

Pbl'S Facilitation For Teachers In College English Ecosystem

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Keywords: College English Ecosystem; Pbl; Imbalance; Facilitation

Abstract: College English Ecosystem includes subjects and environment; the study of its operation, characteristics and laws helps to deal with teachers' imbalance in the system. PBL (Project-based Learning) enters the College English Ecosystem, copes with the symptoms of ecological imbalance among teachers, promotes their role reposition as well as function transformation, and facilitates their ecological implementing, coordinating, connecting and promoting.

1. Introduction

The development of information technology and the advancement of globalization, fundamentally change the College English teaching-learning concepts and methodology. The focus of College English has been or is being transferred from reading and writing to a more communicative and comprehensive skill-involved disposition. Moreover, College English means more than mere English language skills teaching by become increasingly instrumental, humanistic, comprehensive, practical and academic, so as to serve the quality education of students.^[1]In light of the complex purposes, College English has to take the leap and initiate connections with the world inside and outside the course, which breaks the wall and naturally puts College English in a multi-layer ecosystem.

Educational Ecology is a discipline using the principles and methods of Ecology to connect education and its ecological environment, and to study their mutual relationship, mechanism of actions and law of movements. The concept of "Ecology of education" was first mentioned in Lawrence Cremin's book, *Public Education*, which started the analysis of the phenomenon and problems in education, from the perspective of ecology.^[2]The research of Educational Ecology in China began in the 1980s, when it was more about the introduction of foreign Educational Ecology research, with no extensive attention attracted from the educational and theoretical researchers. The research on Educational Ecology wasn't accelerated and enhanced enough until the 21st century. Now, while continuing the analysis and discussion on the principles of Educational Ecology, many scholars have also studied various aspects, both in macro- and micro-perspectives of Educational Ecology.

College English Ecosystem is a teaching system composed of teaching-learning subjects (teachers, students, etc.) and their corresponding environment. In ideal status, the Educational Ecosystem for College English determines the role of the subjects and the specific functions of the surrounding Ecosystem with its specific structure. Needless to say, the system is inevitably in existence with its essential factors already in place, which means there's no necessity to create an Ecosystem for College English. However, with many flaws and defects, this system is far from being perfect. Practically, a perfect ecosystem can only happen in theory, but it's feasible to figure out the negative energy flow caused by the imbalance of the main subjects and the other major elements in this ecosystem, and better the system based on research and investigation so as to benefit the College English teaching and learning activities

On the other hand, Project-based Learning (PBL) was officially introduced into College English Course about a decade ago. It has been proved that this strategy breaks the barriers of the classroom, tears down the virtual boundaries around the classroom, allows students to explore and research in a more open environment, and encourages students to learn to use technical tools and implement

scientific research methods with the aim of solving complex problems in real life and real situations. In this process, “students’ interest is stimulated, autonomous learning ability and team spirit are also cultivated and improved”.^[3] As a new element in College English Ecosystem, PBL provides an open, practical and research-oriented background and situation, helps the subjects to redesign their optimum position and determine their proper function in the ecosystem.

2. The Teachers’ Species in College English Ecosystem

The organizational structure of College English Ecosystem shows the complexity of classroom ecosystem, which mainly includes the organizational structure leading and controlling the flow of the teachers’ energy. “In the classroom ecosystem, with the purpose, content, manner and attitude appropriately situated in the right phase and the suitable species (subjects, teachers and students), the more energy flows among them.”^[4]

In the College English Ecosystem, teachers, as one of the main subjects, are a “species” of great essence. The teachers’ responsibility in the ecosystem is to determine their ecological status, and based on that, play their role to coordinate the relationship between themselves and other subjects and factors in the system. The teachers’ performance not only affects the development, balance and stability of the ecosystem, but also influences their own “evolution” in the system.

3. The Imbalance of the Teachers in College English Ecosystem

The fact that species and function of teachers in College English Ecosystem change tremendously these days, and sometimes relevant matters and teacher-student relations are not handled properly in teaching practice, impose great pressure on the teachers’ shoulders. Some teachers, due to internal or external causes, cannot deal with that pressure, and become victims of their own imbalance in the ecosystem. This situation would almost for certain bring poisonous consequences to the College English Ecosystem as a counterblow.

3.1. In Implementing

In College English Ecosystem, teachers are responsible for the development and production of teaching resources. With the influence of some factors, the designing and guiding function of teachers may not be efficiently implemented. For a long time, the language education has been regarded as the single objective of College English teaching, which becomes comfortable zone for many teachers and refrains them from experimenting new teaching-learning strategies. Today, even if teachers intend to introduce a new mode into the College English Ecosystem, they are deterred by the compression of class hours and heavy textbooks; many of them are forced to give up on implementing their new thought, and reluctantly follow the textbook and compress their knowledge and skills to a limited timeframe. In this case, teachers cannot apply the language teaching resources with multiple choices, and the implementing of their design or thoughts become seriously inadequate. As time goes by, teachers are tired of coping with the curriculum content and lose interests, and their functions in the ecosystem are gradually unbalanced.

3.2. In Coordinating

In the College English Ecosystem, teachers need to coordinate the relationships between the subjects, and between the subjects and the external environment, so as to optimize the teaching and learning function of the main subjects. When teachers coordinate the relationships among teaching content, teaching methods and students, between teachers and students, or between students, any functional imbalance might result in an eco-chaos.

For example, ignoring the coordination between students and the external environment may cause the teachers not paying attention to the ecological relationship between students and teaching contents and methods, and then the students species may become repulsive to the external environment and reject absorbing the knowledge and skills from the outside world.

3.3. In Connecting

The College English Ecosystem is supposed to be an open environment, and the teaching resources such as teaching concept, teaching content, teaching mode, teaching method, teaching schedule and teaching space need to be open to stretch the possibilities. As the subject with the instructional task, the teachers lack innovating and managing ability, may result in the ecosystem confronted with severe risks of being confined to a limited environment, and lead to the subjects' vitality running off and a low-energy environment.

3.4. In Promoting

The College English Ecosystem works to stimulate and cultivate the initiative of the subjects' motions. In order to promote students' independent and active innovation, conscious and dynamic development, and vigorously improve their ability of active learning and autonomous learning, the focus of College English Ecosystem gradually inclines to the students. However, in lack of complete or correct understanding about the teaching-learning concepts, such as "student-centered", and "autonomous learning", Some teachers delegate the time controlling and resources choosing to students without proper observation and enough scrutiny. They blindly gave up on their job and leave it all to the students to cultivate and boost their own initiative, which seems to be free and democratic, but actually draws the College English Ecosystem away from the reality. The reality is that most college students haven't been trained for autonomous learning during the earlier stage of their education; it is quite likely for some of them to lose control when they are suddenly put in a totally strange and unsupervised system.

4. The Facilitation of PBL in College English Ecosystem for Teachers

It is difficult to improve the quality of foreign language teachers at one time, for this objective "requires lifelong learning and sustainable development"^[5]. PBL is introduced and implemented into the College English Ecosystem and put learning in complex situation with a problem-solving objective. The problems are not supposed to be solely committed by teachers but to be solved through the cooperation of learners, providing the learning subjects with windows to see the knowledge hidden behind the problems, and to form the problem-solving skills and autonomous learning ability. "PBL teaching has changed the roles of teachers and students, so it has new and higher requirements for teachers."^[6] With responsibilities, comes opportunities. PBL plays the role in supporting the teachers in a more constructive manner.

4.1. In Implementing

The process of PBL planning allows teachers to develop and research teaching ecological resources based on their own professional language knowledge and professional teaching knowledge in accordance with teaching objectives and standards, which helps to transform teaching resources into knowledge, skills and information that adapt to students' ecological personality and characteristics. In this way, appropriate teaching mode, teaching method and teaching means are selected, aiming at knowledge, skills and information being transferred to and internalized within students through various channels. Additionally, in need of the means to research and demonstrate, PBL also works as an urge to push the teachers to develop and reproduce teaching-learning media, IT technology and other advanced resources. Teachers should choose suitable teaching-learning media, and make full use of them to improve teaching-learning efficiency. Multimedia software, audio, video and other teaching methods play an important role in improving students' learning interest, optimizing teaching environment and teaching atmosphere. It is accepted by teachers and researchers that it is an exceptional effective way to mobilize the initiative of students' senses in foreign language learning.

4.2. In Coordinating

Teachers are the main coordinator of various relationships and functions in the College English Ecosystem. In PBL, teachers bear the job to eliminate the contradictions and harmonize the relationships among different species in the system. They tend to let go of their dominant position

and their power to run the class, and they bring the students species forward to enjoy the right to speak freely. Teachers should be good at grasping the hot spots and key points, carry out developmental guidance, actively participate in it, encourage speech and activate the atmosphere. In the well operated PBL process, teachers had better keep silent or reduce their own voices to avoid becoming the centre of learning groups; When the PBL is not working well, teachers should step in and give the students proper guidance. Sometimes, the students deviate from the theme or only touch the surface of the topic, teachers should observe the process and instruct the students in time to keep the learning at a comprehensive and broad level and ensure that the activities always revolve around the themes. Therefore, compared with traditional teaching, PBL teaching process requires and helps in teachers' planning and organizing, hence the coordinating.

4.3. In Connecting

College English Ecosystem is an open system. Different teaching-learning concepts, contents, models and methods are welcome to maintain the dynamic balance of the ecosystem. The open Ecosystem also refers to the openness of English teaching-learning space and time. To change the situation that traditional English course is basically carried out in formal environments such as classrooms and phonetic rooms, PBL requires students to solve social or scientific problems, so that the teaching ecological subject and external environmental ecological factors can continuously exchange energy and information, and the vitality and power of the system can be maintained and developed. Thanks to PBL, College English Ecosystem is expanded from classroom teaching to extracurricular activities, from classroom practice to social surveys, and from classroom learning to field trips, to fulfill the openness of the teaching ecosystem. As a result, the flow of knowledge, energy and information between teachers, students and students won't be blocked by the limitation of time and space.

4.4. In Promoting

In traditional Chinese culture, students hold a high level of respect and trust for teachers. PBL can help teachers make use of this to develop students' autonomous learning ability and enhance the main kinetic energy of College English Ecosystem. In PBL, students are meant to be driven by their output objectives. Teachers can formulate learning plans and set learning standards through consultation with students, and can help students evaluate and reflect on their learning process and stage learning results. In this way, students can timely understand their own learning situation, cultivate their sense of responsibility for learning, and maximize their learning initiative. Also, PBL can help teachers create a psychological atmosphere conducive to improving the quality of learning and give students enthusiasm and motivation for learning. PBL in a freer environment can improve the harmonious relationship between teachers and students and between students. Teachers give students objective evaluation and encouragement in time, observe students' negative emotions carefully and enlighten them, listen to and accept students' opinions, carry out non critical communication between teachers and students, reasonably allocate teaching rights and protect students' self-esteem, so as to make students feel more secure and more confident in their own learning behavior, and to give full play to their subjective initiative and reduce their subjective initiative.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, College English Ecosystem is a complex ecosystem, which has the basic structural characteristics of the ecosystem. It needs the co-existence and common growth of the constituent elements (teachers, students, teaching-learning environment)^[7]. PBL, with the characteristics of "autonomy, research, openness and cooperation", helps to promote the symbiotic and interdependent relationship among the subjects, the internal environment and the external environment, which is positive to teachers and students to jump out of textbooks and contact with open resources to promote the growth of the subjects themselves; it also helps teachers and students explore and cooperate, develop autonomous learning and collaborative learning, and boost the

healthy development of College English Ecosystem.

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