

Reflections on the Role of Teachers Under the Concept of Flipped Classroom—A Case Study of Rain Classroom Practice in Basic Japanese Course

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Under the flipped classroom teaching theory, the aim of this paper is to explore whether the teaching model of “student-oriented, teacher-led” can help improve the learning effect of Japanese major students by adopting the mixed online and offline teaching method of rain classroom. Two Japanese majors classes of Grade 19 in BISU were taken as the research objects of the one-semester comparative experiment. The study found there were obvious differences in learning effect and learning experience between the two classes. The experiment proves that the role of teachers in flipped classroom is more obvious than that of traditional teaching. If teachers can actively play the role of teacher-student interaction, Japanese professional level of the students can be effectively improved.

Keywords: flipped classroom, the rain classroom, basic Japanese teaching, contrast experiment

Related Researches and Dilemmas of Flipped Classroom

Since entering the 21st century, the tide of informationization has swept all aspects of the society. Every educator is faced with the problem of how to promote the reform of higher education as well as improve the teaching quality comprehensively through the informatization of education.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the teaching concept of flipped classroom was first put forward by the American educational circle. J. Wesley Baker published a paper “The Classroom Flip: Using Web Course Management Tools to Become the Guide by the Side” in the 11th International Conference on University Teaching in 2000. Since then, with the continuous development and improvement of Internet technology, flipped classroom has gradually become popular in the United States, and related research and practice have also been carried out in China. After the author reviewed the results of 251 domestic papers on flipped classroom in Japanese major from 2013 to 2021, which showed an increasing trend year by year (source: CNKI), the representative paper included “Practical Research on Flipped Classroom in Basic Courses for Japanese Majors—Taking Advanced Japanese as an Example” (Liu, 2019), “Teaching Practice and Teaching Effect of Flipped Classroom for Basic Japanese” (Wang, 2018), and “Design and Implementation of Flipped Classroom in Network Environment—An Example of Japanese Intensive Reading Course” (Jin, 2018), and so on. It can be seen from the above research results that flipped classroom supported by Internet technology can improve students’ independent learning ability to a certain extent and change students’ learning habits and consciousness. However, there are still many problems, such as differences in individual acceptance of students,

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inaccurate positioning between teachers and students, imperfect evaluation system, and mismatch between teaching concepts and technical means.

The author began to conduct practice and research on flipped classroom in 2013. For several years, the author has tried to conduct teaching design through modular teaching method, used rain classroom teaching software to build online and offline mixed teaching platform, and carried out long-term teaching practice. He has published related papers such as “The Application of Module Teaching Method in Japanese Extensive Reading Teaching”, “Research on the Application of Modular Teaching Method in Japanese Professional Translation Course”, “Case Study of the Application of Rain Classroom in Japanese Teaching in Universities”. Through practical research, the author finds that flipped classroom is not literally “flipped”, but a kind of “breaking”. Flipped classroom aims to break the boundary of time and space in traditional teaching and break the old orientation of teacher-student relationship, so as to realize the goal of building students’ independent knowledge system.

Mixed Teaching Experiment of Basic Japanese Rain Class Under the Flipped Classroom Concept

Based on the above thinking, the author carried out relevant research on teaching practice from 2020 to 2021. The specific research contents are as follows.

Experimental Subjects and Conditions

This study takes Class 192 and Class 193, two classes of Japanese major of Grade 2019 in Beijing International Studies University, as the research objects, among which Class 192 is referred to as Group A; Class 193 is referred to as Group B. There were 27 students in each group. In the one-semester teaching, the two groups adopted the rain-class mixed teaching method. For the students in Group A, the teacher explained the teaching design and objectives under the flipped classroom concept in advance, and interacted with the students in each teaching module throughout the whole process. Group B only provided relevant teaching resources for the rain class and supervised students’ learning in each link without relevant teaching interaction.

Teaching Structure Design of Basic Japanese Rain Class

This teaching design consists of four modules, namely, the import module, the learning module, the practice module, and the summary module. During the module introduction, the teacher issued the “Classroom Task Guide” through the Rain Classroom platform to clarify the key points and points of this lesson learning. Students complete the tasks assigned in the “Class Task Guide” during the whole teaching process and submit them in the final summary module.

In the learning module, the teacher releases relevant MOOCs and preview courseware of this course through rain class, and designs corresponding questions about key grammar and sentence patterns in preview courseware, so as to cultivate students’ ability to analyze and solve problems. In this part, students will preview, submit their own answers through the rain class platform, and interact with teachers online about the problems they encounter in independent learning.

The practice module is mainly completed in class. In the course of teaching, teachers explain the problems that students cannot solve in the previous learning link, lead students to discuss, set up various classroom presentations, such as: grammar analysis, conversation exercise, relevant cultural knowledge supplement, etc., to provide students with more Japanese language practice opportunities.

The summary module is a process of checking and patching up the gaps in the whole teaching process, as well as a process of comprehensive evaluation of the students' learning results of this lesson. The teacher evaluates the "classroom task guide" submitted by the students, and the students also evaluate the learning effect of this lesson, so as to construct a complete evaluation system, so that the whole teaching process forms a perfect closed loop.

Results and Analysis

Based on the above teaching practice and after a semester's study, the author conducted an online questionnaire survey on the learning effect and learning experience of the students in Group A and Group B in Nov. 2020.

First of all, regarding the evaluation of the cultivation of learning abilities by this teaching method, the questionnaire results of Group A are shown in the following table.

Table 1

Evaluation of Learning Ability Cultivation in Group A

Title/options	Excellent	Good	Average	Below average
Improve the ability of active learning	14 (53.85%)	8 (30.77%)	3 (11.54%)	1 (3.85%)
Improve the ability of analyzing problems	13 (52%)	4 (16%)	6 (24%)	2 (8%)
Improve classroom learning efficiency	13 (52%)	5 (20%)	5 (20%)	2 (8%)
Improve learning time efficiency	14 (56%)	7 (28%)	2 (8%)	2 (8%)
Subtotal	54 (53.47%)	24 (23.76%)	16 (15.84%)	7 (6.93%)

Nearly 78% of the students believe that the classroom design has a good effect in improving learning autonomy, improving the ability to analyze problems, improving the efficiency of classroom learning, and using fragmented learning time. About 6% of the students think that the effect on ability cultivation is not good. Correspondingly, the data of Group B without teacher-student interaction are shown in the following table.

Table 2

Evaluation of Learning Ability Cultivation in Group B

Title/options	Excellent	Good	Average	Below average
Improve the ability of active learning	12 (44.44%)	2 (7.41%)	7 (25.93%)	6 (22.22%)
Improve the ability of analyzing problems	10 (38.46%)	3 (11.54%)	7 (26.92%)	6 (23.08%)
Improve classroom learning efficiency	11 (42.31%)	2 (7.69%)	7 (26.92%)	6 (23.08%)
Improve learning time efficiency	11 (42.31%)	6 (23.08%)	5 (19.23%)	4 (15.38%)
Subtotal	44 (41.9%)	13 (12.38%)	26 (24.76%)	22 (20.95%)

It can be seen that in the absence of interaction between teachers and students in each link, Group B students have a low evaluation of their own ability improvement, only about 53% of the students are relatively satisfied, and about 20% of the students are not satisfied.

Secondly, the results of the two groups also have great differences on the problem of whether independent learning in each link causes heavy schoolwork load. In the case that all members of Group A have completed 100% of their assignments, the results of questions and answers on whether the schoolwork load has been increased are shown in the table below.

Table 3

Evaluation of Group A on Whether the School Load Was Heavy

Subject/option	Subtotal	Ratio
Heavy schoolwork load	6	22.22%
No additional schoolwork	21	77.78%

About 78% of the students think that online learning time does not cause heavy schoolwork load, and 22% of the students think that the study load is heavy. In the case that Group B is not obligated to participate in each online independent learning link and the homework completion is less than 50%, the results of the questions and answers are as follows.

Table 4

Evaluation of Group B on Whether the Schoolwork Load Was Heavy

Subject/option	Subtotal	Ratio
Heavy schoolwork load	16	59.26%
No additional schoolwork	11	40.74%

Nearly 60% of the students in Group B think that this teaching mode increases the load of schoolwork, and about 40% of the students say that it is acceptable.

Finally, let's look at the data on approval for the teaching model. Approval for the teaching model reached 96.3 percent in Group A, while only 37.04 percent in Group B.

Table 5

Comparison of Approval Rating of Teaching Mode in Groups A & B

Group/option	Approval	Disapproval
Group A	96.3%	3.7%
Group B	37.04%	62.96%

With the same teaching mode and the same teaching resources, the interaction between teachers and students resulted in a huge difference in learning experience between the two groups. It can be seen that the interactive participation of teachers in the teaching process has a great influence on the learning effect of students.

Problems and Reflections on Flipped Classroom

Compared with the traditional teaching mode, flipped classroom emphasizes the central positioning of "student-oriented and teacher-led". Therefore, the role of teachers has changed from unidirectional knowledge instilling to guiding students to learn independently. At the same time, the role of students has changed from passive receivers to independent constructors of knowledge consciousness. The Internet platform provides technical support for maximizing the effect of flipped classroom. However, it is undeniable that the practical process only depends on the MOOC production, the upgrade of teaching software, the construction of online and offline teaching platform and other hardware transformation is not enough. Teachers and students need to have the same understanding of the information education reform and clear their positioning and goals from the consciousness level, in order to truly achieve the maximum teaching effect.

The Reorientation of Teacher-Student Relationship

Flipped classroom emphasizes the orientation of the classroom center with students as the main body and teachers as the leading. But there are differences in understanding of what is the subject and what is the dominant. The leading role of teachers is not the same as leading the overall situation and promoting the overall development of the leadership. Teachers are not simply learning supervisors, homework correcting machines; in fact, these jobs can gradually be handed over to technology to solve. As an important part of humanized teaching, teachers should go deep into each link of students' learning, become the person who answers questions, and become the lighthouse for students to guide the way. The study of language majors emphasizes communication and practice, and the interaction between teachers and students is particularly important. The traditional teaching model locks the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom, while the development of Internet technology breaks this limitation. Teachers and students can achieve all-round communication through various network means. The practice proves that this kind of interaction can effectively improve students' learning enthusiasm and learning effect. Perhaps this will take up some of the teachers' spare time, but once the teaching platform for such communication and exchange has been established, besides teacher-student interaction, knowledge sharing and communication can also be effective between students. For some questions, students are fully qualified for the task of teachers. Therefore, the author believes that the orientation of teacher-student relationship is not simply about who leads whom, but a flexible transformation relationship under the premise of clear teaching objectives.

Improvement of the Evaluation System

Flipped classroom breaks the limitation of time and space and enables students to acquire knowledge through more channels. Therefore, the time for online study will be enhanced. However, the existing credit evaluation system is mostly 20% of the usual score, 20% of the mid-term score, and 60% of the final score. This kind of evaluation method has the lack of evaluation on students' independent learning, which will affect students' learning enthusiasm and participation in learning tasks. In view of this, in the summary module of basic Japanese classroom practice, the author designs the links of students' self-evaluation and teachers' evaluation. Through all-round evaluation of students' independent learning achievements, it can effectively improve students' self-cognition and learning motivation. At the same time, the author also calls on universities to design the more reasonable learning evaluation system, appropriately increase the proportion of online independent learning evaluation, and establish a more perfect evaluation system.

Integration of Online and Offline Systems

Flipped classroom divides learning into online and offline parts, and emphasizes increasing practical opportunities in class to improve students' comprehensive ability. In teaching practice, there are often some problems in the connection between online learning and classroom practice. Some of the knowledge acquired by students through MOOCs and preview courseware will be explained again in class, resulting in a waste of teaching time. The author thinks there are two main reasons for this kind of problem. First, there are defects in teaching design. Teachers should make clear the demarcation point between knowledge teaching and practical exercises, improve the production of knowledge teaching videos or courseware, and avoid repeated content. Second, teachers do not know enough about students' online autonomous learning. Teaching tools such as Rain Classroom can help teachers keep abreast of students' independent learning through big data and interactive functions.

Conclusion

Based on the flipped classroom teaching concept, this study explores a new mode of information-based education reform for Japanese majors through the mixed online and offline teaching practice of basic Japanese classes. The practice results show that with the same teaching design and the same teaching resources, the learning experience and ability cultivation of Group A with the interactive assistance of teachers are significantly improved. Since this experiment was only conducted in two classes of Japanese major and the sample size was small, the research results had some limitations. In the future research, the author will expand the scope of research and deeply explore how flipped classroom can more effectively improve the teaching effect of Japanese majors in the new era, so as to achieve the teaching goal of all-round talent cultivation.

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