

My future study concerning the exploration of college English teaching in a big class format mainly using qualitative method

1. Introduction

As college English teachers, we have been facing many challenges in teaching College students English in big classes of universities, difficulties can hardly be overcome by all the roles including teachers, students, and others involved. First, teachers have a strong sense of frustration if they can not see achievements made by their students. Secondly, students are unwilling to devote more time and energy to the English-learning because their English skills have not improved as much as they had expected. Thirdly, others involved may be pretty worried about this situation but can do nothing about it, which possibly discourage them from support the English-learning program in universities. To solve the practical problems facing a majority of English teachers in universities, I have planned to carry out my research and write an essay about it. My study is to provide more strategies and insights that will be of help to English instructors who have to teach big classes both in china and other countries mainly using qualitative methods. Cooperative Development will be used as the theoretical framework guiding my study and as a model to come up with potential ways toward solving the problems facing many college English teachers having to teach big classes.

A single instrumental case will be applied by the qualitative study to provide answers to the research questions. My colleague, one Chinese College English teacher, has taught students in big classes in a public university named Guizhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in southwestern China. The study will mainly use the research methods: discussions , document analysis, observations . All the discussions will

follow the Cooperative Development model.

2. Research Questions to be answered

My study will try to provide the answers to the following research questions: What difference can the discussions and observations be made to a College English teacher's realization of her or his pedagogy when teaching big classes, and what insights getting from the discussions and observations will be helpful to English teachers who teach college English in big classes?

The sub-research questions will be: 1) What strategies or skills studied before class and concluded in the observations and discussions will be beneficial to big class English teachers in China? 2) What results and findings obtaining from the discussions and observations will bring teachers benefits?

3. Theoretical Framework to be used

The discussions and observations will follow the theoretical framework called The *Cooperative Development* (CD) model which encourages one or more teacher to work together and spend some time in enhancing teachers' capacity building. In Edge's (2002) work, he proposes the Group Development (GD) model, which involves 3 or 4 people to pay attention to the personal improvement of every member (Boon, 2011). The close cooperation and relationship of the Understander(s) and the Speaker following particular regulation for communication plays a crucial part in deciding whether the study will be valuable. The Understander's job is to use his or her knowledge, horizon, experience, wisdom and judgement to have a in-depth understanding of the Speaker. The Speaker's job is to use some teaching techniques and skills which are particularly useful in big classes to teach students

particular knowledge or train students specific skills such as listening, speaking, reading and so on, but also to enable her to have a clear idea under the careful observation of the researcher. In my study, I will use the Cooperative Development model to guide the pre-observation and post- observation discussions between the speaker named Grace and the understander who is myself.

The Understander and the Speaker are required to obey the three principles, namely, giving respect, showing sympathy, as well as sincerity when communicating with each other. The first point is that the Speaker can decide what they should discuss and his or her opinions must be fully respected. the Understander's interference is not allowed. Second, the Understander is supposed to empathize with the Speaker and think about or look at things from the Speaker's perspective (Edge, 2002). Third, the Speaker should receive true respect and sympathy from the Understander who is not allowed to pretend to understand or influence the Speaker (Edge, 2002; Edge, 2009).

4. Methods to be used

In China, every university student needs to learn English. However, lots of challenges must be faced by teachers and students. The big class model makes it hard for English teachers to carry out language-speaking activities in their limited spaces of the research site (Lu & Ares, 2015; Yu, 2001). What's more, teachers have very little sense of achievement when teaching students English due to lack of pedagogical knowledge and proper teaching techniques for teaching students English in a big class (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013). My study will focus on understanding a College English teacher in a public

university in south-western China teaching in big classes to explore what difference can the discussions and observations can be made to a College English teacher's realization of her pedagogy when teaching big classes, and what insights getting from the discussions and observation will be helpful to English teachers who teach English in big classes?

The qualitative method will mainly be applied in my study. I will use only one instrumental case to gain a deeper and better understanding of a university English teacher's idea of teaching students English in a big class format when using the qualitative method. The qualitative method will mainly be employed because qualitative research puts more emphasis on words and meaning instead of quantification during the process of data collection and analysis. The qualitative method has three common features, which are, employing reasoning based on general principles produced on the basis of the known facts to combine theory with study, an interpretivist epistemological position that puts more emphasis on the knowledge of the social world by means of the interpretation of social participants, as well as a constructionist ontological position that holds that social phenomena is influenced by social interactions ([Bryman, 2008](#)). There are five commonly applied research designs to carry out qualitative research ([Creswell, 2009](#)): One of them is a case study which exams a single event, activity, person, family, organization, or process (Rubin and Babbie, 2011). Deeper and better understanding concerning the case will be gained because different kinds of data collection methods are able to be applied. Qualitative methods are generally employed to gather and analyse detailed data about a smaller number of participants and cases so that the researcher will have a better and deeper understanding of the cases and situations which are studied (Patton, 2002). The

qualitative study's features and characteristics are suitable for the rationale for the Cooperative Development model because this method enables teachers to look more carefully at their own opinions and to do more concerning what they find with reflection on their experiences and contexts (Edge, 2002). The Cooperative Development model enables teachers to be away from the frustration of considering their teaching future which may not be bright because it is defined by the newest method or the newest coursebook. (Edge, 2002). This makes it possible for the researcher to get a detailed and complicated knowledge of the teaching practice in a big class format.

The Qualitative methods will be applied in natural settings in which I will try to use the researcher as the crucial instrument of the research and employ multiple methods, as well as put emphasis on the voices of the participants and the reflexivity of the researcher and provide a comprehensive description or interpretation of the problem unsolved (Creswell, 2013). In my study, the natural settings include three items, which are, the participant teacher Grace's classroom, the university where she and I are working and other places where all the observations and discussions may happen. Apart from the Qualitative methods, other methods will also be employed in this study, such as document or data analysis, observations in classrooms, as well as discussions concerning the participants between the participant teacher teacher and me. The discussions will be divided into pre-observation discussion and post-observation discussions which are applied to give top priority to the voice of the participant teacher Grace encourage her to share her stories and stimulate her reflection on the teaching practices, her true feelings and contexts when teaching students in a big class.

4.1 Data Collection

My research site will be a university in Southwest China, Guizhou University, University of traditional Chinese medicine. Miss grace, who will participate in the study, is my colleague. She teaches English in the same university as me. Grace has rich experience in College English teaching. For more than 10 years, she has taught more than 500 college students English in big classes every semester, and there are about 100 students in a classroom.

In this case study, data are collected through a variety of methods, namely, document analysis, classroom observations and discussions. The experiment will start at the end of May 2022 and end at the beginning of July 2022. The whole study will last one year. I will collect data with the participating teacher. If the data is not enough to provide the answers to the research questions, the teacher will be asked to allow me to make more observations and discuss with me after observation.

4.1.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is commonly used as a way to review or value documents systematically. (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis is suitable to be employed in qualitative method to offer a piece of writing giving details of a phenomenon, person, event, organization, or project (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Document analysis can be applied to collect personal and public documents .(Patton, 2002).

Document analysis will be applied to gather data about the research site named Guizhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine for two reasons. First, the public and electronic documents can be gained by reading the introduction of the university's official

website to gather more information which will be helpful to the research. Second, with the approval of the participating teacher, I am able to collect other documents which may be useful in my study such as syllabus, lesson plans, course textbooks and slides to be employed in class.

With the analysis of these documents, we can have a better understanding of how big class teaching has impact on college English teaching and what kind of teaching techniques learned in training programs or on the on-line classes should be applied by classroom teachers in big class teaching to achieve better results. Besides, by making analysis of the relevant documents needed in my study, I hope to provide suggestions for the problems to be discussed in classroom observation and post observation discussion. What's more, combining literature analysis with other qualitative research methods can improve the credibility of the research (Denzin, 1970). In my study, the documents concerning the reasearch can also provide supplementary research data for the research (Bowen, 2009).

4.1.2 Observations and discussions

Observations have been divided into four types by Creswell (2013), namely, complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer.

Creswell (2013) argues that, a complete participant is the person who focuses all his attention on the people or issues he or she is observing. A participant as observer is the person taking part in the activity on the spot. (Creswell, 2013). The observer as participant is the person who does not need to be involved in the activity. That is to say, the researcher plays a role in taking note of or making the analysis of data without direct participation with

the designed activity (Creswell, 2013; Springer, 2010). Complete observer is the researcher who will not be seen or noticed by others when the study is conducted.

Prior to the first observation, I will make an observation with Grace for 30 minutes to understand the information about the classroom and research college, such as the description of of Guizhou University of Traditional Chinese medicine , course objectives, teaching techniques, and students' English levels. Every week, I will observe all college English courses taught by the participating teacher, including the reading, writing courses, as well as listening and speaking courses. At the beginning of the study, I will play a role as a non participant observer so that I only observe the classroom without direct interaction with the group (Creswell, 2013). My part working as a non-participant observer will continue in classroom observation. However, in the discussions after observation, my role as an observer will be a participant as an observer. My role working as a participant will become more prominent than that of a researcher, which will enable me to gain more experience connected with big class teaching of College English Internal view of the problem.

In the process of the observations, detailed field notes will be taken through the observation protocol to record key points which are worthwhile to talk about the instructor's pedagogy, particularly connected with big class teaching. The field notes will be taken in English or Chinese as long as it is convenient. I will view the field notes before the discussions between the speaker and the understander so that Grace will be able to give more attention to representative samples of the classes to assist in exploring the research questions. We are going to make better use of the 45-minute post-observation after making the analysis of the discussions and selecting representative samples. 35 observations, each continuing

approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes for 60 hours in total of observations of Grace's College English teaching will be designed to be carried out within four weeks.

After observations every week, one post-observation discussion will be carried out with Grace for at least 45 minutes which mainly be in accordance with the features of the Cooperative Development model. The discussions after class will be arranged for 45 minutes and may be more than that time limit provided that the participant agree and it is necessary. The amount of time for four discussions will be four hours, involving 1 pre-observation and 3 post-observation discussions, will be carried out between the end of May and the starting of July in 2022. The member checking, that will continue for half an hour will be done when the study is going to be finished so as to avoid any misinterpretation of the data.

Given the fact that the priority of the study will be given to the participating teacher, Grace, rather than the students, and the class arrangements for students who have different majors change from class to class, which makes it hard to follow a particular team of students that Grace teaches. For this reason, I will make observation of all the classes taught by Grace between the end of May and the start of July for 4 weeks in total. Every week I will watch around 3 CERW lessons in 3 big classes for approximately 5 hours, and 4 College English Visual-Audio-Oral lessons in another 3 big classes which will be 8 hours or so.

Observing Each lesson will continue for about 1 hour and 40 minutes. 8 observations which totals approximately 13 hours will be carried out each week. Around 35 hours of classroom observations, involving the observations of different types of classes, will be carried out within 4 weeks.

At the beginning, the observations will start with the practice of note-taking and observing (Creswell, 2013). Those observations will be carried out from a holistic view in the process that will assist in the post-observation discussions (Patton, 2002). The observations will be applied on topics like task types, the arrangement of talk, time for waiting, the movements of teachers (Oprandy, 1999).

An observation protocol will be employed to assist in taking notes in the field . The particular date, the exact location and time, and the course name of the observation will be on the head of the protocol (Angrosino, 2007). The left column will be employed to take descriptive and detailed notes and the right column will be applied to record big class activities connected with the participant teacher and students in the research site. The descriptive part of the protocol will be applied for taking note of a description of the observer's intention to make a summary of issues in the research site in chronological order (Creswell, 2013). a piece of writing giving details will provide what will happen in the research sites that are useful for the post-observation discussions to assist in making the analysis of what will continue in the research site, providing interpretations about what will happen, and giving alternative approaches for teaching (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999). The right column will be used for giving a detailed description of big class related activities particularly for the participant teacher and the classroom students. Big class connected issues for the participant teacher had examples such as what instructional strategies applied by the teacher to accommodate big class teaching and how students who sit far away from the teacher standing in the front of the classroom will respond to the teacher's teaching.

Field notes play a crucial role in analyzing data and offering a valuable piece of

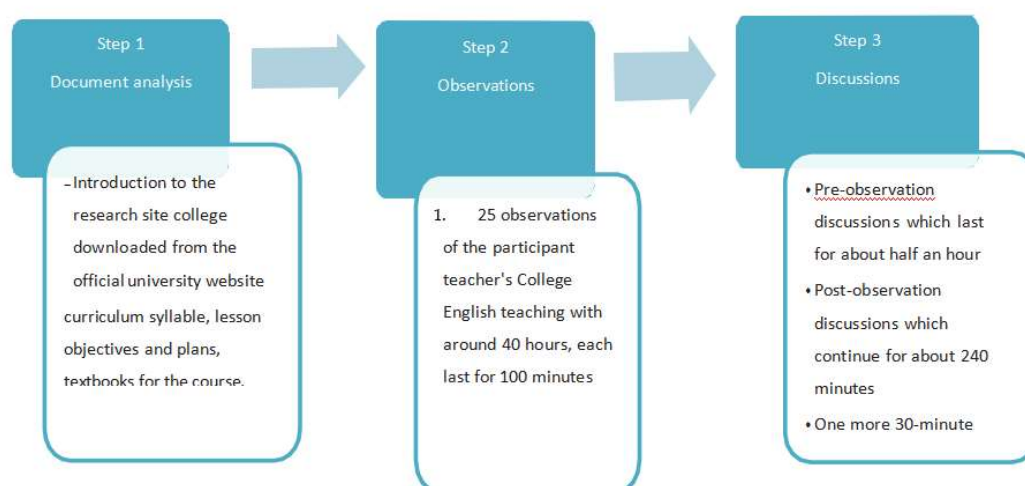
writing giving details and insights to the researcher (Lofland, 1971; Patton, 2002). In my study, field notes will be taken to assist in the post-observation discussions as well as provide the answers to the research questions. Field notes will be taken in two languages (English or Chinese) whenever necessary. Of course, using English to take field notes will save my energy and time because I do not need to translate after taking notes. Apart from that, using English to take field notes will reduce my cognitive load and I will spend less time code switching the terms into Chinese since I have remembered a large number of pedagogy terms in English. I will read the field notes taken in the classes before each discussion so as to make sure that Grace will be able to pay more attention to representative samples of the classes to assist in providing the answers to the research questions. The aim of making the analysis before each discussion is to make better use of the post-observation discussion which will last for around 45 minutes.

The researcher and the participant teacher are equally significant in the post-observation discussions by following the CD model for the reason that the CD model needs mutual respect, sympathy and the demonstration of sincerity. (Edge, 2002). It is also of great significance to know that how the discussions will not always carried out by strictly following the CD model since the Understander is able to think of topics or activities she has a desire to talk about so as to have “collaborative conversations” (Oprandy, Golden, & Shimo, 1999). Grace and I will exchange roles when I prefer to choose an issue to talk about on the basis of the field notes, the discussions, as well as the observations made in this research . Sometimes the discussions will be semi-structured with some prompts. For instance, questions like “Give me the information about or describe the lessons which will be given this

week,” “What strategies and skills that you find effective and efficient will be applied by you when you teach College English in big classes?” will be asked.

I will carry out several pre-observation discussion and a number of observations over the research period which will last for at least six weeks. From a table designed and shown below, we can see the steps of collecting data (see Table 1). All the discussions will be recorded by using two phone recorders which will be very safe because the recorders only can be opened using my fingerprints).

Table 1. Data Collection steps.



4.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis of my study will be carried out between June 2022 and July 2022. That is to say, the process of analyzing data will last for about 2 months. The process of data analysis will include the following procedures. First, all the discussions will be studied verbatim in Chinese. It is crucial to prepare verbatim transcripts to make an analysis of the data collected for the reason that Chinese is my native tongue that I use in my daily life, choosing Chinese as the language to make the analysis of the data collected will save me a

large amount of time as well as energy for the analysis. Meanwhile, since the discussions will be carried out in Chinese, it is necessary to avoid the fact that information or meaning will be changed from time to time in the field note owing to translating the transcripts into another tongue. I will use numbers to name the lines of the transcripts so as to assist in making the analysis of pertinent parts of the data. The note taken for the discussions will be omitted as soon as they are transcribed. I will save transcripts of the post-observation discussions in my personal laptop and computer which will be protected by a six-digit code. Both the copy in a hard disk and an electronic copy of the transcripts in a USB will be prepared and used whenever needed in the process of analyzing data (Patton, 2002).

The documents, observation field notes, and the transcripts for the post-observation discussions will be read carefully several times so as to be thoroughly familiar with the data collected in the research site for the analysis process (Agar, 1980). By reading and studying the documents, field notes and the transcripts very carefully, I will make some margin notes to write down the ideas in my mind or key points that come to my mind during this process (Creswell, 2013). Different-color markers to mark quotes connected with different themes will be employed in this process too. After viewing and studying the data several times, I will offer a piece of writing giving details of the classrooms, the case participant teacher Grace as well as her College English courses (Geertz, 1973).

Secondly, the field notes, together with the transcripts, will be further coded into categories of information that is like “making a list of the data in which the unwanted part will be get rid of” according to Wolcott (1994). I will attach a piece of paper on the classified data with each code to provide a description of information and develop themes. I will apply

categorical aggregation because categories will simply be reduced to a limited number to classify the types into four themes finally (Creswell, 2013). Data interpretation includes the use of direct interpretation and the development of naturalistic generalizations .

The third procedure involves representing the data collected through a piece of writing giving details and a lot of quotes from the analysis documents, field notes taken in the research site, and the transcripts of the post-observation discussions done by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). At this moment, the quotes gained from the transcripts that will be in the study must be translated into English from Chinese. I will make the presentation of the findings with tables and figures (Roberts, 2010).

Finally, I will share the findings made at the beginning with Grace to ask for her opinions of the findings to make sure that misrepresentation or misunderstanding of the data collected beforehand do not take place.

5.Summary

I will use a case study to explore the teaching experiences of a College English teacher who teaches College English in big classes in a university in the southwestern part of China. The participant is my colleague who has worked in the university for more than a decade. Multiple methods will be used to gather Data, namely, document analysis, observations and discussions. An observation protocol and a post-observation discussion protocol will be applied to make the observations and the discussions more efficiently and easily. The discussions and observations will try to follow the theoretical framework, namely, the Cooperative Development model and a collaborative conversation approach. By making the analysis of data collected from the College English teacher's teaching practices , my study will

finally generate findings to offer further references concerning discussions and teaching strategies or skills for College English teachers instructors in big class formats in China and other countries.

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