

Some Thoughts on the Improvement of Research Ability of College English Teachers in Local Medical Colleges in China

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Abstract—Scientific research can promote teaching, and the development of scientific research ability of English teachers in medical colleges is conducive to the overall quality of students and the improvement of the overall education level of the college. On the basis of analysis of the present situation of college English teachers' scientific research ability and its restricting factors, the paper proposes approaches to improve medical college English teachers' scientific research ability from the perspective of research awareness, research contents, research methods and research team, hoping to provide the reference for college English teachers' professional development in the same kind of medical colleges in China.

Keywords—local medical colleges and universities; English teachers; research ability; approaches

I. INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities shoulder the important task of cultivating high-level professionals and promoting the development of science, culture and society. Therefore, the work undertaken by college teachers mainly includes teaching, scientific research, and social service [1]. Among them, the level of scientific research has become one of the standards to measure the quality of running a university. Scientific research is an important task for every teacher, and they should be aware of relevant researches conducted by researchers in different countries.

However, the research status of foreign language teachers is not optimistic in China [2]. Compared with other comprehensive college English teachers, the research ability and research level of English teachers in local medical colleges are relatively low. How to improve the research ability of college English teachers in local medical colleges is very important to improve the overall quality of students and the overall education level of the school.

This study will focus on analysis of current research status of college English teachers in local medical colleges and then try to propose approaches to improve their research ability to provide the reference for college English teachers' professional development in the same kind of medical colleges in China.

II. RESEARCH SITUATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS IN LOCAL MEDICAL COLLEGES IN CHINA

Teachers' scientific research ability is represented by the following aspects. The teachers have strong scientific research consciousness; they can accurately select subjects and the objects of research; they can skillfully use suitable methods and means to effectively explore education and teaching rules; they can elaborate their research results in a scientific and standardized way. It mainly includes the ability of discovering and putting forward problems, ability of experiment research, and ability of successfully elaboration of research results [3]. At present, English teachers in medical colleges and universities mainly face the following three problems in research.

A. Weak Research Awareness

A survey conducted on the current research status of college English teachers pointed out that "weak scientific research awareness" is one of the important factors hindering teachers' scientific research [4]. In medical colleges and universities, English teachers mainly focus on coping with CET-4(College English Test-4) and CET-6(College English Test-6) to increase the employment rate of medical undergraduates by improving their passing rate of CET-4 and CET-6. Under the pressure of passing the examination, they focus more on teaching than research.

B. Low Research Quality

1) *Lack of professional and innovative research content:* Although English teachers in medical colleges and universities have strong professional knowledge and skills in English language, due to the limitations of academic qualifications; they are lack of theoretical knowledge in linguistics and applied linguistics, which are the disciplines that lay the theoretical foundation for scientific research. As Dong Lirong said, "Scientific research without theories can only be castles in the air, and it is difficult to ascend to the great hall" [5]. Therefore, their research contents are relatively unprofessional and plain, which are mostly from teaching experience. Innovative achievements are very scarce [6].

2) *Simple research methods*: The English teachers in local medical colleges are basically Master's degree holders, and they have not systematically and formally studied the courses of research methods during their study in colleges and universities. Therefore, their research methods are relatively simple, and most teachers are dedicated to literature review research. Quantitative research is rare, and some quantitative research is just simple questionnaire survey and primary data analysis. Most teachers do not use social science statistical software to analyze data. Moreover, the research methods of action research, narrative research and so on, which are more and more valued in the present research work, are also poorly understood.

C. *Lack of Research Teams and Cooperation*

Teachers with doctoral degrees and professional titles are actually the academic backbone of the discipline. Due to the scarcity of English PhDs, it is difficult for local medical colleges to attract English teachers with PhDs. Teachers with a senior title basically achieve success and win recognition, resulting in not continuously dedicated to research. Young English teachers are still in the stage of doing scientific research on their own, crossing the river by feeling stones. Their scientific research ability can hardly be improved without guidance and teamwork.

III. APPROACHES TO IMPROVING RESEARCH ABILITY

The outline of the national program for medium-and long-term education reform and development (2010-2020) clearly states that colleges and universities should be guided to make rational positioning, overcome the tendency of homogeneity, form their own ideas and styles of running schools, develop their own characteristics at different levels and in different fields, and strive to be first-class. Under this program, colleges and universities actively update their educational concepts, deepen educational and teaching reform, pay attention to connotation construction, strengthen characteristic development, and highlight school-running characteristics.

Against the national background of running a school with characteristics, on the basis of analyzing factors hindering college English teachers' research ability, the author thinks that in order to improve medical college English teachers' scientific research ability, it must get rid of the stale and bring forth the fresh in the perspectives of research consciousness, research direction and content, research method and team collaboration.

A. *Raising Research Awareness*

Teaching and research are mutually reinforced. Teaching is fundamental, research is the key. For college teachers, they should not only have the foundation of teaching, but also have the way of strengthening themselves through scientific research. Scientific research is a necessary condition for teachers to obtain academic recognition [7].

Meanwhile, scientific research consciousness is the driving force of scientific research activities. We should

cultivate foreign language teachers' interest in scientific research, enhance their awareness of scientific research, and let them participate in scientific activities [8].

B. *Identifying Research Directions*

Due to the limitations of their own subject knowledge and college resources, compared with other comprehensive universities, English teachers in local medical universities have fewer advantages in the research of general English teaching, British and American literature and culture, foreign linguistics, etc., making it difficult to produce high-quality research results in foreign languages. Moreover, even if some teachers have managed to produce scientific research results, they will have a weak effect on the college English teaching. Therefore, the best way for English teachers in local medical colleges and universities to make more achievements in English scientific research is to attach themselves to their colleges' characteristic disciplines and conduct more interdisciplinary research. It is suggested to consider the research direction and content from the following aspects.

ESP Teaching Reform Research: In recent years, China's college English teaching reform has been continuously deepened. Under the premise of extensive EGP (English for General Purposes) teaching, ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teaching will play a better role in promoting the enthusiasm of medical students in English learning [9]. ESP teaching will gradually replace EGP, which is bound to happen someday [10]. In medical colleges, the wide variety of medical specialties provides a broad platform for ESP teaching reform. College English teachers in medical colleges should seize the opportunity to actively carry out college English teaching reform. Under the background of the EGP transformation to ESP, English language is combined with Medical research to actively explore EMP (English for Medical Purpose) curriculum setting, curriculum design, teaching model and teaching method, etc.

In addition, EAP (English For Academic Purpose), as a major branch of ESP, is the mainstream of future development of college English ESP [11]. EGAP (General purpose English for academic purposes) teaches students how to listen to academic lectures, take notes, participate in academic discussions, make academic presentations, read academically, write academically and other language skills. It is foreign language teaching for non-English majors in most universities in the world [12]. Academic English replacing comprehensive college English which is offered in the first year for non-English majors. This practice is just starting in mainland universities and in the stage of experience exploration. As academic English is different from professional English, it is not restricted by teachers' educational background, and all college foreign language teachers are competent for it. Because it is in the exploratory and experimental stage, it needs teachers' research and practice on academic English curriculum setting and other aspects.

1) *Curriculum system construction research of medical English*: For a long time, the problem in the development of

English majors in medical colleges has been how to combine medicine and English organically to cultivate talents with advanced academic English ability [13]. In recent two years, under the background of the emphasis on prominent features in China's higher education, and in order to meet the needs of the future job market, some local medical colleges and universities began to develop medical English or pharmaceutical English majors based on their strong medical majors. However, there are few colleges developing medical English or medical English majors in China, and those developing are still in the early stage of major construction. The training plan, curriculum system, teaching model and teaching method of medical English or pharmaceutical English majors still need to be proved, modified, practiced and improved. Local medical college English teachers, therefore, can integrate education, medicine, foreign language education and other related professional knowledge, based on the feedback information such as the job market to further medical English talent training mode and curriculum system construction research, which will provide relevant reference for cultivating English language talents with medical knowledge background.

2) *Research on construction of medical English teaching materials and corpus:* With the development of EMP and medical English major, more abundant teaching materials are needed. The published medical English textbooks mainly include subject-related textbooks, skills-related textbooks, educational textbooks and three-dimensional textbooks. Although the classification is meticulous, there are few subjects-related textbooks and skills-related textbooks that focus on translation. Paper textbooks are still much more than textbooks with modern media. There is a lack of educational textbooks linking public English with professional English. In short, although there are many teaching materials, the overall quality still needs to be improved [14]. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of medical English learning, English teachers can cooperate with medical teachers to develop and improve medical English teaching materials.

Corpus is a huge database integrated by a large amount of language information used in real situations, which can be retrieved by computers and used for special research [15]. On the one hand, there are only a few specialized medical English corpora in China, and those specialized medical English corpora have insufficient storage capacity with pure accumulation of corpus without classification [16]. How to construct and develop a medical English corpus with detailed classification, wide coverage and authenticity is a subject worthy of further study.

3) *Research on professional development of medical English teachers:* The current medical and pharmaceutical professional English teaching work is generally undertaken by ordinary college English teachers, professional teachers or both. Ordinary college English teachers lack of professional knowledge while medical professional teachers

are relatively weak in language ability. Moreover, the implementation of medical English teaching by both of them will affect the fluency of teaching. Thus, the shortage of medical English teachers has become a 'bottleneck' affecting the quality of medical English teaching [17]. Therefore, how to transform general English teachers to expert-teachers with professional backgrounds in local medical colleges and universities under the background of characteristic education has become a focus of future research.

C. *Synthesizing Multiple Research Methods*

Foreign language research methods mainly include qualitative research method, quantitative research method or a mixture of the two. Due to the particularity of the samples in local medical colleges, the representativeness of the research results is limited, so it is difficult for English teachers to produce high-quality research results in the quantitative research. According to the current situation of teaching, education background and knowledge composition of English teachers in local medical colleges, it is suggested that English teachers in medical colleges adopt the following two research methods.

1) *Action research:* Action research is a classroom research method, which means that teachers as researchers pay attention to their own classroom teaching, analyze the needs of learners and problems encountered during teaching, and find the answers to problems through actions. Action research perfectly combines teaching and research. Medical college English teachers, especially college English teachers, undertake a large amount of teaching, which provides a advantageous condition for carrying out action research. Action research method can be adopted to combine with a large number of teaching practices, constantly update teaching ideas, improve and explore new teaching methods, and verify new teaching models.

2) *Narrative research:* In recent years, quantitative research based on data analysis accounts for half of the foreign language research, but qualitative research provides more vivid research results with multi-dimensional language description. Narrative research takes qualitative research as the methodology, takes teachers' life stories as the research objects, and studies teachers' educational thoughts, educational activities and educational objects. It collects and analyzes materials through observation and interview. English teaching in local medical colleges is in the transition period from EGP to ESP, which provides rich materials for English teachers in medical colleges to conduct qualitative research. Moreover, this is a good research path for teachers who are not familiar with statistical and quantitative analysis.

D. *Building Research Teams*

By virtue of the favorable conditions of local colleges and universities developing characteristic school-running, it is better to set up a research team based on a concise research

direction and gathering up teachers with the same research interests. There must be an influential leader and guider, on the one hand, to ensure the unity of the team, on the other hand, to guide and coordinate the whole team members. All in all, college English teachers in local medical colleges should form a scientific research community, building a bridge of communication, exchanging or sharing resources and ideas. Through frequent academic communication, all members will unconsciously improve their research ability.

IV. CONCLUSION

Foreign language teachers' scientific research activities can not only improve their own professional quality, but also play a positive role in promoting teaching [18]. Based on the analysis of the difficulties in scientific research of college English teachers in local medical colleges, this paper puts forward some ideas and approaches to improve the scientific research ability and level of English teachers' in local medical colleges. That is to say, on the basis of enhancing the awareness of scientific research, college English teachers in local medical colleges should carry out interdisciplinary research in combination with the characteristics of their colleges or universities and professional advantages, identifying research directions related with medical majors, comprehensively apply various research methods, including action research and narrative research, and improve the overall scientific research level building a scientific research team.

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