



Evaluation from Students

—A Case Study in Construction Engineering Technology of YAU

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Abstract

This paper not only aims to present the feedback received from the students, but also evaluate the feedback by review the teaching practice. It analyses the teacher should be aware of the importance that feedback, both to and from the students, has upon the teaching and learning process. Through a case study about the feedback from the students in Construction Engineering Technology of YAU, the author gives some suggestions on the teaching that the teacher's reflective evaluation can refine the teaching and help them to be better teachers. The teacher may incorporate feedback into practice, which teachers, like students, can benefits from assessment and evaluation of their own work or practice.

Keywords: Evaluation, Teaching method, Surface learning, Deep learning, Effective teaching

1. Introduction

Ramsden(2003) suggest that evaluation is a way of understanding the effects of our teaching on students' learning. Collecting information about our work, interpreting the information and making some judgments about which actions we should take into practice. Good teachers are always evaluating themselves. Evaluating teaching is about learning to teach better and exercising control over the process of learning to teach better.

2. Feedback and evaluation

“Feedback may operate both to improve learning of individual students, and to improve teaching.” (Biggs, 2003 p141). ‘The purpose of providing feedback to the students is to help teachers and students to identify their strengths and weaknesses as they learn and to improve those areas. It is a key principle of effective teaching. The feedback should not merely be to make things better next time. Giving feedback can itself be turned into part of learning experience.’ (Race, 2007, p192-204).

Evaluating student feedback is presented in detail to assist the classroom teacher in its application and the consequent improvement of both the teaching and learning processes.

2.1 Evaluation participants

The students who have provided feedback are from the first year students of Construction Engineering Technology, the module was the lecture of Capital Cities in New century English Integrated Course for two sessions. There were 50 students who were non-English majors. The students' feedback was carried out after the session. I had no time to do it during the session.

2.2 Aims and methods of evaluation

As there are so large students, I think the questionnaires would be the most appropriate method for acquiring feedback. The questions focused on the content and the method of delivery:

1. Which did you like best, PPT slides, text or activities?
2. What did you dislike about the session?
3. Did you learn anything from the session, if so, what?
4. What part of the lectures that could be improved?
5. Any other comments.

Feedback was received from 50 students and the result below suggests the responses were got. I will analyze the feedback in the following section.

2.3 Results from the feedback

1). Which did you like best, PPT slides, text or activities?

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2). What did you dislike about the session?

Only three students stated that the homework for writing a composition which they disliked. The other said none.

3). Did you learn anything from the session, if so, what?

—35 said they remembered a lot of vocabulary, phrases or description about the capital cities.

—10 said they knew some peculiar qualities of cities and characteristics.

—5 said they can say something about the advantages of capital cities.

4). What part of the lectures that could be improved?

—24 stated that nothing could be improved, lecture were enjoyable.

—12 asked if I could speak slower, they want to write something down.

— 8 said they want to have more handouts.

— 6 asked they need more time to think about the issues raised in the discussion.

5). Any other comments

Most of them said nothing g. Some of them gave me some positive comments such as,

—This is an enjoyable lecture.

—Very good presentation, I like the interesting learning. I hope you continue to use ppt Slides.

—Three students who are good at English want to do more activities in the classroom.

3. Analysis and discussion

The first question was about the teaching methods used, from the rating graph I could get to know students enjoyed the ppt slides, which were attractive, with imagination used to create animated presentations. They also liked the activities about the text, for the text itself maybe it was a little hard for them they did not understand it completely.

Sieber (2005) described that technology had a great deal to offer teachers and students. It could provide a rich, stimulating learner-centered environment, feedback and opportunity to develop communication between students and teachers. Therefore, in my future teaching I want to support teaching with technology.

The responses of second question about was funny, almost every one of them identified nothing to dislike within the session, whereas three students dislike the composition. It hinted some students were afraid of writing; I must help them with it.

The third question was relation to session content, most of them had learned from the session. It allowed the students to reflect on what they had learned. It was evidence of the session that was successful.

The next question was open question allowing students to provide written feedback. The open question was the most challenging question asked which was how the lecture could be improved. Their responses helped me identify areas to improvement rather than prove that something worked. This is the primary focus of evaluation. They help me research my teaching, define the problem, implement a change (Biggs, 2003 pp.252-260).

On reflection, I felt I should try to change my habit of speaking. I would try to make full preparation before each lesson, speak slowly so that the students had enough time to write notes. I would also give them enough time to discuss the issue instead of finishing the content in haste. Now I have slowed down, I stop on slides that are important and give the students time to check their notes.

Some students want to have more handouts. It is clear that some students didn't understand the text clearly. The teacher should provide study guide lines, including an introductory statesmen that help the students structure their study time, providing a structure of content for the day's material. The handout for students should leave blanks that students fill in while studying. The handouts can include one or several slides which is left intentionally blank for students filling in during class. We think it is clearly that there is no "best" way to use PowerPoint handout. Practice should be driven by our course objective and our students' abilities. By providing an outline of our lecture content via handout, we can encourage students to take notes on what is important part, evaluation, not on simply writing down what appears on the slide.

This is suitable for the ideas: if we use the PowerPoint incorrectly, it can discourage interaction between the students. Maybe the teachers overload slides with information, moving the slides too quickly for the students to follow, which

can sometimes discourage students and lead them to stop listening to the lecture.

(<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/powerpoint/lecturing.html>)

4. Suggestion

4.1 The change of teaching methods

The new syllabus officially and strongly advocates that computers should be applied in English class to enhance the students' ability to use language. From the evaluation from the students, we can obviously get to know that most students are interested in PowerPoint slides. The Traditional English classroom is dominated by the teacher and students depends on the teachers' teaching. The students have become more and more passive in the teacher-centered classroom. English learning in China is test-oriented learning. Some students get undesirable scores, because some students are lack of motivation and confidence, they are passive learners. Teachers use plenty of traditional teaching in their teaching that is poor in quality. Some students frequently complain the classroom time is not used efficiently and that they are keen to study outside the classroom. Teachers are the trapped teachers, who do not know how to change the situation well.

Using educational technologies to support our teaching and students learning perhaps is the better way to solve these problems. Students are not simply learners of academic subject; they are social being. Like everyone else, they are concerned about the social, political organizational context around them, and this directly affects what they do in their work every day. So we have a great responsibility to require the sort of things — computer, Net-based English teaching, multimedia-aided teaching and learning mode that help the students learn in a superior language learning environment--- using technological tools influence learning environments. It can provide a rich, stimulating learner-centered environment, feedback and opportunity to develop communication between students and teachers.

Some technology to supporting my teaching such as PowerPoint slides, internet. Classroom facilities can influence a student approach to learning. To change a common classroom with a blackboard into one equipped with multi-media can encourage students to adopt a more intrinsic orientation to study. Students are able to absorb much more audio-visual information and fascinating images in multi-media classroom than in the traditional classroom.

Changing traditional teaching methods into teaching with technologies' resources is good for our teaching. It can drive collaboration and group problem solving; it can encourage students' self-reflection and self-evaluation. Technologies can help students learn in ways they find most effective and broaden their knowledge for learning. Brilliant students have opportunities to show their talents and learn in way that work for them. Slower students can take more time and get more feedback and direct help from teachers and other students. With the help of technologies, students with similar motives and talents can work in same study group without constraints of time and place. (Chickering and Hermann, 2003).

Most of my students are surface learners. They come from villages, towns and cities in very rural parts of Yunnan Province. Some of them are not good at English. Most of students are afraid of doing the exercises in the textbook. Some students want to copy the right answer. They don't like thinking about the reason of the exercises. That shows the students are motivated extrinsically. They do the exercises because of importance they attach to the examination. This leads the students to adopt a surface approach—the intention only to complete task requirements. How can I tackle low motivation? In terms of motivational theory (Biggs (2003, p62-63), the value is high, the expectation of success is also high, a teacher should help the students develop intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation refers to going something because it leads to a separable outcome. In addition, the teaching should be tried to make the students choose deep approaches to learning.

4.2 Improved feedback to the students

Providing feedback to students is one of the most important aspects of teaching. Good feedback comprises not just commentary about what has been done, but suggests for what has been done next. (Brown, 2007) Good feedback can encourage and motivate students, clear up misunderstandings or confusion and improve the students' performance. Good feedback is recognized as being prompt, is related to the learning outcomes of the assignment, individualized to the student, but manageable for the lecturer. (Race, 2001)

Providing feedback on assignments should be prompt feedback. The students should need help in assessing their existing knowledge and competence. They need frequent opportunities to perform or receive feedback on their performance. They also need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how they assess themselves.

Learning is conceived as a social practice situated in a specific context where informal learning is more important than formal instruction. Students can often learn more from formal or informal assessment by their peers or themselves. It can help to reduce the assessment tasks of staff, and make a valuable contribution to their learning.

Ramsden discusses the benefits of formal and informal feedback to students. Positive and timely informal feedback is

readily comprehended and shows teacher's attention on students. The teacher's feedback to their performance implies that they have reached the teacher's expectation and received peers' positive assessment.

4.3 Need More Activities

"Successful teaching is a construction site on which students build on what they have already known. Teaching requires much relevant activity from the students, interaction with others, and self-monitoring to check everything is proceeding according to the plan. The teacher's role varies, from highly directive, specifying procedures and correcting errors, to supervisory, to consultant, to group leader." (Biggs, 2003, p74).

Activities that allow students to interact and engage with each other in classes using the deep approach (Ramsden, 2003, pp53-61) in handling teaching, students have positive feelings: interest, a sense of importance, challenge, even of exhilaration. Students receive messages from the teaching context, which affect their learning activities. Therefore, in the further teaching, I am going to apply more flexible, effective and updating methods of teaching. I maximize the chances that students will engage the full range of verbs needed to achieve the desired outcomes.

For example, problem-solving activities in small group, using pictures to make up stories, guessing games, peer-directed TLAs(teaching/learning activities), teacher-directed activities, self-directed activities, student-student interaction, group-discussion ,peering-teaching, group discussion, group presentations, role-play, handouts, dictation and contests, etc. I can motivate the students positively.

I will use some humorous examples while explaining new words in order to generate the learning interests of students. I use some prior knowledge students know to show the new meaning of these words. Obviously, I guide students to take the deep approach to learning. Just as Ramsden (2003, p47) says deep approach is to "relate previous knowledge to new knowledge", to "relate theoretical ideas to everyday experience." Deep approaches to learning emphasize how students learn but surface approaches emphasize what students learn. Students in the observation class had neither unrelated tasks to do nor requirement of memorizing information so that they could focus on how to learn and how the content is organized in a coherent whole.

Ramsden (2003, p110) states "teaching is seen no longer as being mainly about telling or transmission; it is also about dealing with students and above all about making them busy." I made it like this. Teaching is to ask students to do something rather than stuff knowledge in students. During the long 50 minutes, all of them were engaged in study by sequential group work, think-pair-share and open class questioning. As a result, students looked not so bored as before but energetic and active all along. The different activities brought them into active learning and kept them from boredom and distraction.

Role-play can be used to motivate large class students. The class is a larger one with 50 or 64 students. For example, in order to have a satisfying lecture concerning a drama, I asked students to prepare role-play for the drama before class. They were allowed to gather five or six classmates as a group and play the role they like. To my surprise, each group made excellent performance. Their fluent dialogue, colorful clothes, exaggerates tone and humorous body language gained a lot of laughter and praise from their peers. Besides, my oral feedback to their performance gave them great encouragement. The key to the successful class lies in the management skills of large class teaching. "Large classes need much more meticulous preparation than small class. The larger class, the slower things get done." (Biggs, 2003,p105) How to start, structure and delivery a lecture in a large class is not so easy as we expect. During the class, student-student interaction in the large class setting lets active learning come into effect. Just as Biggs says, "students also like learning from peers." They can learn and benefit each other by different role-plays and their interests of learning the text are motivated intrinsically. In addition, the teacher's praise and comments on their role-plays can encourage students and help them get much progress in future's learning.

5. Conclusion

Although this is only an exploratory research and the findings and analysis are very limited, it has, to some degree verified the importance of evaluation. The students feedback allowed me to feel appreciated and encouraged me to improve the areas that perhaps lagging behind the identified strengths. Improvements in teaching were found to be much more likely when university teachers not only received feedback but also could draw on expert help in exploring how they might best capitalize upon strengths and address weaknesses (Hounsell, 2003). Remsden (2003, P225) described that evaluation is part of our responsibility as teachers towards our students . The students were open and honest, what they responded encourage the teacher try to teach them effectively and better. Knight(2002, p179) states with regard to good evaluation, " they affirm our intrinsic motivation to teach, while inspiring us to continue to tinker at doing better." The teacher should be glad to the feedback he receives. The teacher's reflective evaluation can refine the teaching and help them to be better teachers. The teacher may incorporate feedback into practice, which teachers, like students, can benefits from assessment and evaluation of their own work or practice.

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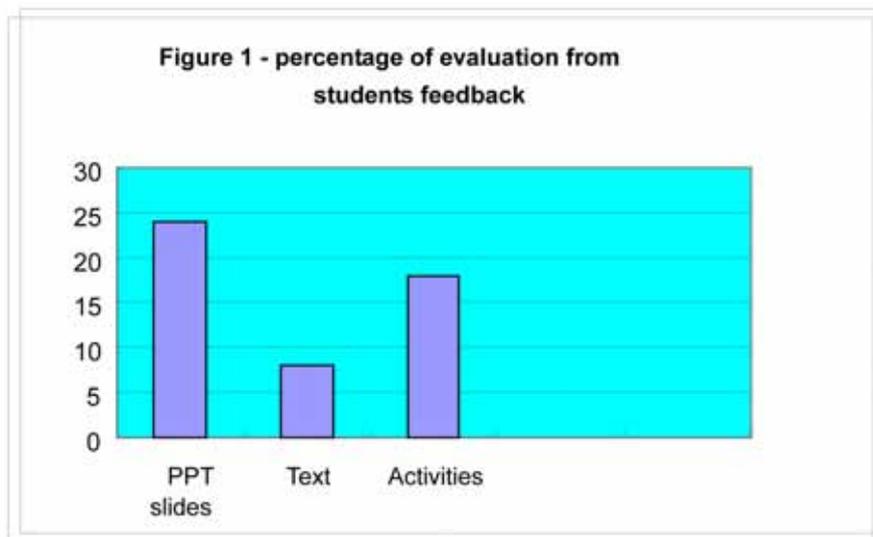


Figure 1.