

Research on the Promoting Effect of English Speech Course on the Development of English Teaching Ability

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Abstract: In normal universities, the training of students' teaching skills in Microteaching cannot achieve satisfactory effect, one of the reasons is that it doesn't get sufficient support from the preliminary courses. English Public Speaking Course provides an effective and practical solution, because public speaking and teaching are highly relevant in the perspective of Communication Studies. Therefore, the systematic training of English public speaking skills will definitely promote the development of English teaching skills.

1. Introduction

English Curriculum Standards and higher requirements of the teaching profession pose great challenges to normal universities which aim at cultivating graduates with both theoretical background in teaching and professional teaching competence. Therefore, it has been a highly concerned issue to find effective methods to improve the instructional design competence and teaching competence of students majoring in English teaching in normal universities.

As the major course set to train students' teaching skills before teaching practice, Microteaching usually begins in the third year in normal universities. However, the preliminary courses of the first and second year study don't provide sufficient support to the training of teaching skills in Microteaching, since the former is mainly about basic knowledge of English language and teaching theories, while the latter shifts the focus to teaching implementation. Meanwhile, lack of transition between the two stages is highly relevant to the difficulties in students' conversion from "learner perspective" to "teacher perspective", which is one of major causes of student's inadequate performance in Microteaching. In view of the above reasons, exploration of a new and effective method to better support students in Microteaching and development of English teaching skills becomes necessary.

2. The correlation between Microteaching and Public Speaking Course

Microteaching, started by American scholar Dwight W.Allen, is a scaled down teaching encounter in class size and class time. It is a system of practice on specific teaching behaviors to develop teaching skills and raise the level of teaching competence under controlled conditions. Public Speaking, known as the "art of language", is the process of speaking to a group of people in a structured, deliberate manner intended to inform or influence the listeners. Both Microteaching

and public speaking share quite a lot in common in the perspective of Communication Studies. The 7W Model proposed by Richard Braddock provides the theoretical framework to the analysis of the correlation between teaching and public speaking. Based on 7W Model, both Microteaching and public speaking can be analyzed from 7 angles: who, to whom, for what purpose, says what, in which channel, what environment, with what effect.^[1]

Table 1: Interpretation of 7W Model in Public Speaking and Microteaching

7W Model	Public Speaking	Microteaching
Who	speaker	teacher
To whom	audience	students
For what purpose	speaking purpose	teaching objectives
Says what	speaking contents	teaching contents
In which channel	online/offline speaking	online/offline teaching
What environment	Time, place and physical setting in which speech occurs	Time, place and physical setting in which teaching occurs
With what effect	speaking effect	teaching effect

Table 1 presents the interpretation of the 7W Model in both public speaking and Microteaching, among the 7 elements, the following are extremely important in providing brand new angles to analyze public speaking and Microteaching, as well as the correlation between the two.

2.1 To whom

This factor refers to the communication target, which requires both extensive and intensive research before communication occurs. In public speaking, speakers need to do the audience analysis to better know who the audience are, why they listen to the speech and what topics they would prefer. The main factors taken into consideration in audience analysis include: size of the audience, age, gender, educational level, cultural background, interest and knowledge. The results of the audience analysis provide the speakers with reliable evidence to choose the topic, decide the specific purpose and compose before the speech delivery. Also, speakers may adapt the diction, manner, ways of delivery and interaction during the speech according to the background information they get from audience analysis. In Micro teaching, trainee teachers analyze their students to collect the necessary information for the instructional design and teaching implementation. Students analysis mainly includes age, gender, cognitive style, learning stage, background knowledge, and initial level. Objective and accurate analysis of the communication target is the precondition to the following tasks in both public speaking and Micro teaching.

2.2 For what purpose

In public speaking, the speaking purposes basically fall into two categories----to inform and to persuade. The informative speeches aim at conveying knowledge and raising cognitive level of the listeners, while the persuasive speeches generally tend to shape or change listeners' opinion towards certain issues. On some social occasions, such as weddings, conferences, ceremonies, the speaking purposes are also decided by the situations in which the speeches are delivered. In Micro teaching, the design of teaching objectives generally follows the English Curriculum Standards, which emphasizes the language knowledge, language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. Teaching objectives are also decided based on Bloom's Taxonomy which identifies six categories of cognitive levels: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. The important questions to be asked in deciding both speaking purposes and teaching objectives always include: do the purposes or objectives match the knowledge level and cognitive

level of the communication target? Are they specific and manageable? Are they achievable and evaluable?

2.3 Says what

In public speaking, speakers need to identify the information gap on a certain topic to make sure the speaking is meaningful to the listeners. Speakers are encouraged to follow the principle “tell the audience something they don’t know about something they know” in choosing the speaking contents to arouse audience curiosity and guarantee the speech value. The composition is supposed to be highly-structured, in which examples, statistics, testimony and other materials are used to support the key point of the speech. Language quality is another requirement to make the contents accurate and easy to follow. In Micro teaching, the teaching contents are decided on the basis of evaluation of the Zone of Proximal Development, which refers to the space between students’ current level and their potential development. The teaching contents should range from the remembering level to evaluating or creating level to better meet the needs of students of different current levels and cognitive styles. Different scaffolds, such as examples, questions, charts, mind maps are used to facilitate students’ mastery of the contents.^[2]

2.4 In which channel

Communication channel refers to any possible ways through which information is spread. In public speaking, which mainly occur offline, speakers have chances to communicate directly with people sitting face to face with them. Speakers usually design and use deliberately the methods of delivery, manner, interaction, body language, vocal variety and visual aids to maximize the speech effect. The online speeches which occurs on social media and online platforms pose new challenge to speakers, since it’s harder to interact directly, get the effective feedback or evaluate the effect. In Micro teaching, the traditional offline classes guarantee the direct teacher-students communication, real-time response to questions, objective feedback to students’ performance, and teachers’ diverse roles. In recent years, it is a general trend to carry out the Blending Learning which emphasizes the combination of both online and offline learning resources, the reconfiguration of learning time and space, optimization of learning experience to facilitate active learning and deep learning. However, online teaching is far more challenging because of the elements in internet communication, such as remote students, technological difficulties and various forms of interference.

2.5 With what effect

In public speaking, the speaking effect is assessed based on the speaking purposes. Does the informative speech successfully increase listeners’ knowledge or raise their cognitive level? Does the persuasive speech gain any agreement or call for immediate action? Speakers need to reflect on the audience feedback or make a systematic post-speaking analysis to improve the speech. In Micro teaching, the teaching effect is basically evaluated based on the teaching objectives in the instructional design as well as students’ academic records, class participation, learning efficiency, interests and attitude, and motivation. Teaching reflection which covers wide scope, from teaching analysis, teaching objectives, teaching contents, to teaching methods, class activities, and teaching aids, is an essential part in the whole teaching procedure. Self-reflection, peer evaluation, and group evaluation are included in the reflection stage to give trainee teachers more help and inspiration to improve teaching.

3. Transference from English public speaking skills to English teaching skills

In normal universities, the English Public Speaking Course is usually set as a part of basic courses in the second year study to increase English majors' knowledge in public speaking, as well as to improve their oral communication skills, logical thinking ability, researching and composing ability. Micro teaching starts in the third year and lasts for a whole year, it serves as a good connection between theoretical study and teaching practice, providing students with a transition stage to shift from “student perspective” to “teacher perspective”, to get qualified and experienced in teaching before their career lives start. Therefore, it is important and feasible to study the inner link between English Public Speaking Course and Micro teaching, and explore the effective ways to transfer English public speaking skills to English teaching skills.

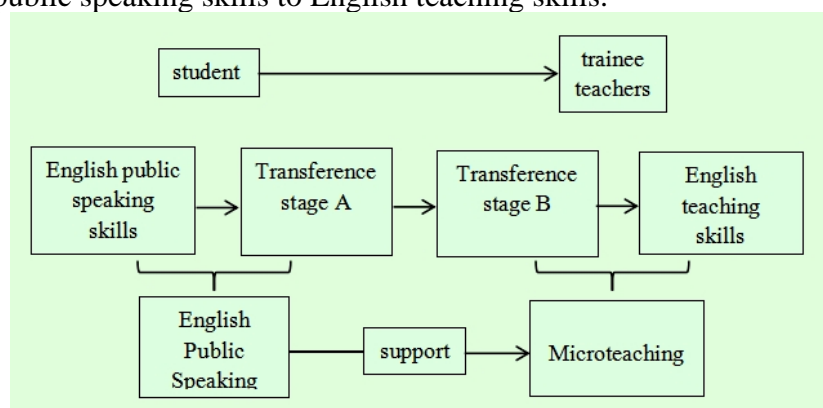


Figure 1: Transference Model

Figure 1 presents the model by which the English public speaking skills developed in English Public Speaking Course in second year study is transferred into English teaching skills. Specific English public speaking skills, ranging from audience analysis, choosing topics, researching and composing to speech delivery, nonverbal communication skills, and use of visual aids are trained separately in the first stage. Then right after the training of a specific public speaking skill, in the Transference Stage A, students are given relevant teaching tasks and are encouraged to assume and propose the possible answer or plan based on the English public speaking skill they have mastered, their assumed plan will be recorded and kept to be reviewed in the following stages. Transference Stage B begins in the third year study in Micro teaching class, what is worth mentioning is that it's more accurate to use the term trainee teachers to refer to the third-year students from this stage to help them transfer to the teacher perspective, and to better distinguish them from their target students in Micro teaching. In this stage, same teaching tasks that has been given to students in English Public Speaking Course are reassigned. Trainee teachers firstly review the answers or plans they proposed by discussing the rationality and feasibility of them. Next, they move into the learning of the theories and guidelines of relevant teaching skills to lay the theoretical foundation for further exploration, observation tasks are also given to present concrete examples of application of the teaching skills. Thirdly, they reflect on their former proposal and redesign to get the second version, with the reasonable parts kept and infeasible parts revised. Then in the last stage, trainee teachers practice these skills and plans in teaching, get feedback from partners and supervisor. After that, trainee teachers are encouraged to think about the public speaking skills or experience that can be transferred directly into teaching, as well as the different application of relevant skills in public speaking and teaching in order to promote deep learning and their development of teaching skills.^[3]

3.1 Audience analysis and students analysis

Both public speakers and teachers need to know well about the psychology of their communication targets, good public speakers are audience-centered while good teachers are students-centered. Therefore, audience analysis and students analysis share quite a lot in common, such as demographic traits, interest, background knowledge. The methods and experience trainee teacher get from audience analysis will definitely help the students analysis, they are more capable in identifying their target students' cognitive level, ways of thinking based on the theories of cognitive development and personality development they learned in public speaking. The key point in transferring the audience analysis ability to students analysis lies in the different emphasis. Audience analysis differs from students analysis in that the former attaches more importance to the analysis of social traits, such as profession, marital status, while the latter focuses more on cognitive development and cognitive styles. Are the students in the concrete operational stage or formal operational stage? Are they of field dependent style or field independent style? The Zone of Proximal Development is usually included in students analysis since it provides reliable evidence in deciding the teaching objectives and teaching contents. Another difference lies in that audience analysis is not continuous in most cases unless the speaker gives a series of speeches to the same audience, in contrast, students analysis goes through the whole learning stage, teachers need to trace any changes in their students, and continuously optimize the students analysis and instructional design. In Microteaching trainee teachers should be guided to notice these differences to make the students analysis more accurate and effective.

3.2 Setting of speaking purposes and designing of teaching objectives

The setting and expression of speaking purposes and teaching objectives share lots of similarities. First of all, both of them should be designed according to the communication targets' age, knowledge background, interest. Secondly, the speaking purposes and teaching objectives should be specific and achievable, the broad or vague purposes fail to reveal what the speaker or teacher plan to do. Thirdly, expression of the speaking purposes and teaching objectives is supposed to be clear and accurate through using action verbs, full infinitive phrases and statements, instead of questions, figurative language or abstract description. Based on the similarities, trainee teachers' experience in setting and expressing speaking purposes definitely helps their designing of teaching objectives. However, the speaking purposes are generally set based on the social functions of the speeches: to inform, to gain passive agreement, to call for action, or to serve certain ceremonial purpose, while the designing of teaching objectives is much more systematic. There are basically two systems to follow, the English Curriculum Standards which emphasize the multi-dimensional objectives, and Bloom's Taxonomy which focuses on six categories of cognitive levels. The systematic designing of teaching objectives is challenging to most trainee teacher in Micro teaching, ill-defined or overlapping objectives should be avoided.

3.3 Speaking content and teaching content

The similarities between the designing of speaking content and teaching content basically lie in the choice of information and the arrangement of the structure. The information to present in both public speaking and teaching should be carefully chosen based on the results of need analysis. The content is expected to be a little bit higher than the communication targets' current level to guarantee the information gap which makes the communication process meaningful, and to make sure the information can be taken in by the audience and students without fail. In Micro teaching, the trainee teachers who are familiar with the principles of choosing and designing speaking content

are more likely to do better jobs in designing teaching content. However, students' Zone of Proximal Development is carefully assessed in teaching to support the accurate choice of teaching content, which is not suggested in public speaking. Something else that may confuse the trainee teachers is that teaching content doesn't equal to the content of textbook, since some of them naturally include everything in textbook in their teaching, ignoring teachers' active roles in selecting and rearranging the teaching content. The logical structure and clear expression make public speaking and teaching easy to follow. Both public speakers and teachers follow certain models or formats in arranging the structure. The models used in organizing speaking content, including chronological order, spatial order, topical order, problem-solution order and motivated sequence, definitely give trainee teachers enlightenment in their arrangement of teaching content.

3.4 Speech delivery and teaching implementation

Experience trainee teachers get from both online and offline English public speaking effectively promote their teaching implementation. First, English public speaking course provides students good opportunities to practice both verbal and nonverbal communication skills, the systematic training improves students pronunciation, intonation, vocal variety, as well as the use of body language, such as gesture, posture, eye contact, facial expression, making them more capable in teaching and more confident in manner. Second, the skill of using visual aids to present, to demonstrate, and to reinforce naturally transfers to the skill of using teaching aids in class, making teaching more effective. Thirdly, interaction skills are frequently used in both public speaking and teaching situations. The warming-up skill, questioning skill, reacting skill, reinforcing skill, which are deliberately trained in English Public Speaking Course, facilitate trainee teachers' skillful performance in teaching and class management. As to online communication, besides all the benefits mentioned above, the ability of using the online applications and handling technological difficulties trainee teachers get from their online public speaking experience plays significant role in their online teaching.

3.5 Speaking effect evaluation and teaching effect evaluation

Both speaking effect evaluation and teaching effect evaluation should be based on the objective information got from observation, recording, questionnaire, and interview. The focuses of the two are partially overlapping. To what degree are the speaking purposes or teaching objectives achieved? Did the speaker or teacher successfully get their audience or students engaged in? Did the speaker or teacher inspire active thinking or get meaningful feedback? What's more, the result of evaluation gives reliable evidence to speakers and teachers to reflect and improve. Therefore the method and skill of speaking effect evaluation trainee teachers got in the second year study can be very supportive when they are assessing their teaching effect.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, various skills developed in English Public Speaking Course definitely facilitate the development of English teaching skills, since they are highly relevant under the View of Communication Studies. The whole transference process from public speaking skills to teaching skills should be traced to record any changes in trainee teachers' performance and the difficulties that may hinder the process, providing necessary evidence for the further optimization. Cooperation of the whole teaching faculty plays a critical role in the process, teachers of different specialties need to work together actively in designing the teaching setup, observing, recording, evaluating and reflecting.

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