

Analysis on the Connection between Middle School English and College English: Problems and Countermeasures

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Abstract—English plays an important role in all aspects of communication. English teaching has also been the focus of many scholars. The problem of the connection between middle school English and college English is highlighted in English teaching in China. Many problems in the transition period from middle school English to college English are the main factors restricting the college students' successful adaption to college English learning. Through the analysis of the differences between middle school English and college English, this paper analyzes the reasons for restricting the connection and proposes the corresponding countermeasures, in order that students' English proficiency can be improved.

Keywords—middle school English; college English; English teaching; connection problems; countermeasures

I. INTRODUCTION

With the increasing globalization of economic and trade, English as a language communication tool highlights its significance in communicative activities. At the same time, college English education, as an advanced stage of students' English learning, cultivates their language communicative capacities, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. However, there are still some problems in English learning and teaching in China, the most prominent of which is the “dumb English” and the “time-consuming and inefficient” phenomenon of English learning. [1] The time-consuming and inefficient teaching of college English has always been a concern of the foreign language education community, and it is also a major reason for the criticism of college English teaching. How to improve the effectiveness of college English teaching has always been the focus of experts and scholars. In recent years, linguists and English teachers have tried to find an efficient way of teaching comprising teaching methods, evaluation methods, teaching materials and teaching methods, but little effect has been achieved. [2] At present, English teaching in China basically runs through the whole learning life of students, from elementary school to university, but each teaching stage is self-contained. Many problems exist in the long process of English education from middle school English to college English, restricting the systematic acquisition of

English. [3] Therefore, the connection between college English and middle school English education remains the first problem that many colleges and universities must face and address.

Middle school English teaching and college English teaching should be an organic whole, but with the deepening reform of English education and teaching, the disconnection between the two is becoming more and more obvious. [4] The connection between middle school English teaching and college English is an important issue [5] which involves the connection between the purpose and requirements of English teaching in colleges and middle schools, the connection of teaching materials, syllabus, curriculum, evaluation methods and teaching management mechanisms. Freshmen usually do not adapt to many changes after entering the college. They still retain the English learning habits and methods in high school, which will inevitably incur confusion and loss of interest in English learning. How to fill the gap between college English and middle school English is a concern of both students and teachers. Professor Mei Deming had conducted three years of research and study in his project “Study on the Training Model of One-stop English Talents in Universities, Middle Schools and Primary Schools”, aiming to promote the convergence of English teaching in primary and middle schools. [6] Although the project has achieved a lot of research achievements in the connection of primary and secondary school teaching, the problem of the disconnection between college English and middle school English teaching remained unsolved.

II. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH AND COLLEGE ENGLISH

A. Objective Differences in the Connection between Middle School English and College English Teaching

College English is based on the middle school English acquisition system. It is not only the expansion and deepening of middle school English, but also the continuation and extension of English skills. Through research, we can find that high school English and college English are disjointed or unconnected in many aspects, such as class time, textbooks, learning conditions and assessment methods.

In terms of class hours, high school offers three years with the total English class hours amounting to 384 hours, and 12

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hours per week, apart from students' self-study time in the morning and evening. The university, on the other side, only provides four semesters of English learning period starting from the freshman year to the sophomore year. Each semester lasts about 70 class hours, with the total being 280 hours, and there are only 4 hours per week in most cases. Since the students are used to having English class every day, the sharp drop of English learning hours may reduce the freshmen to a loss of aim and motive until finally they don't know how to use their free time in English learning and become lazy and ruined.

In terms of learning conditions, middle school students are merely listeners and test candidates who are immersed in a sea of tests and have no other options than to listen to their teachers' explanation and dictation. Even if some well-equipped schools have multimedia classrooms or language labs, students' "scores" in the college entrance examination are prioritized, while their listening and speaking abilities are in an inferior position. The use of multimedia devices is extremely limited. Perhaps English teachers and exercise books are the main source of English learning for ordinary high school students. The case is different in colleges. In a college English class, a comprehensive language acquisition system comprised of multimedia and internet network is available, on the basis of which students can develop the habit of independent and teamwork learning mode. This is, however, not easy for the students to adapt to, as they are used to following the teachers' one-way explanation.

As for the teaching materials, the textbooks used from junior high school to high school are almost unified or mutually connected. These textbooks overemphasize the language function and grammatical structure, while ignoring the cultivation of students' comprehensive application of the language, especially the students' listening and speaking abilities. [7]

The situation in university is much more flexible with a dozen of textbooks to choose from. On the one hand, teachers are provided with different choices; on the other hand, these textbooks are not effectively linked with the content in English textbooks of middle schools.

In the college entrance examination, English accounts for 150 points out of the total 750 points of all subjects. In order to get high marks, the students dig deep in various tests and they have great pressure until the final scores come out. Consequently, the improvement of students' comprehensive language abilities is placed in a secondary position. While studying in college, students have to pass College English Test (CET) during campus years. However, they don't suffer as much pressure as getting a high score in the college entrance examination, as CET is not mandatory for graduation. Such factors contribute to the lack of English learning motive among college students.

B. Subjective Differences in the Connection between High School English and College English Teaching

In addition to the differences in objective conditions, the differences in teaching methods also complicated the situation by widening the gap between college English and high school

English. The teaching effect varies depending on the teaching method.

1) Differences in teaching methods.

The standardized college entrance examination has confined the students' subjective thinking ability, and students may develop the habit of learning under the guidance of teachers. High school English education focuses on the accumulation of knowledge, and the teaching methods are relatively simple, covering grammar, words, sentence analysis, and sentence patterns. The students have to study late at night through a sea of exam papers. The case is different in college with limited English classes. Teachers do not have much time to meet everyone's requirement. Therefore, the students are expected to develop their own self-learning ability. The teacher gives classes on the basis of the characteristics of each lesson and tries to use the limited time to convey relevant information. In the classroom, not all texts are explained, and more time is squeezed up for students to conduct discussion on related topics. For these freshmen who have just entered the college, it is quite difficult for them to adapt to such learning mode in time. If the teacher does not notice the confusion of these new students, the latter will lose their way, and some will even lose their interest in learning English.

2) Changing of roles between teachers and students

The teachers' roles have been transformed under the reform of college English teaching mode. In college English class, teachers are still the dominant players in teaching activities, but their leading role is more reflected in the design, organization and guidance of curriculum and teaching activities. Students are still the main body of classroom teaching activities, participants, collaborators, and communicators. However, when they use computers and network, they are the leaders, decision makers, managers, monitors, and evaluators of their own learning activities.

III. THE CONNECTION STRATEGY BETWEEN MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH AND COLLEGE ENGLISH

A. Changing Teaching Concepts and Enhancing Students' Abilities

In middle school English teaching, teachers often teach students linguistic knowledge as well as their listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating skills in order to cope with exams. Therefore, students lack the ability to learn independently. They lose interest in learning English, resulting in weakened ability to listen, speak, read, write, and translate. College English teaching, which is no longer directing at exams and questions, shifts to cultivation and improvement of students' overall language skills. Therefore, from the first day students entered the university, teachers should teach them how to make preparation for the coming lessons. Students are also encouraged to participate in the second class activities to expand their range of knowledge and enhance their foundations, so that they can adapt to the learning environment in universities as soon as possible.

B. *Adjusting Teaching Methods to Improve Students' Enthusiasm for Learning*

In middle school English classes, knowledge is spread through "cramming method of teaching", in which students are the quiet listeners and the teacher has the absolute dominating role. While the college English teaching focuses on the ways of inspiring students to learn knowledge. The students are motivated to address problems semi-independently and turn knowledge into ability. Therefore, when students enter university from high school, teachers should adopt various teaching methods including debate, discussion, and performance to invite students' courage to participate in class activities.

C. *Establishing a Team of College English Teachers with Professional Qualification*

Teachers are a key factor in the reform of college English teaching. [8] Foreign language teaching involves the development of language ability, imparting linguistic knowledge, and cultivating cross-cultural awareness. It has its particularity and requires a high level of teaching ability. It is not easy to magnet the students' attention in class. An important part in the reform of college English teaching is that with the application of multimedia to English teaching, a new teaching model can be established based on class and computer, reflecting the main position of students and the guiding position of teachers in the teaching process. Teachers undoubtedly play a leading role in teaching goal setting, learning content selection, classroom teaching design, and teaching activity management. Their teaching ability directly affects the classroom effect. Current college English teachers must improve their English proficiency and optimize their knowledge structure in order to be competent in teaching. Besides, they should be familiar with foreign language teaching theory and have a good mastery of computer skills, as well as a wide range of knowledge.

D. *Optimizing the Teaching Materials*

The teaching materials are an important basis for the development of teaching activities, while the development of teaching activities is decided by the requirements of the curriculum standards. If the course requirements are not consistent with the requirements of the examination syllabus, it will often result in double standards for the actual teaching requirements and objectives, thus affecting the implementation of the actual teaching practice. Therefore, only when the curriculum standards and the examination syllabus requirements are unified, can the smooth development of teaching activities and teaching management be guaranteed, and the teaching activities, curriculum standards and examination syllabus requirements be coordinated, forming a unified standard, which is conducive to the goal of promoting English teaching.

Meanwhile, it is essential to compile a series of English textbooks for middle schools and colleges which are systemic, closely connected and coordinated. From the comparative analysis of the lexicon of *New Horizon College English* in universities and the PEP(People's Education Press) and other versions used in middle schools, it is found that there is an extensive overlap of knowledge, especially the vocabulary

grammar and other teaching content, which hinders the optimization of teaching resources allocation.

It is also important to select or compile some textbooks on listening and speaking based on the students' language capacity, so that students' interest in listening and speaking can be aroused, which helps improve their communication skills during the transition period from middle school to college.

E. *Increasing the Second Classroom Teaching of English*

A large number of teaching practices show that the first class can not meet the students' needs for English learning. Therefore, second classroom for college English should be established to strengthen students' knowledge and further improve their listening, speaking and communication skills. By this means, students can make up for their shortcomings in middle school English learning. And to a certain extent, second classroom has played a natural role in accelerating the process of English learning. At the same time, it has greatly promoted students' pragmatic and communicative competence, leading to the establishment of self-directed learning, self-learning habits and abilities. Such second classroom can be like participating an English speech contest, English corner, English culture festival, imitating film dubbing, English club activities, etc. Through the development of these second classroom activities, the students not only have created an atmosphere of English learning, but also developed their enthusiasm in learning English.

In addition, students are provided with some English websites, such as *China Daily*, *Quora*, etc., so that they can improve their use of language while expanding their knowledge.

IV. CONCLUSION

The natural connection between middle school English and college English is conducive to the gradual improvement of students' English proficiency and the formation of their life-long learning habits. There are many difficulties and confusion in the process of connection. This paper has proposed several strategies with the aim at addressing such difficulties and confusion. Both the teachers and students should coordinate their efforts by inputting more time and energy in English teaching and study. It is also hoped that more in-depth research can be conducted on this, and a constant exploration on effective strategies can be initiated to ensure that students can experience a natural transition from middle school English learning to college English learning.

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