An Empirical Study on Web-based English Listening Autonomous Learning Model

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Abstract—In order to explore a teaching and learning model based on a combination of student-centered teaching concept with web-based teaching technology, a goal-oriented teaching model was put forward. Comparing and analyzing the study results in three examinations of the learners, the learners performance in one-year web-based English listening autonomous learning model was studied. The learners were from 3 experimental classes with the goal-oriented teaching model and 3 control classes with the common autonomous learning model during one year. The qualitative and quantitative data prove that the goal-oriented English listening learning model is feasible in China’s college English teaching. The experimental group performed well in the examination in both the listening part and the comprehensive English tests. Based on the data collected through questionnaires and the learners feedback, it can be seen that through the goal oriented model with teachers’ instruction and supervising in their learning process students can not only fulfill their learning task better but also can exercise self-regulation and make self-adjustment, self-control while the control group found it difficult. The study also shows that the new model can develop the students’ interests in language learning and the ability of lifelong learning.

Keywords—goal-oriented model; web-based teaching; autonomous learning; web-based learning

I. INTRODUCTION

With the swift development of multimedia technology, Web-based English learning is put into practice in China’s higher education nationwide. In order to keeping up with the new developments of higher education in China, deepening teaching reform, improving teaching quality, College English Curriculum Requirements has been drawn up. The Requirements states clearly that “The new model should be built on modern information technology, particularly network technology, so that English language teaching and learning will be, to a certain extent, free from the constraints of time or place and geared towards students’ individualized and autonomous learning” [1]. And it also points out that “One of the objectives of the reform of the teaching model is to promote the development of individualized study methods and the autonomous learning ability on the part of students” [1]. So further promoting the College English autonomous learning model based on the student-centered teaching concept is one of the most important task in the process of the reform.

Shenyang Institute of Chemical Technology (Shenyang) participated the second college English teaching reform extended program ratified by Ministry of Education in 2005. The participants were the freshmen in the year of 2005, there were three experimental classes as the experimental group and three common classes as the control group.

II. THE DEFINITION OF AUTONOMY

David Little[2] has described autonomy as a “buzz-word” of the 1990’, and this borne out by a number of books and articles.(Dam,1995;Van Lier, 1995). According to Holec, “autonomy” is defined as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” [3]. Furthermore, Dickinson accepts the definition of autonomy as a “situation in which the learner is totally for all of the decisions concerned with his or her learning and implementation of those decision” [4]. On general, the term autonomy has come to be used in at least five ways[5]:

a. for situations in which learners study entirely on their own;
b. for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;
c. for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;
d. for the exercise of learners’ responsibility for their own learning;
e. for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

When we talk about the web-based autonomous learning, we refer to “the learning which relies on the platform of computer and multi-media through the web courses and learning resources provided by the teachers” [7]. This implies that an autonomous learner is capable of setting goals and objectives, choosing material, methods and tasks, carrying out and evaluating his/her work/learning. Learners are able to make significant decisions about what is to be learned, as well as how and when to learn it.

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III. THE SITUATION OF WEB-BASED ENGLISH LISTENING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING IN CHINA

From the definitions, we can see that the learners must be independent thinkers, and should have a clear view of the whole learning process. They must understand the purpose of their learning programme, explicitly accept responsibility for their learning, share in the setting of learning goals, take initiatives in planning and executing learning activities, and regularly review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness. But the situation of our college students and the situation of English teaching are not so optimistic now in China. There are some barriers to promoting autonomous learning.

A. Individual affective barriers

For most of the students do not have the ability to shoulder all the studying duty. In China, most of the learners learn English with an instrumental motivation. They view the foreign language as a means of finding a good job or pursuing a lucrative career, and some of them learn it just for passing the exams. That is to say, they are lowly-motivated. They are likely to be impervious or resistant to learner-centered strategies aiming at autonomy. The students’ negative attitudes towards their role in the learning decrease the motivation. Learner autonomy is likely to be undermined.

B. The students learning styles

According to the surveys (Wang, 2002; Dong, 2003; Dai, 2004; Xu, Peng and Wu, 2004), Chinese students do little listening and reading after class, let alone speaking and writing. For a long time the typical Chinese learner has been characterized as passive, dependent, and lacking initiative. This kind of learning style is not good for promoting the learner autonomy.

C. External barriers

The external barriers include the teachers and Culture influence and family education. In the process of promoting learner autonomy, teachers have a crucial role to play in launching learners into autonomy and in lending them a regular helping hand.

Facing such a situation in China, the students are in great need of promoting autonomy. So exploring how to make a feasible learning aim for the students, how to exploring a teaching and learning model based on a combination of student-centered teaching concept with multimedia technology, is one of the most important tasks in the process of the reform.

IV. THE DESIGN AND DESCRIPTION OF GOAL-ORIENTED METHOD TO WEB-BASED ENGLISH LISTENING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING MODEL

A. Goal-oriented learning method

Goal-setting is one of the most important factors which can have a strong impact on self-regulated learning in web environment, since goals and objectives can help to convert the needs of action into motivation, driving people to make efforts in some certain direction. And learners will compare the performance results with those objectives set in advance, making adjustments and modifications accordingly. Step by step, they achieve the ultimate goal. Lack of goal-orientation is just one of the most important reasons why many learners cannot adapt themselves to the web-based self-regulated learning. In order to improve the quality of online-learning, from the course designer’s angle, one of the tasks is to enhance a goal-oriented on-line learning with the guide of goal-setting theory. Goal-setting, as an important aspect of self-regulated learning, is a capability which can be gained through a gradual process of developing from external control to self control and from consciousness to automation. There are six elements during the procedure of acquiring of the gold, they are gold classification, action, content, method, manner and facility.

B. The description of the model

This program aimed to study a new teaching model for English listening autonomous learning under the internet circumstance in order to improve the students’ listening and speaking ability. We chose the New Era Interactive English as our textbook and with the help of gold-oriented theory. The new teaching model was carried as below: under the instruction of the teacher, every student made his final goal of this term at the very beginning of the term, and the specific sub-goals made in order to fulfill the final goal at the end of the team (every month, every week, every day even every specific goal before he go on to the internet). At the same time, let all the students wrote down the diary. The teacher would supervise and check if all their records written on the diary were fulfilled. Moreover, for the sake of insuring every goal can be accomplished in time, teachers would give lots of training for the learning strategy. For the experimental group the teachers released control gradually by exercising enough external control first and then reducing it till the learners can totally adapt themselves to self-regulation with some support and aids from outside. All the goals made, diary written, and all the assignments given, quiz conducted will be sort out into a “personal file” as the important basis for final evaluation.

V. THE RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCEDURE

A. The hypothesis of the research

The new model of web-based English listening autonomous learning will improve the students’ English listening ability, improve the students English comprehensive practical ability, improve the students’ English learning interest and help the students develop the autonomous learning habit and ability.

B. Subjects of the research

A total of 90 (from three classes of A level) Non-English majors college students from the freshmen of 2005 in Shenyang Institute of Chemical Technology were selected
to participate in the research as the experimental group. 97(also from three classes of A level)as the control group.

The goal-oriented method was introduced to the experimental group, while the traditional web-based English listening autonomous learning model was still for the control group. There were three teachers who are all excellent in teaching and love students participated in the teaching procedures.

C. the instruments of the research

In the research, there were two kinds of instruments used: tests and questionnaire.

- the tests in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. The test in the beginning:(2005.09): when the freshmen were just enrolled into the school, we had the test which divided the students into different levels. The test in the middle (2006.01): according to the achievements of national college English test 4(thestudents in A level have the opportunity to take parting the CET4 in our school) the test in the end (2006.07): the achievements in the final examination when Grade One finished.

- the questionnaire

We delivered questionnaire to the experimental group and the control group. The questionnaire was “A questionnaire on Web-based English Listening Autonomous Learning ability forming”. The questionnaire was also about the students’ autonomous ability forming. There are four aspects, made according to the definition and the descriptions for autonomous learning. The students will mark each aspect according to their own situation. For example, 1 is the lowest correspondence, while 5 means almost the same.

VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The tests achievements

In the entrance test we found that there was not very distinct obvious differences between the two group. To evaluate the learning and teaching effectiveness with the model of Web-based English Listening Autonomous Learning after experimental teaching, we designed two different tests. From these two examinations we found that the experimental group and the control group behaved differently no matter in the listening part or in the total achievements, the experimental group’s achievements higher than the control group dramatically. We can see the differences from table I, table II and table III. Test results showed goal-oriented method is efficient in the web-based English listening autonomous learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Listening Mean (total 35)</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Average (total 100)</th>
<th>Rate of passage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Listening Mean (total 142)</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Average (total 710)</th>
<th>Rate of passage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>18.72</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>22.68</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. The questionnaire

From table IV, table V and table VI, we can see clearly that most of the students held the favorite idea to the new goal-oriented teaching model compared with the traditional one. They believed that the teachers’ instruction and supervising in their learning process was vital and helpful. Especially after almost one year’s learning they nearly formed their own learning habit, in the future studying they know how to perform autonomous learning. They can exercise self-regulation or make self-adjustment, self-control while the control group found it’s difficult for them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Highly satisfactory</th>
<th>Partly satisfactory</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Dissatisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental group</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Skill application</th>
<th>Self-regulation</th>
<th>Self-planning</th>
<th>Self-evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental group</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Can you conduct autonomous learning in your future studying?
VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

From the beginning of this research until now, the web-based English listening autonomous learning has been more than 4 years, it's fruitful for both the teachers and students. The goal-oriented autonomous learning model combined the principles of practicality, knowledge and interest, facilitate mobilizing the initiative of both teachers and students. The new teaching model changed not only teaching methods, but, more important, it changed the teaching concept and practice, and the new model aroused a shift from a teacher-centered pattern, to a student-centered pattern, in which the ability to use the language and the ability to learn independently are cultivated in addition to language knowledge and skills. Especially through the autonomous learning training we gave the student lifelong learning ability.

The research also indicated some implications for our future teaching. The web-based English listening autonomous learning will play a vital role in the internet-based tests of CET4, and it can also teach the students lifelong learning ability, how can we extend our experiment to the whole students and extent the listening ability to all the other English skills is the new task for all the English teachers.

REFERENCES