Practices and bidirectional advantages analysis of combined-class teaching of Chinese and international students

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Abstract—Combined-class teaching of Chinese and international students is an innovate teaching mode which organizes Chinese and international students together to perform teaching activities. This paper studies the practices of combined-class teaching of Chinese and international students based on online and offline teaching method. It introduces the bidirectional demands, theoretical support, teaching design, implementation and advantages of combined-class teaching. Two different combined-teaching modes are detailed analyzed. It explores the characteristics as well as specifications. This paper also points out the problems in combined-class teaching practices, and proposes some solutions for further teaching reform at the aim of providing more possibilities for international students' education as well as enriching the teaching strategies of online and offline teaching method.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the statistics published by the Ministry of Education in December 2022, in 2021, the number of international students in China have reached 255,720, which is still affected by the epidemic situation. In the previous 10 years, the number was keeping on the rise. It could be predicted, in the following years, the scale of international students will continue to expand.

It has significant sense to explore the mode of combined-class teaching of Chinese and international students in order to improve international education quality. It will be beneficial for international students to further understand Chinese culture, and stimulate them to devote themselves in cultural exchanges.

As an associated professor, the author teaches related courses to both Chinese undergraduates and international students majoring in international trade. In recent years, we tried many procedures to cultivate Chinese students' ability to solve problems and enlarge their international visions. At the same time, deeply understanding Chinese culture is one of the important goals of international student education. In author’s university, the international students are managed separately, and be taught in English. The opportunities to communicate with Chinese students are limited. On the basis of online and offline teaching method, the author started a teaching reform project of teaching in combined-class of both Chinese and international students in the same or similar courses. Taking good use of the advantages of online and offline teaching method, we successfully helped Chinese and international students fulfill complementary advantages.

2. BIDIRECTIONAL DEMANDS ANALYSIS

2.1 The international students need helps due to the gap in basic education

Take author’s university as an example, many international students are from Africa and Oceania. There is a significant gap in education quality between local countries and China. Teachers are required to provide more supports to such international students. while, it is difficult for the teachers to take care of each students in the class. Combined-class teaching can alleviate this problem to a certain extent, for Chinese students could provide international students helps.

2.2 The initiative of Chinese students to participate in the teaching activities needs to be improved

Compared with the international students, Chinese students have less initiative to further participate in teaching activities. The Chinese students are used to completing study tasks under the guidance of teachers. Some students are not developed good learning habits and lack of learning ability. In the process of combined-class teaching, international students will give good examples to Chinese students, which can effectively influence the classroom teaching atmosphere.

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2.3 International students desire to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture

Most international students have some understanding of Chinese culture before coming to China. After studying in China, they develop a stronger interest in traditional Chinese culture. Meanwhile, in order to better integrate into the new environment, international students are eager to improve their Chinese ability. Therefore, they have a strong willingness to communicate with Chinese students, but due to the mode of separately management, international students have limited opportunities to contact with Chinese students.\(^2\)

2.4 Undergraduate education requires enhancing students' international visions.

In the process of constructing a new liberal arts, it is one of the important educational goals to cultivate students' international visions, especially for the students majoring in international economic and trade. Some students also have their own plans to study abroad in the future. They have a strong desire to improve their English ability. Studying together with international students will broaden Chinese student’s international visions and improve their communication abilities.

3. THEORETICAL BASIS

3.1 The theoretical basis of reciprocal learning

Reciprocal learning is a learning relationship formed on the basis of equality and autonomy. The two or more learning subjects participate in other’s learning under the condition of mutual appreciation, understanding and respect. Different from the one-way input, reciprocal learning is a highly interactive relationship, which constantly gives and gains in the process, and gradually improves their own knowledge structure. In the theory of socialization construction, reciprocal learning can build a harmonious learning environment, and achieve the purpose of win-win situation under the willingness of mutual support and mutual achievement.

3.2 Cross-cultural learning

Bennett M.J.’s defined Cross-cultural Learning, “To improve the understanding of the subjective cultural background (international view), and develop greater ability to conduct sensitive and competent interactions in different cultural backgrounds, which is the direct and long-term effect of communication.” This is also the main goal of international students’ education. Establishing the compatibility with different cultural backgrounds is not only the acceptance of different cultures, but also the collision of new ideological results.\(^4\)

Lane H C. defined two perspectives of cross-cultural learning as learning content (knowledge and skills) and outcome (understanding and interaction): “acquire knowledge and skills to support the ability of learners to understand culture and interact with people from different cultures”.\(^5\)

3.3 Theories verified

The reciprocal learning theory and cross-cultural learning can be well proved among international students’ study experiences. International students are from different countries or regions with different cultural backgrounds, living habits, and even different religious beliefs. International students are inclined to accept cultural differences to form relatively harmonious collective. They are willing to understand and assist each other in the learning process. And naturally completed the cross-cultural communication.\(^6\) Therefore, with the experience of cross-cultural communications among international students, it is easier for international students to integrate into Chinese students. For both international students and undergraduates, cross-cultural learning not only increases the international communication skills, but also help them form diversified learning abilities.\(^7\)

4. IMPLEMENTATIONS

We have practiced two types of combined-class teaching: Chinese students into international students’ class, as well as international students into Chinese students’ class.

4.1 Mode One: Chinese students joining in the international students class in English teaching.

1) Teaching design for Mode One

This mode is based on international students class. International students and Chinese students are offered the same(or similar) course separately. Teachers in charge should maintain the consistency in the content of both. The international students’ classes are open to Chinese students whose English is qualified. Chinese students could choose to complete the whole semester in English, and have the final evaluation together with international students, or choose to just take some parts of the international students’ course, and meet the final evaluation of Chinese students course.

2) Characteristics of Mode One

a) Much flexibility: Most Chinese students are a little nervous in international classes. This teaching design has much flexibility and provides students more choices. They could choose to take any parts of the international classes as an opportunity to improve self-ability.

b) Less barrier in language ability: Most Chinese students in combined-class have language barriers. This teaching design offers the possibility to students even in lower English ability. Students with higher English ability could choose to attend the whole courses with international students. For students with limited English ability, they can choose to take both Chinese teaching and English teaching in the same contents. So even the students with limited English ability could get the opportunities to participate in the combined-class teaching practices.
4.2 Mode Two: International students joining in Chinese students class in bilingual teaching.

1) Teaching design of Mode Two

This mode is based on Chinese students classes in bilingual teaching. We selected international students by evaluating their Chinese ability, only the students qualified to study in bilingual were permitted to have bilingual combined-class. This mode requires teachers to give more support to international students in and after class.

2) Characteristics of Mode Two

a) Competitive mechanism in international students: This mode is less flexibility compared with Mode One, for it sets a certain standard of Chinese language ability. The reason is that international students are easy to accept new things, and most students have strong willingness to participate in combined-class to get in touch with Chinese students, but some international students prone to higher assess their Chinese ability. Therefore, in order to ensure the teaching effect, Chinese language ability evaluation is necessary.

b) Maintain stability: Maintaining student stability is crucial for responsible teachers. Therefore, international students are required to make decision whether to join in the combined-class after the first twice courses. Once the decision made, the full combined-class of the whole semester should be completed.

4.3 Comparison of the two modes

1) Different implementation methods: Both international students joining in the bilingual combine-class and Chinese students joining in the English classroom are effective, but there are still obvious differences (The detailed in Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combined-class Modes</th>
<th>Mode One (Chinese students join in the international student class)</th>
<th>Mode Two (International students join in Chinese students class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The course based on</td>
<td>International students’ class</td>
<td>Chinese students’ class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching language</td>
<td>In English</td>
<td>In bilingual language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access requirements</td>
<td>Null special</td>
<td>Qualified Chinese ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>form of participation</td>
<td>Both the whole semester and some parts of the courses are available</td>
<td>The whole semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and evaluation</td>
<td>Based on Chinese class evaluation, and the combined class participation shall be given reward points</td>
<td>Assessment was conducted together with the Chinese students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Analysis of the respective characteristics:

a) Participation: Chinese students have choices to take any parts or the whole courses. However, international students must complete the whole course.

b) The role of the online and offline teaching method: Online and offline teaching method supports the combined-class teaching, especially for international students. Teachers in charge take good use of online platform to provide students study resources, which could help especially international students better integrate into the bilingual teaching courses, and cooperate with the teachers' guidance. In practice, the online and offline teaching method has been a very important tools for both teachers and students to successfully complete combined-class teaching.

5. ADVANTAGES ANALYSIS

Through different semesters, we have practiced in these two modes, both of which have achieved good results.

5.1 The effects of Chinese students joining in international students’ class

First, the Chinese students show great enthusiasm to combined-class teaching with international students. In one semester, more than 50% of the students volunteered to participate in international students class. They are interested in this new teaching mode, especially for some students with better learning attitude.

Second, Chinese students are deeply involved in study and discussion, accomplishing cross-cultural communication and ideas collision. The teaching process is very smooth, for international students and Chinese students are both highly mutual inclusiveness. In discussion part, Chinese and international students acquire more in-depth communication opportunities. Some Chinese students with higher English ability are encouraged to make presentation in English, sharing ideas with international students. It is really welcomed, because international students learned more information from presentations made by Chinese students, which are much benefit for their professional studies.

Thirdly, in the class feedback questionnaire, many positive comments are conformed by both Chinese and international students. Both parties gained a lot: the improvement of learning ability and language ability; the deeper understanding of each other; and the enhancement of self-confidence.

Fourth, international students also show great enthusiasm for having Chinese students entering their class. And they are willing to discuss professional questions and Chinese cultures.

5.2 The effect of international students joining in Chinese students’ class

First, the opportunity for international students to enter bilingual classes is limited, so the students who catch the opportunity are very diligent and actively participate in the whole teaching activities. According to the feedback,
the bilingual teaching method did not affect their study effects. Instead, international students gained more knowledge than in the normal teaching process. Meanwhile it helps them adapted to live in China.

Second, Chinese students are very welcome international student to join in. Chinese students are more active in teaching activities, and their innovation ability improved.

After two semesters’ practice, the expected effect of combined-class teaching has been achieved. It fulfill the expected effect including cultural exchange, ideological collision. Both Chinese students and international students plays their advantage and are improved at different perspective.

6. PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

6.1 The initiative of Chinese students joining in international students’ classroom needs improving

1) The fact of problem
At the beginning of combined-class teaching, Chinese students had high enthusiasm. With the teaching going, the novelty faded, and the enthusiasm for Chinese students’ participation decreased.

2) Analysis of the reasons
Before we made teaching design, we had widely investigated Chinese student about this teaching reform. Most Chinese students were interested. When such problem occurred, we organized the feedback meeting as well as individual communication to find out that almost all the students conform that they have gained a lot in the combined teaching. The reduction of enthusiasm for participation is lack of motivation, because there is no reward in final evaluation points. We realized that in the initial design, the premise is that Chinese students have strong consciousness for knowledge and strong enthusiasm for learning. We thought they would make decisions based on whether they could learn more or improve their learning ability. While, in fact not all students have this kind of high learning initiative. Completing learning task, or pursuing higher scores are still the foremost influential elements to their study activity. So we understand that only relying on students’ internal initiative and self-consciousness is not enough, there must have some external stimulus impetus to help students keep learning enthusiasm.

3) Solution assumptions
In response to this problem, we decided that the assessment mechanism needs to be adjusted to further motivate students.

In the teaching process, we choose Chao Xing platform to record and evaluated the whole process of students’ classroom and online learning activities. The final assessment scores are based on the record points. However, the participation of combined-class teaching was not included in this assessment system. We will establish the linkage mechanism between Chinese students courses and international students’ courses in the following teaching practice. Chinese students joining in combined-class teaching will be rewarded special points in the study record, we should also consider balancing the scores of students who did not participate in the combined-class, ensure the fairness and stimulating both in efficiency.

6.2 International students have less opportunity to participate in combined-teaching

1) The fact of problem
The Mode Two teaching design obviously shows more strict for international students to participate in the combined class in both the number and the access requirements.

2) Analysis of the reason
The main reason is that there is no enough teachers qualified to guide the international students. In combined-class teaching process, the lecturers should pay special attention to international students, and give them additional guidance, so the number of participants is limited.

3) Solution assumptions
Online resources play very important role in combined-teaching, especially for the international students. Therefore, making better use of the online platform and provide more high-quality online learning resources for international students would be an useful solution.

Online resources should meet the needs of students to complete preview and review independently, which will alleviate the obstacles caused by the limit of language ability and knowledge background. Because of the specified contents of this course, the existing online English resources are not enough, especially the video resources. In the following teaching practice, we planed to divide the teaching contents into several modules, and make teaching video by ourselves.

In addition, besides responsible teachers, some auxiliary teachers should be arranged to help international students, so as to provide learning opportunities to more international students.

7. CONCLUSION
The combined-class teaching practice is beneficial to both Chinese and international students. It is also in line with the intention of international students’ education and the ideas of the development of new liberal arts. During the teaching practice, we can feel the students’ strong enthusiasm for teaching reform, which will motivate us to continue improving our teaching practices. On the basis of preliminary teaching practices, it is necessary to further integrate resources and improve teaching effectiveness to enrich the teaching methods of combined-class teaching, and take good use of the advantages of online and offline teaching method.
REFERENCES


