

The Mixed Mode Teaching Reform on the Graduate Course of Modern Western Literary Theory and Criticism

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Abstract: This paper summarizes the teaching reform experience of the graduate course “Modern Western Literary Theory and Criticism” under the mixed mode of online and offline teaching. Relying on the online teaching platform RainClassroom, the course adopts the mixed online and offline teaching mode, extends the classroom teaching time through the micro-class and the network platform, enriches the teaching resources, and expands the teaching content. Mixed mode teaching strengthens students independent learning and research-oriented teaching, and helps students collaborate in research projects, so as to create an open-access and research-oriented teaching environment centering on students, which is conducive to giving full play to students’ initiative and creativity, cultivating and improving students’ research ability.

Keywords: Online and Offline; Mixed Mode; Western Literary Theory Teaching

Introduction

With the emergence of various multimedia online teaching platforms, the research hot spot of the current teaching reform is to explore the mixed online and offline teaching modes and teaching practice of various professional courses. The “mixed-mode teaching” which organically combines online teaching with traditional offline teaching can realize the complementary advantages of the two educational methods. This model has a positive role in changing the traditional teacher-centered teaching mode in graduate course and promoting students’ independent learning. It not only makes students actively build knowledge, but also can play the leading role of teachers in the guide of research methods and realize the monitoring of students’ learning process. The author offers the graduate course Modern Literary Theory and Criticism in the School of Foreign Languages, Guangxi University. Relying on RainClassroom, the interactive intelligent teaching tool developed by Tsinghua University as the online teaching platform, I conduct the mixed mode teaching reform in the past two years. This paper will take this as an example to discuss the feasibility and practice on the mixed mode teaching of western literary theory course for graduate students.

1. Problems Existing in the Teaching of Western Literary Theory

The graduate course modern literary theory and criticism is to cultivate the aesthetic perception and literary criticism capacity in students. Literary theory teaching has plays important role in broadening students’ theoretical vision and giving them theoretical framework in literary criticism. However, traditional teaching of western literary theory faces many problems: first, the traditional theory teaching is mainly classroom teaching, less interaction between teachers and students; second, the contradiction between less class hours and large requirements of curriculum content; third, too much literary learning and less critical practice. Mixed-mode of western literary theory teaching is to conduct parts of class learning and seminars through online teaching platform, offer micro-class to students for preview and review. Via online teaching platform mixed-mode teaching could extend classroom teaching time, enrich teaching resources, expand the teaching content, and cultivate and improve students research capacity. Students could be more questioning, innovative in literary studies.

2. Implementation of Mixed-Mode Teaching Activities

To explore the mixed online and offline teaching of western literary theory course, the following steps are taken in the teaching practice:

2.1 Pre-class preparation.

In pre-class preparation stage, teaching contents are divided into units, and for each unit teaching, students are provided with rich reading materials online such as literary theory materials and video resources of high-quality literary theory classes from elite schools, and learning tasks are assigned. Students are better prepared in knowledge learning before class through Rain Classroom online platform. In such a way, students could carry out independent learning. The teacher does not need to spend too much time on the teaching of basic concepts and could focus on the hot issues in current literary studies.

2.2 Classroom teaching.

In the classroom teaching stage, offline classroom teaching is mainly conducted in lectures and classroom discussions. The teacher explains the key and difficult points of literary theory, organizes students to discuss the learning tasks released before class, and help students internalize knowledge. Teaching through projects and learning assignment could encourage students to find out their blind spot in certain theories and arouse their interest to explore deeper over certain issues. By inquiry teaching, the teacher encourage problem consciousness throughout the teaching activities, stimulate students' critical thinking, mobilize students' enthusiasm for learning, and cultivate their ability of independent thinking and language expression.

2.3 Post-class activities.

In the post-class stage, students could consolidate what they have learned in classroom teaching and review the class through micro e-class if necessary. Students are asked to perform literary criticism by applying the theory they have just learned. They submit their practice of literary criticism in the RainClassroom for peer reviews, and the teacher gives evaluation on their practice and involve in discussion.

2.4 Online and offline teaching interaction and collaborative learning.

On the RainClassroom platform, the teacher divides students in groups and assign tasks, assigns them learning tasks or research projects and asks them to submit research reports through cooperative learning in the learning community online. After the learning task is assigned, students in the group collaborate on data collection and analysis, involved in online and offline discussion and communication, which is conducive to resource sharing and mutual inspiration of thinking among students. Their final research report is the crystallization of group work. Continuous discussion and peer review among students can deepen their understanding of knowledge and improve their ability of theoretical application and text analysis. Such online and offline collaborative learning can effectively promote students' mutual learning through interaction and cooperation.

2.5 Student evaluation.

Final evaluation will be based on students' performance in online learning, classroom learning, group cooperation and other learning activities. The teacher will make a fair and objective evaluation of students' learning effect by their performances in various activities. Multiple evaluation changes the traditional singular evaluation based on the final term paper. The final grade includes the performance grade and final term paper grade, which takes up 50% in the final grade. The emphasis on performance grade strengthens the process management, by clarifying evaluation standard and open reviews from peer students, the fairness of the performance evaluation is ensured. Usually the performance grade accounts for 50%, which include attendance, online resources reading, online homework, course papers and group research report, etc. The

online teaching platform RainClassroom is used to dynamically monitor students' learning activities. For each student's attendance, classroom discussion participation, homework and network resources review, the platform will provide corresponding data. Setting up the proportion of each item, and detailed data report could be downloaded from the platform at the end of the semester.

In order to better serve the students' independent learning, I also enriched the network teaching resources for this course. Relying on RainClassroom, I have built multimedia teaching resource database, multimedia teaching courseware and micro-class videos, and uploaded them to the online teaching platform for students' extracurricular learning. Rich teaching resources facilitate students to prepare before class and consolidate what they have learned after class.

3. Summary and Reflection of Mixed-Mode Teaching

In order to understand the effect of the teaching reform, I interviewed the students, including the students' views on the teaching mode, teaching content and learning effect. Most students (90%) believe that the introduction of the mixed teaching mode of western literary theory course improves their independent learning ability, facilitates the communication and discussion between students and teachers and between students, and helps to deepen their understanding of the theory. The satisfaction with teaching content has reached 85%. Students generally believe that literary theory learning combined with criticism practice can make them better master critical approaches. Discussion in class and after class has deepened their understanding of concepts and avoids malpractice in criticism. Ten percent of the students believe that the combination of online and offline methods is more beneficial to the interaction between teachers and students. In terms of learning results, the interaction of students in online discussion enhances their interest in literary theory learning, and the collision of views in the discussion helps them to find more research points and deepen the depth and breadth of their criticism. The interviews also show that the mixed teaching mode is generally popular with students. Students believe that the evaluation includes various activities such as online learning and classroom discussion, and such evaluation is more comprehensive and objective, which also encourages them to be more active in study. However, there is also room for improvement in the implementation of this model. In the first few units of teaching, student' enthusiasm for online learning and discussion is relatively high, but with the increase of theories and increasing difficulties, students are overwhelmed and do not have too much energy for online learning and discussion. Innovative thinking relies on extensive reading and thinking, which could not be developed over a short period of time, and without solid foundation of knowledge, it is impossible to see quick results. For students who do not have interest in academic career, it is difficult for them to maintain interest in academic learning and they do not want to do more extracurricular learning. In addition, some students fail to adapt to the offline independent teaching, they are used to the traditional classroom teaching methods, and their research enthusiasm is not high. How to overcome the above problems still need more thinking and practice.

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