

# Research on Teaching Skill Cultivation of Children's English Teachers\*

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**Abstract**—This paper presents a detailed demonstration on the teaching skill cultivation of children's English teachers. After analyzing the language features and the current situation of children's English education, much emphasis is put on the strategies for teaching skill cultivation. It is illustrated that in addition to arranging courses reasonably, normal universities should spare no effort to cooperate with social forces while sticking to employment-oriented to improve teachers' skill cultivation.

**Keywords**—children's English education; teaching skill cultivation; current situation; strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

English education has always been an essentially important topic in educational research in China. With the informatization and globalization of social life, the requirements for English proficiency have also become higher. One of the most significant features is that the starting age for English education has become earlier and earlier. The truth in this case is that this phenomenon does make sense. Swiss child psychologist Piaget's cognitive theory, behaviorism school linguists Skinner's behaviorism theory and American psychologist Skinner's behaviorism theory have all argued that children are born with the language learning ability. In other words, the critical period of language acquisition is childhood. Moreover, *The Guidance of the Ministry of Education on Actively Promoting the Establishing English Courses in Primary Schools* clearly stipulates that since the autumn of 2001, English courses will be offered in primary schools in large, medium and small cities and county towns across the country. Children's English education has developed rapidly in recent years, and English education for children has become a mainstream phenomenon in China.

## II. LANGUAGE FEATURES OF CHILDREN'S ENGLISH EDUCATION

Children's English education, which belongs to special purpose English, is to apply English language skills to children's English teaching activities, and this activity is closely related to teachers' professional proficiency.

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Compared with pure language learning, Children's English education has stronger applicability. Although children's English education is formed on the basis of general English, it is the extension and development of general English. It needs to cultivate the same language skills as general English, but children's English education pays more attention to the cultivation of practicality.

In the process of learning children's English education, basic educational knowledge and language skills come first, which are followed by purposeful and professional English learning, and that requires the transition from general English to children's English education. That is to say, in the process of children's English teacher training, students must first learn the basic courses of general English, master a certain English language foundation, and then begin the in-depth professional children's education English learning. From the perspective of teaching objectives, children's English education aims at cultivating children's English teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to combine the basic English ability with the major of children's education, focusing on cultivating students' practical skills such as oral English, playing English games, English songs and English picture books reading and editing. In terms of teaching content, it emphasizes the language output of students and the cultivation of teaching practice ability. In addition, children's English teachers should not only have solid English ability and teaching ability, but also need to have relevant professional knowledge of children's education, and especially the ability to deal with emergencies in the teaching process.

## III. ANALYSIS ON THE CURRENT SITUATION OF CHILDREN'S ENGLISH EDUCATION

With the development of children's English education, the problems in it also arise, which are manifested mainly in the following aspects.

### A. Insufficient Faculty

As an important part of elementary education, children's education has a profound impact on human's growth, which correspondingly puts forward higher requirements for children's English teachers. Children's English teaching requires that teachers should not only have a solid professional foundation, but also should have the relevant

knowledge of children's education. Therefore, children's English teaching presents the characteristics of strong expertise and professionalism. However, most teachers currently engaging in children's English teaching in China mainly graduate from secondary vocational schools or vocational colleges. Compared with university undergraduates, their English foundation is relatively weak and their professional level is lower. Their pronunciation is not standard and their vocabulary is extremely limited, which has a great negative impact on children's English teaching. In *the Cultivation of English Teaching Skills for Students Majoring in Preschool Education*, Dou Lili points out that there is a serious shortage of double-qualified English teachers in colleges and universities in China. Since the major of most teachers engaging in children's English education are preschool education, not English, although some students can pass the CET 4, and a minority even pass CET 6, English learning for them is just regarded as a subject, not a major, and hence the level of English listening and speaking skill is generally low. However, in terms of children's English learning, speaking and listening are the key points. This deficiency directly leads to the fact that in actual teaching, teachers cannot have free dialogue and communication in English, which hinders a complete English classroom teaching.

#### *B. Unreasonable Course Design*

Children's English teaching has its own teaching objectives and characteristics. Children's English teaching should focus on cultivating children's interest in English, improving children's English listening and speaking ability, and meanwhile, forming their thinking ability in English language. Needless to say, the course objectives directly affect the selection and implementation of the course content. Therefore, in order to achieve this teaching goal, there are strict requirements for the curriculum. When designing children's English classroom teaching, in order to mobilize students' learning enthusiasm, teachers usually use situational teaching method to stimulate students' learning interest. However, due to the limited ability of English teachers and the unclear goal of curriculum design, the content of situational design is often separated from the actual teaching and the actual life. Being short of diversity, situational teaching cannot combine textbooks and extracurricular materials effectively, resulting in the failure to achieve the real teaching objectives.

#### *C. Inadequate Language Learning Environment*

Environment plays a crucial role in the learning of second language acquisition in childhood. The teaching environment plays an imperceptible role in the formation of language. Learning a language necessarily depends on its environment. Only in an adequate language environment can students learn the language vividly and master the skills of using language flexibly. Language learning cannot exist without a suitable environment. In order to promote children's language learning, it is important to create an appropriate language environment for children. But in real life, both in the traditional school education, and in a variety of language training institutions, the pattern for English

learning still focuses on teachers' teaching language in English, or hiring native language teachers to teach the oral English. The establishment of English learning environment is, to a large extent, ignored. Language learning should give much priority to combining the children's daily life with the learning process together, and try to realizing the purpose of learning second language in a native language acquisition way. Due to the limited teaching time, children cannot obtain an ideal language learning environment in the English language acquisition.

#### *D. Single Value-oriented Teaching Evaluation*

Teaching evaluation is a measure of the achievement of teaching objectives and the feedback of teaching information. Only scientific and fair teaching evaluation can truly and effectively reflect the learning degree of learners. Moreover, effective teaching evaluation approaches can help teachers constantly improve teaching methods through the results of teaching evaluation. In terms of the evaluation of English courses, the evaluation of the subject should be diversified in form and multi-dimensional in content and the evaluation process and evaluation results should be effectively combined. However, there are still some problems in the evaluation system of English teaching for children in China. The traditional knowledge-based teaching evaluation is a kind of single value-oriented teaching evaluation, which constrains the harmonious development of students. The examination paper test result is still regarded as the primary standard for evaluation. In English learning, the written test evaluation still occupies the dominant position. It can be seen that teaching evaluation methods are too simple to play a role in promoting the improvement of teaching methods.

#### *E. Lack of Effective Learning Communities*

Learning is a lifelong and comprehensive process. Learning behavior should not only occur in school, but also permeate into the life of learners. Influenced by traditional ideas, schools are still regarded as the main place for students to learn, so parents think that they are just the helpers for their children to learn. On the other hand, the school believes that parents play a decisive role in children's education, and they are the first and lifelong teacher of the child. Since teachers believe that family education plays a crucial role, there is always lack of effective cooperation between school and family education. In fact, it is just the cooperation between them that can build a good learning community for children. In terms of English learning, the current situation is that there is a lack of a good English learning community.

## IV. CURRENT SITUATION OF ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN NORMAL UNIVERSITIES

At present, English teacher education courses in normal universities in China are mainly divided into three categories: public compulsory courses, professional courses and educational courses. Public compulsory courses include courses that students of all majors must learn, basing on the cultivation of students' basic moral character, political and physical qualities, and a broader comprehensive system of

cultural knowledge, such as political courses, sports, and computer foundation courses. Professional compulsory courses are a series of courses designed for normal university students to engage in specialized foreign language teaching after graduation. These courses can be divided into basic courses, compulsory courses and optional courses. The teaching objective is to train students' basic English skills and strengthen their professional English knowledge. Educational courses are the pedagogical theories and skills which are necessary for English majors to engage in teaching after graduation, including pedagogical psychology and pedagogical courses. In the three types of courses, professional courses are in a dominant position.

But from the point of view of aiming at children's English teaching, it involves all the aspects of social life and various fields, which requires a more extensive knowledge system from the children's English teachers. So in setting up the curriculum for the public courses, enough interdisciplinary fields related to learning should be taken into consideration, aiming at cultivating students' broad knowledge. Moreover, educational courses currently still account for a small proportion, and the number of courses on teaching method, teachers' language, classroom skills training and other practical courses is still low, which, to a certain extent, ignores the characteristics of the normal professional curriculum system. At the same time, the pertinence of the curriculum is not strong, which fails to grasp the characteristics of children's education.

## V. STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SKILL CULTIVATION

### A. *Arranging Courses Reasonably and Improving Teaching Skills*

First of all, the scope of public courses should be broadened in a more diversified and comprehensive way. Considering the characteristics of children's English teachers, course designers should offer students interdisciplinary courses, like social humanities, natural sciences, arts, which can arm them with adequate knowledge both on arts and humanities. Besides, the proportion of professional curriculum should be adjusted. While attaching great importance to the cultivation of language skills, it is also necessary to attach great value to the cultivation of English teaching ability. Currently, the foreign language teaching education in China is basically a process to improve the language level of trainees. The training courses are obviously designed to improve the language skills of normal university students, but in essence they exclude teaching methods. At present, the curriculum syllabus of foreign language normal university students in China takes the English professional level, namely the English professional ability test, as the evaluation standard. Therefore, although students have relatively high English professional ability, it is difficult to meet the demands of the pedagogical nature of normal universities. Therefore, in curriculum setting, the proportion of teaching skills should be appropriately increased. The educational objectives should be more clearly defined and. At the same time, normal university students should be encouraged to develop diversified professional knowledge

related to children's English teaching, such as English picture books, children's book translation and other diversified elective courses.

### B. *Cooperating with Social Forces and Strengthening Practical Teaching*

Take Anshan Normal University as an example, the practical teaching of children's English education is often divided into three types. One is to conduct intensive training on campus. Under the guidance of teachers and in cooperation with their colleagues, students learn to make teaching aids, design teaching activities and carry out simulated classroom exercises to develop their basic teaching skills. The second is the extracurricular internship. Under the guidance of teachers, students will go to language training institutions for observation and investigation. In this way, students can feel the real teaching environment in person, get familiar with the teaching procedures, learn through observation activities, and discuss the observation activities through the writing of the internship report. Through the above activities, they can learn classroom teaching critically. The third is internship. Students are really engaged in teaching activities. They can understand the needs of parents through their own experience, put the knowledge acquired in school into real teaching activities, and improve it through practice. Although internship is the most effective way to train students in terms of practical teaching training, in this process, students are assigned to separated schools or training institution, which results in the lack of enough opportunities for them to communicate with teachers and classmates to exchange teaching experience. Therefore, it is suggested that universities should actively cooperate with social forces, primary schools and kindergartens to create a good circular internship chain. Meanwhile, teaching and practical training should be carried out simultaneously. Universities should expand internship time and arrange internship reasonably. Through six months of full-time internship, students are offered a good chance to learn educational skills and knowledge from real children's English teachers. What's more, the quality of internship should be ensured. A complete educational practice system should be established. Specific regulations should be set up covering the following aspects: the selection of the internship school, the determination of the internship instructors, the standardization of the internship content, and the assessment of the internship results.

### C. *Sticking to Employment-oriented to Improve Teachers' Skills*

The major of children's English education should be employment-oriented. The curriculum of children's English education should be constructed specifically basing on the demands for talent types and the needs of posts. According to the training objectives of children's English education, the quality of children's English majors is required to achieve the objectives of being diversified, comprehensive and cross-cutting training so as to improve the professional quality of children's English majors and the level of children's English teachers. The purpose of children's English education is to make the children's English majors more competent for

children's English teaching posts and meet the needs of society for children's English Education. The goal of talent training for children's English education major is the integration of children's education major and English education major. The integration and absorption of the two professional knowledge systems is the product of the superposition and analysis of the two specialties of children's education and English education. Therefore, the curriculum for children's English majors needs to constantly accept new information supplements in the course of its application, maintaining unity and diversity. Guided by employment-oriented, Teachers' skills should be developed from three aspects: basic vocational competence, teaching and management competence of children's English education institutions and comprehensive English language competence.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In sum, teacher competence plays a key role in children's English teaching, which an important factor is affecting children's interest and confidence in English learning. Therefore, in terms of English teaching skill cultivation, normal universities should pay much attention to arranging courses reasonably. Moreover, cooperation between normal universities and social forces should be strengthened to provide more practical teaching chances. Besides, employment-oriented should always be the golden rule for children's English teaching education so as to meet the demands of the society.

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