ON THE USE OF MODERN APPLICATIONS IN ENGLISH CLASS

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Abstract

Recently, more and more modern applications have been applied to the English learning class, among which the most outstanding ones are the 'The Rain Classroom' and 'The Super Star'. The first one, 'The Rain Classroom' is a mini-program in Wechat, through which the students can get connected to the teacher directly; they can do homework online and express their ideas on the class' screen simultaneously. The second one, 'The Super Star' is an application that the students have to download on the mobile-phone, and then they can scan the teachers' material and assignment in the app. In this essay, in order to make a comparison between the two apps, the author tries to carry an investigation and an experiment into the students, so as to find a better way of using the modern applications, in which case, can attract the students' attention, arouse their interest and guarantee their speaking and writing hours at the same time. Furthermore, more scholars can get a better understanding of these two apps through the essay, and the producers of the app will be able to make some adjustment to them timely. This essay will form a new viewpoint on the multimedia English teaching in China, even in the world.

Keywords

The Rain Classroom, The Super Star, Modern Applications, English Teaching

1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the development of science and technology, the combination of the development of information technology and the reform of English specialty teaching in the new era has promoted the innovation of English specialty teaching (ZHANG XIA, 106). Many teachers gradually add the modern applications as new ways to enrich their teaching procedure. Among all kinds of modern applications, the Rain Classroom and the Super Star are two most outstanding ones. This paper aims to give a short introduction to these two apps, and make a comparison between the two apps. In that way, the teacher can find a better way to balance the use of these two apps and furthermore, make the best use of the two apps.

1.1 The Rain Classroom

It is an online mobile phone app which can be used to present the new information and knowledge into the college students' training. Originally it was developed by a student team in Tsinghua University, and later became the latest achievement of the online education study center of Chinese MOE (ZHANG DONGYAN, 2020). It can use Wechat and PPT plugs-in to carry out the teaching procedure, which means the students can study at any time, and the teacher can also know the students' studying information at any moment. (ZHANYU, 2020) Usually we can use this app to link the mobile phone app- Wechat to the Powerpoint. In that case, the teaching procedure can last from the before-class time to the after-class time. In the Rain Classroom, we can upload many other resources to share with the students, such as MOOC video (the online studying courses in China), the exercises, the language previews, so that they can see the material anywhere and whenever they want. During the class time, the students can send the things they think onto the website, in which the teacher can see the inner thoughts of the students and they can make a good communication. After class, the program can give a result of the students' class performance to inform the teachers, which parts of the students need more attention, which part of the students are ahead and need praise. All in all, the Rain Classroom integrates courseware release prior to class, real-time feedback, multi-screen virtual-classroom interaction and review after class. (CHEN JIANGPING, 2018) Followings are several features of this app.

1.1.1 The software is divided into two parts: the teachers' interface and students' interface.

1.1.2 Both the teachers and the students should scan the Wechat code.

1.1.3 The function includes checking out the absentees, dividing groups, random selecting students and making assignment.

1.1.4 The red packet is also available, which greatly increases the students' enthusiasm.

1.2 The Super Star

It is a mobile-library app, in which the teachers can upload the e-books and further reading material relating the class, and the students can scan it on the phone as well. Besides uploading different types of learning material, the app can also monitor the students' learning process, and at the same time, arouse the students' studying interest. (LI ZHENGZHENG, 2020) Meanwhile, the teacher can use the app to share the class' ppt, notes to the students, and it can be used as a way to make assignments. Super Star learning platform has become a bridge between teachers and students, and it is also a beneficial assistant for teachers to encourage and supervise students' learning. (Reeves, 2019)

Followings are several features of this app.

1.2.1 In order to further different periods of study, the students need to accomplish the previous parts, that is to say, the students should follow the teachers' teaching procedure strictly.

1.2.2 The teachers can attract the students to view some movies, moocs and teaching videos, which can greatly arouse the students' learning interest.

1.2.3 After viewing the students' score of learning the previous material, the teacher can repeat the fallible problems to the students, in which case, the students' academic record can get promotion at the same time. (WANG BAOMIN, 2019)

2. Comparison between the Rain Classroom and the Super Star

Super Star was used as a teaching method in China back to around 2000, and many teachers consider it as a convenient way to share the information with the students, which greatly improves the students' responsive rate and scores, especially in the English teaching class. The Rain Classroom has come into the market in recent 5 years, and was introduced to the college much later than the Super Star. However, as soon as it was introduced into the classroom, it was highly appreciated.

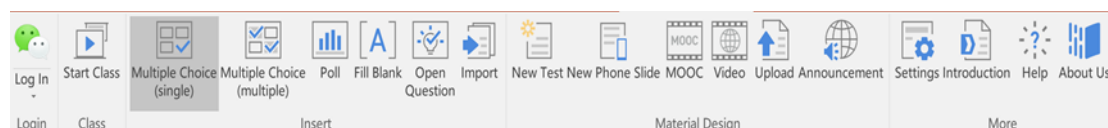### 2.1 The Function of these Two Apps

Figure 1: *The User Interface of Rain Classroom's computer end. With the function of setting Multiple Choice, Poll, Fill Blank, Open Questions, MOOC and so on*

Figure 2: *The user interface of Super Star's computer end. With the function of setting Multiple Choice, Fill Blank, Open Questions, True or False Questions and so on*

The author will try to take several functions as an example, to distinguish the two apps properly, based on multiple choice, blank-filling and open questions. All the three functions can be accomplished within several steps, and the teachers can add the correct answers, detailed analysis easily. For the multiple choice, in the Rain Classroom, the teacher only need to fill in the blanks with the options, then enter the correct answers into it. However, in the Super Star, the answers and analysis need to be typed in one by one, which seems to be a little unnecessary. For the blank-filling part, in the Rain Classroom, all the students can see the correct answers and see the scores corrected by the system automatically, but the questions and answers have to be typed one by one, sometime the function may go wrong. However, the Super Star is much more convenient, as the teachers can copy the questions and paste them into apps directly, which is especially friendly to the old teachers. For the open question, both the two apps have the same display interface, and the Super Star has a special function: the students can upload their video onto the website. While the Rain Classroom has another feature, the teacher can share one students' good work to all the students in the classroom, in which case the students themselves can develop a habit of learning from each other.

2.2 The Evaluation from the Students

For most of the students in Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, they have used these two apps simultaneously, and many of them give their own comments on the use of the apps. The author has tried to make a survey of 141 students, and it is with great delight to say that most of the students are willing to use the apps in their English learning class. They have the motivation and commitment for doing project work.(Gnatz, 2003) For the 141 students, 112 students are men, and 29 are women. 4 students aging below 18, 91 aging between 18-19 and 46 aging between 20-21. The students' majors vary from physics, chemistry, electronics, astronautics and aeronautics, English, law and so on, almost covering all the majors in Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics
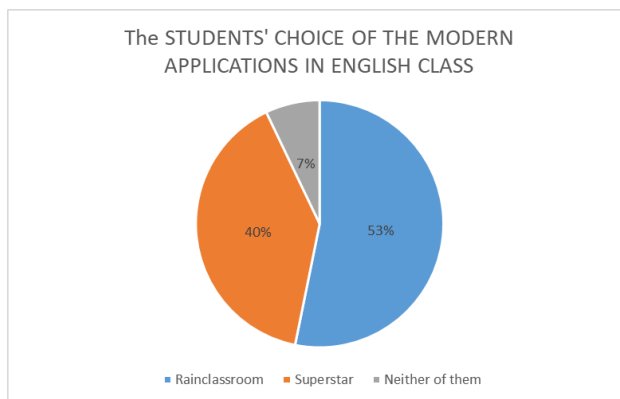
Figure 3: *Ratios of the Two Apps that the Students Chose*

The above statistics show that there still exist more students preferring to use the Rain Classroom and some of them illustrate their ideas by saying: through the use the Rain Classroom, they can better perform their oral English and composition, and they are able to cooperate with their classmates better. And the students who have chosen the Super Star suppose it as a good data base, through which they can view the class resource, including the video, the music, the paper, the power point in advance and after the class. Meanwhile, compared with the mini-program of the Rain Classroom, the homework assignment system of Super Star is much easier to operate and more stable.
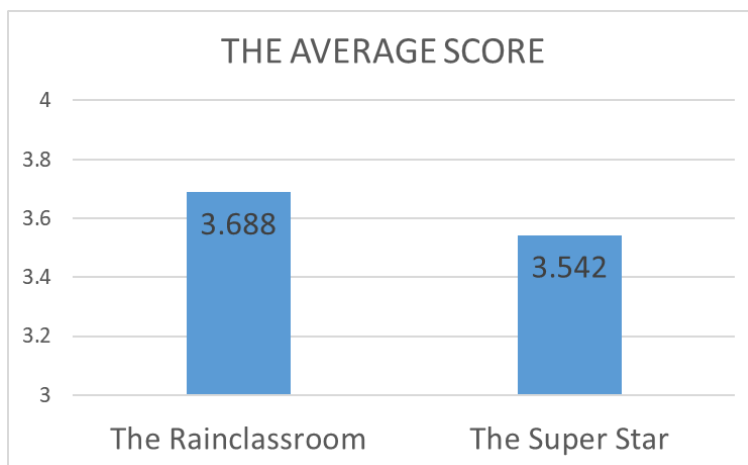

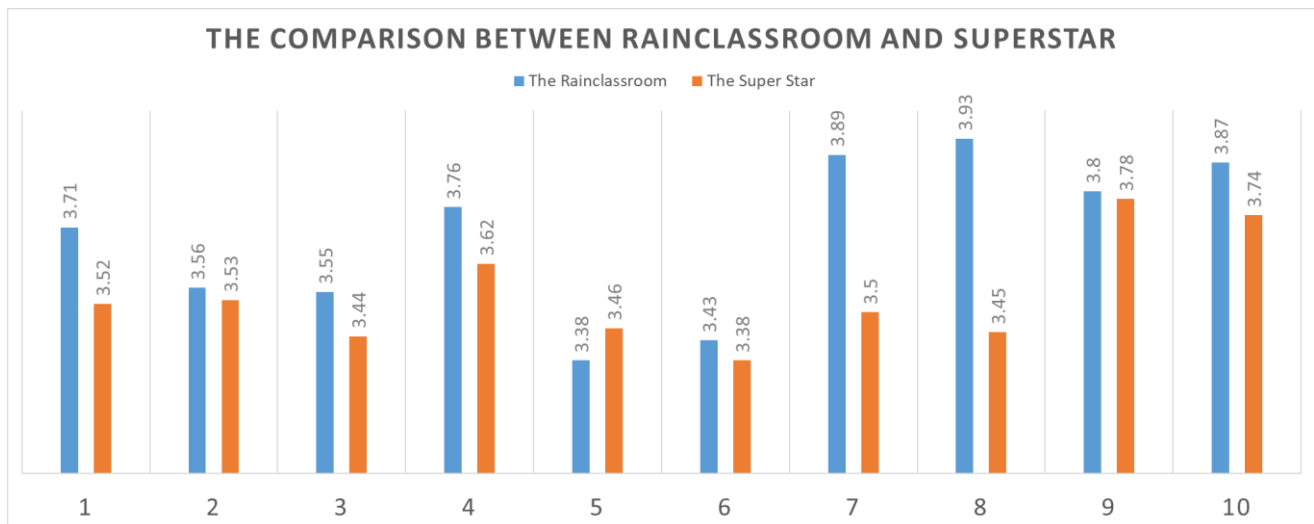**Figure 4:** *The Average Score of the Rain Classroom and the Super Star*

Figure 5: *The detailed average score of two apps from the students, including 1.the evaluation of the software style 2the flexibility of operation 3. the matching score of the internet 4. the evaluation of the multiple choice 5. the evaluation of the blank-filling 6. the evaluation of the subjective question, 7. the evaluation of live broadcast, 8.the interactivity of communicating, 9. The convenience of sharing e-material 10. The help to the study*

Actually, the Rain Classroom gets a higher score than the Super Star, with the average score of 3.68, while the Super Star gets 3.54, and we can almost get to the result: the Rain Classroom is more attractive to the students than the Super Star. Let's take a close look at the concrete options above. To the flexibility, the convenience of sharing e-material, the students' opinions remain the same. The main difference lies in the software style, the multiple choice, the live broadcasting and interactivity, which shows the outstanding features of the Rain Classroom. We can see that the Rain Classroom is more suitable for the teachers to use during the class time, because the students regard it as a good way to develop the interactivity with the teachers and other students. Usually, the interactivity is a goal to achieve and a medium through which other goals can be achieved in our daily life, but with the help of the Rain Classroom (Lazaar, 2019), the students can achieve it just during the class time. What's more, the Rain Classroom's several superior functions can be better performed during the class, especially the live broadcast, the multiple choice, the subjective question and the blank-filling. For the students, they can answer the question on the mobile phone, and the teacher can set the sores in advance. Besides, they can discuss in the form of groups, and upload their answers in the word form or picture form. Furthermore, the statistics provided by the apps is quite obvious, which equips teacher with the possibility to praise the good students and encourage the students falling behind. The last but not the least, the app

can be connected to the talent classroom, in which case, the students can get a better arrangement and learn the knowledge faster and more quickly. That is to say, the curriculum which contains a large number of students, needs a lot of interactive session is more likely to use the form of Rain Classroom.

Although the Super Star is a little bit behindhand in some aspects, however, in flexibility, sharing e-material, it still gets as much score as the Rain Classroom. Among all the options, the Super Star is superior in one function, that is the blank filling part, which means the app can put more emphasis on that function and make the advantage larger. After carefully arranging the statistics and students' response, it can be inferred that the Super Star is a better platform for the teachers to share information and material with students before class and after class, which means the best time to use the app is before and after class. Meanwhile, many students show their praise after using the app, especially those who want to improve themselves by self-learning, as it develops students' habit of self-studying. Furthermore, most of the teachers prefer to use this app because of its flexibility, simplicity and stability. In Super Star, some of the assignments can be corrected by the system itself, which provides the teacher with great convenience, and it saves the teachers' time and energy.

So there comes the suggestion for the teachers: it is better for them to choose different apps for different purposes, for the large-size, foundation classes like college English teaching, advanced mathematics, the Rain Classroom is likely to be adopted as a teaching method; for the small-size, specialized classes which need a large storage of curriculum resource, like English literature study or Material Physics Learning, the Super Star is a better choice.

3. The Research Process of Using the apps

When it comes to the matter of choosing the appropriate teaching apps, several considerations should be taken. The most important is, when and where to choose the suitable teaching apps, as well as the teaching style, teaching method and teaching frequency. In order to bridge the disconnect between theory and practice(Alex Baker, 2005), after considering all these factors, the investigator tries to start an experiment into the College English teaching process.

3.1 The Experiments' Preparation

Table 1: *The Average Score of the Students in Sep.2019*

Class Category	Apps'	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing

	Category				
19 Innovation Class 1	Super Star	4.1	4.3	4.4	3.9
19 Innovation Class 2	Rain Classroom	4	4.3	4.4	3.9

The investigator tries to launch the experiment in two different classes, the 19 Innovation class 1, and 19 Innovation class 2. It can be seen from Table 1 that the two classes have almost the same score in four parts: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The differences between students with respect to motivations and knowledge are not too great. (Gnatz, 2003)The experiment time is set between 2019.9--2020.1, all together 32 times of class, the time period is long enough to check the students' scores' improvement. For the 19 Innovation Class 1, the author uses the Super Star to add to the class teaching, while for the 19 Innovation Class 2, the author uses the Rain Classroom to carry out the class teaching. The full score of each item is 5, and the higher score is, the better performance that the students have.
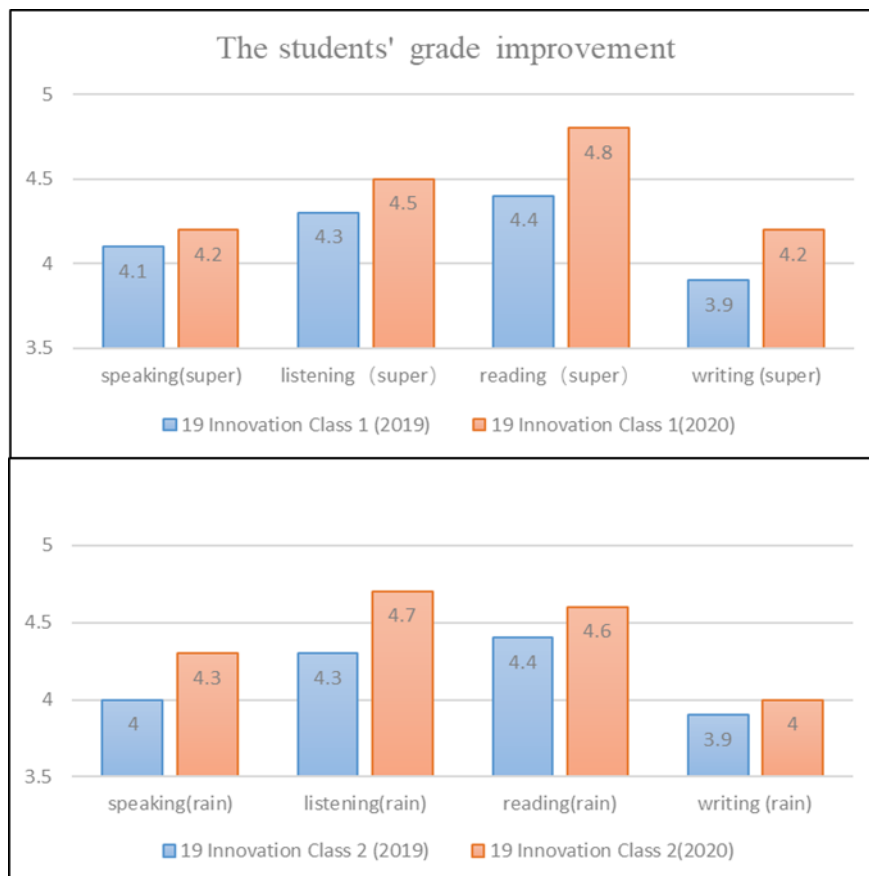

Figure 6: *The Effect of the Two Apps on Two Class Students' English Studying, including Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing*

3.2 The Results' Analysis

From the above statistics, we can see clearly, that two classes have made obvious improvement in all the four parts. For 19 Innovation Class 1, the students' improvement in reading(0.4) and writing (0.3) is more outstanding than speaking(0.1) and listening (0.2). For 19 Innovation Class 2, the students' increase in speaking(0.3) and listening(0.4) is more obvious than reading(0.2) and writing(0.1), after the teacher uses the apps into English teaching process. We can almost get to the idea, for the Innovation Class 1, the Super Star has more evident effect in reading and writing, while for the Innovation Class 2, the Rain Classroom has better performance in speaking and listening.

Then we can make a comparison between the two pictures, to the speaking part, the Rain Classroom got better performance, with 0.3 higher for the students, while the Super Star has got 0.1 higher. To the listening part, the Rain Classroom also has a better performance, with 0.4 for higher grades, and Super Star has only 0.2 higher grades. For the reading part, the Super Star has got a better performance, with 0.4 higher to the students than the Rain Classroom with 0.2 higher. And for the writing part, the students' grades increase more in the mode of the Super Star, with 0.3 points, while the Rain Classroom got 0.1 higher.

From the above statistics, the author can draw a conclusion that, the Rain Classroom has got a better effect in listening and speaking, which means that the teachers can use it to carry out more activities during the class time, and the students will have a better way to make full use of the class resource. And for the reading and writing part, they will usually be implemented before or after the class, and Super Star provides them with a better way to improve their studying efficiency and result. For the students, they can learn the passage before the class, and discuss the questions by themselves, and then move on to the normal class, and put forward their own questions.(Tian Yuan, 2019) So the teacher can develop the mode as

before class——during class——after class

Super star   Rain Classroom   Super Star

For the before class part, in order to do some preview work, the teachers can use the Super Star to assign the reading material to the students, so as to arouse their interest and help them adjust their studying spirit. For the second part, in the concrete process, the students can follow the teachers' class with the help of Rain Classroom, to practise their speaking and listening mode. In the after class period, the teachers can use the Super Star to assign writing homework to the students, which is definitely more effective in facilitating language

acquisition than the old, out-dated methods(Hull, 2019), and will assist the students to learn to sum up and do some thoughts-provoking exercise.

4. Conclusion

The use of the apps has put forward a lot new requirements to the teachers, which means the teachers should not only be familiar with the specialized knowledge, but also familiar with the modern technological methods. If they want to make progress in English teaching, they need to make some adjustments to their class design, and realize their purpose of teaching up to date. (Zhang Xia, 2019, 112) Furthermore, these two apps not only have ensured the effective interaction between teachers and students in class preparation, classroom teaching and after-class review, but also have improved the quality of college English teaching and cultivated students' good self-learning habits. (Liu Weiwei, 2019) With the rapid development of science and technology, the society has put forward more requirements to prepare students for a field that involves rapidly changing conditions and expectations. (Cagiltay, 2007), which means the students have to learn to adapt to new ways of studying and new methods of studying as well. In the learning process, the students' overall ability is greatly improved after the adoption of the two apps, especially their leaning motivation and studying attention. (Huang Yin, 2019) Meanwhile, the students have also put forward some advice, which can be of great significance to the improvement of the apps, for example: to the Rain Classroom, it can provide more background colors for the students to choose, and make some adjustments in the answer-correcting part; for the Super Star, it can simplify its operating procedure, and fasten its online efficiency, as well as reducing the amount of advertisement.

In this article, the author tries to introduce two different apps, make an investigation and an experiment into the students, in order to make a comparison between the two apps, so as to find the correct use situation for them. Meanwhile, the influence of the moderns apps on the students' learning is also explored, and the investigator proposes a good teaching mode of the using the two apps simultaneously. Actually, the teachers are still provided with a large amount of freedom in how to progress. (Alex Baker, 2005) How to choose the suitable teaching apps towards different levels of classes and different English teaching materials, as well as the match between the modern apps and the modern classroom, the combination of the online modern apps, the off-line modern apps, and the face-to-face teaching process properly are all the questions that we should take a deep thinking into in the future.

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