resources to enrich teaching content and enhance students' learning experience. For example, in a cultural exchange task, documentaries, news reports, and film clips can be used to help students understand lifestyles and values in different cultural contexts.[5]

Online Platforms and Tools: Use online learning platforms and tools to provide abundant learning resources and interactive opportunities. For instance, platforms like Moodle and Canvas can be used to publish task materials, conduct online discussions, and submit assignments. Collaboration tools like Google Docs and Padlet can facilitate student cooperation and communication during tasks.

Textbooks and Supplementary Reading Materials: Select textbooks and supplementary reading materials suitable for task-based teaching to provide systematic language knowledge and a wealth of task materials. For example, use comprehensive English textbooks that include task designs and project activities, combined with relevant literary works, news articles, and academic papers, to expand students' reading range and knowledge base.

Labs and Field Trips: Utilize language labs for listening practice and oral simulations, or organize field trips to enable students to use the language in real environments. For instance, arrange for students to visit companies and participate in social practice activities to enhance their practical language application abilities.

2.4 Teacher Roles and Student Participation

In the task-based teaching mode, the teacher's role shifts from traditional knowledge transmitter to guide, coordinator, and evaluator. Teachers need to actively participate in the task design, implementation, and evaluation process to help students complete tasks and achieve learning progress.

Task Designer: Teachers need to design real and meaningful tasks based on teaching objectives and student needs. Task design should consider students' language proficiency, interests, and learning styles to ensure tasks are appropriately challenging and engaging.

Learning Guide: During task implementation, teachers need to provide necessary guidance and support to help students solve encountered problems. For example, teachers can provide language input, correct errors during discussions, or offer strategy suggestions to help students complete tasks more effectively.

Evaluator and Feedback Provider: After task completion, teachers need to evaluate students' performance and provide specific, constructive feedback. Evaluation should focus not only on task results but also on students' language use, cooperation abilities, and problem-solving skills during the task.[6]

Learning Motivator: Teachers should motivate students to participate in tasks and maintain learning motivation and interest through various methods. For example, by setting up group competitions, awarding prizes, and showcasing outstanding work, teachers can stimulate students' enthusiasm and creativity.

Students play the role of active learners in the task-based teaching mode. They need to actively participate in every aspect of the task, demonstrating autonomy and creativity to complete each learning task.

Task Participants: Students need to actively engage in the design, discussion, and implementation process of tasks, continuously improving their language use and task completion strategies through interaction with peers and teachers.

Autonomous Learners: Students need to demonstrate autonomous learning abilities during tasks, independently searching for information, solving problems, and evaluating results. For example, in completing a survey task, students need to independently collect information, analyze data, and write reports.

Collaborative Learners: Students need to collaborate with peers to achieve task goals. This cooperation not only helps improve language proficiency but also cultivates teamwork and communication skills.

By incorporating these principles and methods, task-based teaching can significantly enhance the effectiveness of college English teaching, fostering students' practical language skills and preparing them for real-world communication challenges.

3. Application Effects of Task-Based Teaching Mode in College English Teaching

3.1 Enhancement of Language Proficiency

The application of the task-based teaching mode in college English teaching has a significant impact on improving students' language proficiency. This mode enhances students' comprehensive language application ability by designing real, specific language tasks. Specifically, the task-based teaching mode enhances students' language proficiency in the following aspects:

Increase in Vocabulary: Task-based teaching requires students to use a wide range of vocabulary during the task process. This contextualized vocabulary learning method helps students better memorize and master new words. For example, when completing a simulated international conference task, students need to use professional terminology and high-frequency words, which helps them flexibly use vocabulary in real language environments.

Deepening of Grammar Mastery: Task-based teaching emphasizes learning grammar rules through practical application. By designing tasks, students use grammatical structures in natural contexts, which helps deepen their understanding and mastery of grammar rules. For example, by completing a report on environmental protection, students need to accurately use tenses, voices, and clause structures, thereby improving their grammar application skills.

Enhancement of Listening and Speaking Abilities: Task-based teaching significantly enhances students' listening and speaking abilities through highly interactive activities such as role-playing, discussions, and presentations. During the task implementation process, students need to continuously express themselves orally and listen to others' opinions, which not only improves their fluency and accuracy in speaking but also enhances their listening comprehension abilities. For example, by participating in group discussions and simulated dialogues, students improve their oral expression skills and listening response speed in real communication.

Improvement of Reading and Writing Skills: Task-based teaching emphasizes the development of comprehensive language skills. Students need to engage in extensive reading and writing when completing tasks. For example, when completing a research report on social issues, students need to review a large amount of literature and write a high-quality research report, which not only improves their reading speed and comprehension abilities but also enhances their writing skills and logical thinking abilities.

3.2 Student Attitudes and Motivation

The task-based teaching mode not only improves students' language proficiency but also positively impacts their learning attitudes and motivation. Specifically, it manifests in the following aspects:

Stimulation of Learning Interest: Task-based teaching designs interesting and challenging tasks, keeping students highly interested and engaged in the task completion process. For example, by designing tasks related to students' lives and interests, such as organizing an English debate competition or planning an English drama performance, students experience the joy of learning and develop a strong interest in learning English.

Enhancement of Learning Motivation: Task-based teaching emphasizes students' initiative and creativity in tasks, allowing them to experience a sense of achievement and satisfaction during task completion. This positive learning experience helps enhance students' learning motivation. For example,

by completing a team cooperation project, students gain knowledge and experience the joy of successful collaboration, thereby motivating further learning.

Cultivation of Autonomous Learning Abilities: The task-based teaching mode emphasizes students' autonomous learning and independent thinking abilities. Students need to independently plan, find information, and solve problems during task completion. This process of autonomous learning helps cultivate their self-management abilities and learning strategies. For example, in a research task on urban planning, students need to independently design research plans, collect data, and conduct analysis, improving their autonomous learning abilities and scientific research qualities.

Improvement of Learning Attitudes: Task-based teaching improves students' learning attitudes through positive classroom interactions and cooperative learning. Students experience the importance of cooperation and team spirit during tasks, gradually forming a positive learning attitude. For example, through group cooperation in completing a research task, students help each other and work together, gradually developing a positive learning attitude and good learning habits.

Conclusion

This study concludes the following main points through the research on the application of the task-based teaching mode in college English teaching:

Enhancement of Language Proficiency: The task-based teaching mode significantly improves students' comprehensive language proficiency. Students expand their vocabulary, deepen their understanding of grammar, and improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills during task completion.

Student Attitudes and Motivation: Task-based teaching effectively stimulates students' learning interest and motivation. By participating in real tasks, students develop a more positive attitude toward learning English, and their autonomous learning abilities are significantly enhanced.

Future research should focus on the following areas:

Optimization and Innovation of Teaching Modes: Further optimize task design and teaching strategies, exploring more innovative teaching methods to better meet the needs of students at different levels.

Professional Development and Training of Teachers: Enhance teachers' understanding and practical abilities in task-based teaching methods, improving their application levels in actual teaching to continuously enhance teaching effectiveness.

Long-term Evaluation of Teaching Effects: Establish a scientific long-term evaluation mechanism to continuously track and evaluate the application effects of the task-based teaching mode in different teaching contexts, continuously improving and refining teaching practices.

Through these efforts, the application of the task-based teaching mode in college English teaching will deepen, providing strong support for the comprehensive improvement of students' language proficiency and overall quality.

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