

The Notion Of Dialogue And Its Implications On Lecture-Based Learning Of College English

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Abstract:

Lecture-based learning (LBL) is one of the main forms of college English teaching and learning at present. However, LBL is of ill repute because of its many disadvantages. It has been criticized repeatedly because in the actual college English teaching and learning, teacher talk does occupy most of the classroom time. The lack of students' discourse is prominent. This kind of teaching and learning is therefore regarded as close to monologue under Bakhtin's dialogue theory. However, monologue and dialogue are only a matter of degree. They can penetrate and transform into each other. From the perspective of Bakhtin's dialogue theory, there is also dialogue in LBL College English teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the level of dialogue needs to be improved.

Keywords: college English teaching and learning; LBL; Dialogue; Monologue; Classroom discourse

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I. Introduction

Lecture-based learning (LBL) is a form of teaching and learning in which students systematically and consistently accept knowledge and skills which are imparted through teachers' oral teaching. It is mainly characterized by teachers' oral teaching and students' passive receptive activities. LBL teaching and learning has strong points as operability, economy and high efficiency. It can make the communication between teachers and students more direct, clear and smooth. Consequently, teachers and students can grasp the teaching progress and improve the teaching and learning efficiency. Coupled with long-term practice, teachers are very interested in this kind of teaching.

LBL is still being frequently used in college English classrooms. However, this teaching method ignores the main role of students. The pursuit of knowledge instillation leads to students' mechanical passive learning. Many disadvantages have been criticized. Practical LBL often leads to students' coldness. More often than not, the teacher throws a topic and the students keep silent. There is a serious lack of students' discourse. Teachers can easily feel the indifference of students. The indifference definitely has a negative impact on the atmosphere and progress of classroom teaching.

In theory, group activities can be more effective. It's ideally that a classroom should encourage all students to speak. But in fact, those who are excellent are a few. Classroom activities are dominated by a minority of top students. As Bohm said, "there are always people trying to show themselves... Others don't have such a superior sense of self. They tend to retreat, especially when they see that someone else is playing the leading role" (Bohm, 2004). This circumstance severely bruised some students' enthusiasm to participate in classroom

activities. Thus, most students don't have discourse power. In addition, "falsehood" arises in the communication between teachers and students in the classroom. More often than not, in order to show the interaction, they deliberately give ideal answers to finish the dialogue. Some students even guess what the teacher wants them to answer, so as to give the "ideal" answer. It leads to a substantial lack of students' discourse. Some teachers simply took over the responsibility especially when the students do not respond well. The whole English classroom seemed like a teacher's monologue.

Bakhtin believes that the language of classroom teaching is a language that has already been studied. It is a "foreign dead language" (Bakhtin,1998). At the beginning of learning a foreign language, especially when the learning method is very poor, learners are always "stacking words", instead of wholly expressing their ideas (Bakhtin, 1998). Teachers also study classroom language for the purpose of teaching. It is not the teacher's own intention to teach after careful preparation. The natural expression of cognitive form is an isolated monologue expression. Bakhtin therefore believes that classroom discourse (particularly foreign language classroom discourse) lack of dialogue.

In the actual college English teaching, teachers' language is indeed "processed", and teachers' discourse dominates the classroom, which shows that foreign language teaching and learning is monologue teaching to a considerable extent. More often than not, there do exist dialogues in LBL College English teaching and learning even when teacher talk occupies the classroom. Teaching in any sense is not a one-way monologue.

II. Literature review

The philosophical study of dialogue can be traced back as far as the history of human thought. The notion of dialogue can be approached by the "heuristic dialogue" of Socrates, the "communicative action" of Jürgen Habermas, the "I-You" relationship of Martin Buber, the "polyphony" of Mikhail Bakhtin and the "fusion of Horizons" of Hans Georg Gadamer and so on. The most mature and systematic dialogue theory was proposed by Russian philosopher and linguist Mikhail Bakhtin and was initially applied in the analysis of literary works and daily communication. Afterwards, Bakhtin's dialogue theory was also used in the research of dialogues in classroom teaching.

Since the 20th century, research on foreign language teaching has been characterized by diverse theories and schools of thought. Dialogue-based teaching is an important branch of many foreign language teaching theories. In the field of foreign language teaching, research on dialogical teaching has achieved fruitful results (Bakhtin, 1981; Zhang, 2008; Wang, 2014; etc.) , concerning with the theoretical basis, concepts, models, strategies, and other issues of dialogical teaching, demonstrating the richness of research in terms of research content. Nevertheless, the research fields mainly focus on the education disciplinary. The research on dialogical teaching in English curriculum mainly focuses on the teaching stage of primary and secondary schools. There is little research on English dialogical teaching in higher education stage. Plus, previous research has mainly focused on theoretical research, with less empirical research.

Other problems exist in the teaching practice of dialogical teaching theory. The so-called dialogical teaching has degenerated into "question and answer teaching", making dialogical teaching mere formality (Zhang, 2012).

Fundamentally speaking, dialogue is not a specific form of communication that involves questioning and responding, but rather a social relationship that involves participants in it (Burbules, 1993). In the view of Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) and Oakeshott (1975), an ideal state of dialogue should be composed of multiple voices, each with its own unique style, and each relatively independent. In the modern sense, dialogical teaching is not a revival of the ancient dialogue teaching method within the traditional education system, but a revolution of transforming the ideology and practice in traditional classrooms (Liu, 2001). Innovative reforms are needed in

terms of English teaching objectives, teaching ethics, and teaching methods.

In existing research practice, there has been a phenomenon of pseudo dialogue caused by blindly pursuing dialogue forms. The quality of dialogue should be emphasized in college English classroom teaching. Pseudo dialogues are verbal forms that appear in form of dialogue, but in essence, they do not truly reflect the discourse rotation of equality, communication, and understanding in dialogue (Yang, 2018). These classroom activities may seem lively, with active interaction and discussion between teachers and students, but in terms of dialogue, they are merely superficial verbal communication, not authentic dialogical teaching. There is also a portion of classroom talk that is unrelated to the teaching content that will fill the classroom. Although they may also have turn taking between teachers and students, they are not beneficial for improving students' language knowledge, skills, or expanding their cultural background.

In English teaching and learning classrooms, if the lectures and teaching materials for learners employ a large amount of non-native language information, learners can easily feel bored and tired. However, dialogical classroom teaching provides a relaxed and comfortable environment for teachers and students to interact with each other. They cooperate, share learning materials, and achieve interactive communication.

On this issue, researchers (Zhang, 2012; Wang, 2014; Qi, 2015; Song, 2018; Zhang, 2019, etc.) have proposed that the implementation of dialogical teaching requires critical reflection on the power system in the classroom, thus to create a discourse environment where students dare to express their true voices sincerely, so that communication between teachers and students is not distorted. This approach has sufficient theoretical and philosophical basis. The improvement of the discourse environment requires specific strategies in respond to different teaching contents, subjects, and objects. Dialogue based teaching has long been advocated as a programmatic teaching method, without thoroughly incorporating it into the teaching process or actual classroom practice.

III. Research methodology

Based on the literature review and the challenges faced with dialogical teaching mentioned above, the research questions of this research are: 1. What is authentic dialogical teaching? 2. Does the LBL method inevitably exhibit the characteristics of teacher monologues? 3. Can the LBL method be dialogical? In what sense does it also exhibit dialogical characteristics?

Regarding these research questions, at the initial stage, this research adopts the method of questionnaire and interviews to survey the mastery of basic English knowledge and skills that students possess. Examine their learning interests and problems existing in their study. Investigate the understanding and expectations of teachers and students towards dialogical teaching. Then, literature review method is employed to examine the already existing dialogical teaching methods and patterns. On basis of that, simulating experimentation method is used to implement some dialogical teaching strategies that are relatively in line with the present teaching and learning situations, monitor the key and difficult points in the implementation process, and evaluate the results.

IV. Research result and analysis

The research result can be demonstrated from the following perspectives, namely, the interrelationship between dialogue and monologue, the dialogical features of LBL, and the implications they make on college English teaching and learning.

Dialogue and monologue

As their names suggest, dialogue and monologue are two different forms of language communication. Dialogue refers to the interactive language communication between two or more roles in a specific context. In

discourse, interlocutors usually ask each other questions, answer questions, exchange opinions, and express emotions. The purpose of dialogue is to enhance mutual understanding, communication, and cooperation through communication. Monologue refers to one-way language communication conducted by one role in a specific context. In monolingual language, a person expresses his own opinions, emotions, ideas, etc. without interacting with others. The purpose of monolingual language is to convey information, explain problems, describe situations, and so on. The main difference between dialogue and monolingual language is whether there are other roles involved in communication. Dialogue requires multiple roles to cooperate with each other, while monologue is performed independently by one role.

As an academic term, dialogue is the product of the interaction between people who speak. In a broad sense, it is the product of the whole complex social situation in which speech occurs (Bakhtin, 1981). Dialogue is not a rehearsal or practice of thought, but a creation itself. In the process of dialogue making, the interlocutor has no predetermined purpose, although there is a freely changing purpose in self-disclosure at all times. There is a new dynamic relationship between interlocutors, in which every participant is involved (Bohm, 1987). Based on the continuous change and development of common meaning in the process of dialogue, a new kind of mind began to form. People are no longer antagonistic or interactive, but participate in the construction of common meaning.

It is Burbliiss's view that dialogue is understanding. He pointed out that dialogue represents a kind of continuous development of communication, by which people can constantly gain a fuller understanding of the world, themselves and others. Dialogue points to discovery and new understanding, and continuously improves participants' knowledge, insight or sensitivity (Hao, 2012). In this sense, the process of dialogue should be a two-way movement process of seeking common ground in differences and seeking differences in similarities. The dialogue relationship should be an open "I-You" relationship. In other words, if the two sides of the communication subject can treat each other equally, understand and talk to each other, and show an open "I-You" relationship, there will be dialogue in their communication.

If dialogue is a two-way process with openness, monologue is a one-way process with closure. However, in real communication, is monologue and dialogue really in an either-or relationship? On this point, Bakhtin put forward the idea of mutual penetration, symbiosis and coexistence of dialogue and monologue. Monologue and dialogue are only relative. They are not incompatible. In the field of literature, they even interact and transform into each other. For example, Bakhtin pointed out that the emergence of polyphonic novels is not to abandon monologue novels." At any time, a new genre just born will not cancel or replace the original genre. Any new genre can only supplement the old genre and expand the scope of the original genre. "Bakhtin attaches great importance to adhering to the principle of relativity and inclusive dialogue positions. "Relativity" is the core concept of Bakhtin's dialogue theory, which means that things exist relatively rather than absolutely. In that sense, dialogue and monologue seem to be opposite, but in fact they are only relative. In this case, Wang Yongxiang also pointed out that dialogue and monologue are only a matter of degree. He clearly explained with the following remark: "dialogue may have monologue, and monologue may also have dialogue. They permeate and coexist with each other" (Bakhtin, 1998; Wang, 2014). As far as teaching and learning is concerned, dialogue and monologue are never in an absolute sense. They do not exist in opposition, nor are they located at the contradictory poles of teaching methods. They exist as a continuum.

Dialogic Features of LBL

The traditional view holds that teaching in College English is a teacher's monologue, which obliterates students' subjectivity. However, as a language subject, College English classroom teaching and learning takes words, sentences and paragraphs as the text elements of teaching, and takes absorption, understanding and expression as the basic activity mode. Moreover, with listening, reading (i.e. intake or input), speaking and

writing (i.e. expression or output) as the basic activity content and the cultivation of listening, reading, speaking and writing ability as the basic goal, its teaching cannot be carried out without language and dialogue. In the process of teaching, if teachers strengthen their own “speaking” and students’ “listening” too much, they will weaken students’ “speaking” and their own “listening”, that’s a monologue. On the contrary, teachers’ teaching points to understanding, listening to students and understanding students in teaching, and students also listen to teachers and understanding teachers in this process. At this time, there is a dialogue relationship in teaching and learning, which can be called the micro-dialogue mentioned by Bakhtin, and the dialogue in teaching and learning is also obvious.

“According to the ‘dialogical teaching theory’, the ‘teaching method’ and the ‘dialogue method’ are not only interactive, but also integrated. In short, dialogical teaching advocates ‘dialogical teaching’” (Zhang, 2011). Zhang Hua pointed out that teaching is also a kind of listening. It is a kind of self-listening and self-dialogue of teachers. People listen to what they are going to say before speaking. Therefore, the process of teachers’ lesson preparation is a process of monologue. In addition, in the classroom, the process of teachers’ teaching is based on students’ listening and understanding. Otherwise, teachers’ teaching can only be a kind of noise and annoy students. Therefore, dialogue is not limited to a specific form of discourse, but whether it embodies the relationship value of mutual listening and mutual understanding and “dialogism”. Teacher’s teaching is to invite students to have a dialogue. The more questions and associations students put forward after teacher’s teaching, the more successful teacher’s teaching will be. That is to say, if teacher’s teaching can stimulate students’ thinking activities, arouse students’ learning interest and enthusiasm, and carry out active learning, such teaching and learning is effective teaching and learning. Teaching stimulates dialogue and its value is measured by the quality of dialogue.

In addition, Wang Yongxiang also put forward the concept of implicit dialogue. He pointed out that there are many forms of implicit dialogue in College English classroom. For example, in the process of lesson preparation, teachers begin to have a dialogue with students to predict and expect the teaching situation that will happen in the classroom. In the design of teaching links, it is also expected that the designed links can stimulate students’ interest and stir students’ brainstorm. It can be said that when preparing lessons, the teacher has conducted a preview of classroom teaching and learning with the students in his heart. In other words, in LBL College English teaching and learning, even if the teacher is teaching (LBL), he has begun an implicit dialogue with students when preparing lessons. In the process of classroom teaching and learning, teachers will make appropriate adjustments to the planned teaching according to the students’ response. Teachers can get students’ response from students’ facial expressions. Even if students keep silent, they still have a positive response as listeners. In such teaching and response, a new round of implicit dialogue between teachers and students began, which is the continuation of the dialogue (Wang, 2014). After teaching, teachers will also carry out teaching reflection. Through the evaluation and reflection on the effect of teaching in the classroom, they will provide experience support for the next teaching, which will produce a new round of implicit dialogue. In other words, there is dialogue before, during and after teaching, which runs through the whole teaching and learning process. At the pre-stage of teaching, the teacher rehearses the class with the students in mind in the process of lesson preparation; During teaching, teachers and students listen to and understand each other; At the post-stage of teaching, teachers reflect on teaching and have a dialogue with the classroom teaching that has happened.

To sum up, monologue and dialogue are only a matter of degree, and there is also dialogue in LBL College English classroom teaching and learning. The teaching of knowledge in teaching is not the final value orientation of teaching. Teaching is expected to stimulate students’ learning interest and enthusiasm, so as to carry out active learning, realize the construction of knowledge and improve their learning ability. Of course, the dialogue in teaching and learning is a kind of micro dialogue and an implicit dialogue, and the degree of

dialogue needs to be further improved.

The Implications on College English Teaching and learning

Nowadays, many college English teachers believe that as long as teachers stand in front of students and transmit language knowledge, it is monologue. It must be very boring and students will not be interested. Therefore, they rush to do everything they can to make students speak. They believe that as long as students speak, the effect of dialogue will be achieved. Then problems as fake dialogues mentioned above in the paper will appear.

This research argues that the occurrence of this problem is attributed to the following points: first, students lack dialogue skills. Foreign language teaching and learning focus mostly on written language, especially at the initial stage of primary and secondary schools, emphasizing reading and writing rather than listening and speaking, resulting in the lack of oral and listening ability. When they enter college English, they are unable to understand and speak. Second, students lack dialogue resources. In College English classroom dialogue, teachers occupy the main dialogue resources. They are more familiar with language knowledge, better understand the learning content, and know the dialogue content around the textbook. However, students' possession of dialogue resources is relatively lack. The lack of understanding, thinking and preparation, resulting in students having nothing to provide in dialogue conducting. Third, teachers and students lack emotional communication. College English teachers meet with students once or twice a week in class attendance. The solidarity is hard to achieve between the two parties. With few class sessions and heavy teaching tasks to fulfill, classroom teaching and learning can only focus on language knowledge indoctrination. There is a lack of emotional communication between teachers and students, so that students cannot actively and naturally express their views.

Accordingly, countermeasures as follows may be taken to solve the problems.

Firstly, to improve the degree of dialogue in teaching and learning, the dialogism of the teaching content should be improved. Habermas believes that the first requirement is the authenticity of the content, followed by the comprehensibility of the theme, and the dialogue should comply with the language rules. Gadamer and Freire have also repeatedly stressed that the dialogue should be carried out closely around the theme or cognitive object. Gadamer believes that the essence of inter-subject dialogue is not to focus on the subjectivity of participants. On the contrary, inter-subject dialogue focuses on the theme in discussion. Freire also believes that in the learning situation, the cognitive object regulates the cognitive actors, namely teachers and students. The teacher is not only the narrator, but also receives the narration in the dialogue with the students, and the students are also the narrator while receiving the narration. Of course, the cognitive object here is not only the content of textbooks, but also the expanded content based on textbooks or teaching materials (Hao, 2012). Therefore, in College English classes, teachers should organize the language knowledge in advance. The language knowledge should conform to the current language level of college students. In the teaching and learning of language knowledge, the reality of students, students' actual language ability, students' actual living conditions and social hot issues should be taken into consideration, so as to stimulate students' interest in learning, enable teachers to integrate language knowledge into students' existing cognitive structure, enable students to find the connection between old and new knowledge, promote the integration and optimization of students' knowledge structure, and realize the construction of their new knowledge. Such teaching can greatly stimulate students' interest in learning English, change passive learning into active learning, change accepting knowledge into constructing knowledge, and the degree of dialogue in teaching and learning will be greatly increased.

Secondly, to improve the level of dialogue in teaching and learning, an equal, democratic and open classroom environment for students should be created. To improve students' initiative and enthusiasm in

learning, teaching must focus on strengthening students' thinking development, emotional experience and spiritual nourishment. An equal subject is conducive to students' willingness to participate in teaching and learning. In teaching practice, college English teachers should give full play to their leading role. The equality between teachers and students in personality and the inequality in achieving teaching objectives should be unified. Every student should be treated equally, and every student is guaranteed to have the opportunity to participate in a dialogue. Teachers should also try to cultivate teacher-student relationships and connections. They can take advantage of College Students' English speech contest, English short play contest and other opportunities to strengthen emotional experience with students in the process of extra-curriculum activities. Only when they are emotionally connected with each other, can teachers and students realize the real identities of dialogue makers. In addition, teachers should create an open dialogue environment, teachers and students can storm their brains around the topics freely, and teachers and students' imagination can also be fully displayed. Teachers should encourage students to use English to express their true thoughts and learn language in the actual use of it. Teachers should also be good at seeking common ground while reserving differences, and advocate pluralistic coexistence and interaction. "I believe it is possible to combine different voices together, but not into one voice, but into a chorus of voices; the personality of each voice and everyone's real personality can be completely preserved here" (Bakhtin, 1998). In this way, English classroom is transformed into a "Carnival" classroom. Such a classroom environment can make students get rid of the shackles of mechanical learning and become the true subject in the classroom, thus the degree of dialogue in classroom teaching and learning will be greatly enhanced.

Bakhtin advocates the humanistic research method of emphasizing dialogue, giving consideration to comprehensive research with the combination of internal and external factors. In college English teaching and learning, both inside and outside factors should be taken into consideration, combine the learning of knowledge with the creation of environment, so as to further improve the degree of dialogue in college English teaching and learning.

V. Conclusion

LBL is one of the main forms of College English teaching and learning at present. However, it is often criticized because of its many disadvantages. Truly in the actual LBL College English teaching and learning, there is a phenomenon that teachers' discourse dominates the class sessions and students' discourse is seriously missing. This kind of teaching and learning is therefore regarded as close to monologue. This seems to confirm Bakhtin's view that classroom discourse, especially in foreign language teaching, is a dead language and lacks dialogue. However, through analysis, we find that monologue and dialogue are only a matter of degree, and they can penetrate and transform into each other. From the perspective of Bakhtin's dialogue theory, there is also dialogue in LBL College English teaching and learning, but this dialogue is a micro-dialogue and an implicit dialogue, and the degree of dialogue needs to be improved. Therefore, we should give consideration to both inside and outside factors. On the one hand, we should pay attention to improving the dialogism of the teaching content in teaching and learning, stimulate students' interest in learning, change passive learning into active learning, and change receiving knowledge into constructing knowledge; On the other hand, actively create an equal, democratic and open dialogue environment in College English classroom, pay attention to strengthening students' thinking development, emotional experience and spiritual nourishment, so that students can get rid of the shackles of mechanical learning, become active subjects in the classroom, improve the degree of College English dialogic teaching and learning, acquire the ability of independent thinking and cultivate themselves into all-round development talents.

The significance of the research lies in the following aspects. First, this study can expand the boundaries of

the application of dialogue theory in research. Dialogue theory can be applied in pedagogical field. The notion of dialogue can be employed to guide teaching and improve teaching methods. Second, this study can enrich the practice of dialogical teaching of college English, providing technical support, practical guidance and reference for the actual practice of dialogical teaching. The limitation of this study is that it has not provided a detailed description of the actual implementation of dialogue theory into teaching. Future research can discuss how to achieve more effective dialogical teaching, how to build open and democratic dialogical platforms for teaching and learning.

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