

# Research on College English Teachers' Teaching Behavior of Lead-In

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**Abstract**—The teaching skill of lead-in is a necessary and basic skill for college English teachers, but at present, some college English teachers still have some problems in using the skill. So 60 lessons taught by 30 college English teachers in a university were taken as the research objects, and the classroom observation method and interview method were used comprehensively in this study to reveal the status quo of teachers' skill of lead-in and the relevant factors influenced their application. Research results showed that: the subjectivity of college students is not enough, the time allocation of lead-in is not reasonable, the method of lead-in is single, the role of lead-in is not fully played, and teachers' understanding of lead-in is not sufficient.

**Keywords**—college English teachers; teaching behavior; lead-in; teaching effective; college English teaching

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is often said that a good beginning is half of the success. An effective lead-in can help students master the key English knowledge of the unit and provide students with effective guarantee for the understanding and mastery of the new knowledge. At the same time, an effective lead-in can attract students and mobilize students' enthusiasm, stimulate students' interest in learning, strengthen students' thinking ability and promote the cultivation of students' independent learning ability, which can obviously improve the efficiency of classroom teaching and learning. On the contrary, the lead-in with poor effect often fails to attract students' attention at the beginning, and as time goes by, such classroom teaching will make students lose interest and unable to talk about the effectiveness of classroom teaching. At present, the instruction design of lead-in in English class in some universities is really unsatisfactory. This study took 60 English lessons of a university in China as research objects, and studied the lead-in subject, the lead-in time, the lead-in method and the lead-in effect in English lessons in order to provide useful references for college English teaching.

## II. DEFINITION

The so-called "lead-in", in Chinese, the "lead-in" is also known as "prologue", "introduction", and "warm-up". In English, "lead-in" is called "warming up", "warm-up", and "lead in" and so on. At present, scholars at home and abroad have given many different understandings on the connotation

of "lead-in". In the 1970s, Turney (1975) believed that "the lead-in is the first part of English classroom teaching, which aims to convey the learning objectives and help students to do a good job in the mental state of research"[1]. Willis (1996) divided the task-based classroom teaching into three steps and the classroom lead-in is a pre-task. In the classroom teaching process, teachers take nearly five minutes to complete the task of lead-in before the implementation phase. Arends (2000) believed that "the lead-in as the first part of the teaching process, which is a teaching skill"[2]. For Chinese scholars, Xi Xiao (2002) pointed out that "Lead-in is the way in which teachers organize students' psychological preparation and knowledge preparation before class and guide students into learning at the beginning of a new teaching content and activity"[3]. Changhuan Yuan (2002) put forward a different understanding of the concept of introduction. "Lead-in is a series of teaching behaviors in which teachers use situational teaching methods to attract students' attention, stimulate their interest in learning, make them clear about their learning purpose, form learning motivation and establish a connection between knowledge" [4]. Baoda Wang (2001) believed "Lead-in is a way for teachers to guide students into new knowledge and learning situations with purpose, direction and method before teaching new knowledge"[5]. Baofa Peng (2011) gave the definition of the concept, "Lead-in skill is a way of teaching behavior that a teacher uses a certain way to let the students see the teaching goal, teaching content and teaching methods, guide the student to make a cognitive preparation and make them into the learning situation, which happened in a new teaching content and teaching activities at the beginning of a class"[6]. To sum up, lead-in is an important teaching step for teachers to guide students to quickly enter the learning state.

## III. RESEARCH DESIGN

### A. Research Object

This study is based on 60 lessons taught by 30 English teachers in a university. Each teacher provided 2 lessons, and 30 teachers have less than 10 years' teaching experience.

### B. Research Purpose

This study aims to reveal the current situation and influence factors of English classroom lead-in, and put

forward some reasonable suggestions to improve college English teachers' teaching skills of lead-in.

*C. Research Methods*

Classroom observation method and interview method will be used comprehensively in this study, and qualitative research will be adopted.

*D. Research Tools*

The classroom observation record table designed by Chinese scholar Haiying Bo was used as the main research tool in this study, and the classroom observation records were made from the following four dimensions: lead-in subject, lead-in time, lead-in method and lead-in effect.

**IV. RESEARCH RESULTS**

*A. Research Results of Lead-in Subject*

We say active participation and repeated practice can help students get more gains. Therefore, it is particularly important to establish students' status as the main body of the class. It is found that the main body of lead-in in the classroom teaching in D university is mainly divided into two types: teachers made a lead-in alone and teachers and students made a lead-in together.

TABLE I. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION RESULTS OF THE SUBJECT OF LEAD-IN

Lead-in Subject	Lessons	Percent
Teacher	20	33%
Teacher and student	40	67%

As can be seen from "Table I", among the 60 lessons, 40 lessons were introduced by teachers and students together, accounting for 67% of the total number of observations, and 33% of the lessons were introduced by teachers alone. Through classroom observation, it is found that teachers completed the introduction by themselves into two situations: one is teachers completed the lead-in by direct introduction

method (16 times); the other is teachers completed the lead-in by means of word test (4 times). Compared with teachers' individual introduction, teachers generally adopt more methods in the form of teachers and students' joint introduction.

*B. Research Results of Lead-in Time*

Generally speaking, most scholars suggested the lead-in time of English class should be reasonably controlled within 3-5 minutes. If the time used for class introduction is too long, it will be complicated, and the extra time will seriously affect the progress of later teaching. If the time used for lead-in is too short, it is easy to cause problems such as the effect of class introduction is not as good as expected.

TABLE II. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION RESULTS OF THE TIME OF LEAD-IN

Lead-in Time	Lessons	Percent
Within 1 minute	14	24%
1 to 2 minutes	18	30%
2 to 3 minutes	10	17%
3 to 4 minutes	10	17%
4 to 5 minutes	8	13%
More than 5 minutes	4	7%

As can be seen from "Table II", among the 60 class examples, 42 classes have less than 3 minutes in the step of lead-in, accounting for 71% of the total number of observations. In other words, most classes have too short lead-in time. There are 18 times are within 3-5 minutes, and 4 times are over 5 minutes, which indicated that very few instructions took too long.

*C. Research Results of Lead-in Method*

Among all the existing researches, scholars have got most abundant researches on the types of classroom lead-in methods. Haiying Bo (2011) divided the lead-in methods into knowledge introduction, emotion introduction, interest introduction and operation introduction. This study referred to its research dimension for classroom observation.

TABLE III. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION RESULTS OF THE METHOD OF LEAD-IN

Lead-in Types	Lead-in Methods	Lessons	Percent
Knowledge lead-in	Direct introduction	18	30%
	Comparison introduction	0	0
	Review knowledge introduction	10	17%
	Aphoristic introduction	0	0
	Interpretation introduction	0	0
Emotional lead-in	Practice introduction	4	7%
	Conversion introduction	6	10%
	Intuitive introduction	18	30%
	Situation introduction	2	3%
	Experience introduction	0	0
Fun lead-in	Problem introduction	8	13%
	Suspense introduction	0	0
	Songs introduction	4	7%
	Acting introduction	0	0
	Games introduction	0	0
Operation lead-in	Riddles introduction	0	0
	Stories introduction	0	0
	Experiments introduction	0	0

According to the statistical results in "Table III", among the four types of lead-in methods, teachers tend to use emotional lead-in and knowledge lead-in, but seldom use interest introduction and never use the method of operation lead-in. Among them, direct introduction is most frequently used, 18 times. The introduction method of review knowledge was used 10 times. The introduction method of practice was used 4 times. The methods of comparison introduction, aphorism introduction and explanation introduction were all used 0 times, that is to say, those three methods were never used for teachers. In the dimension of emotional introduction, the frequency of intuitive introduction is the highest, accounting for 30% and 18 times in total. Secondly, the method of problem introduction is more commonly used, 8 times in total, 6 times in conversation introduction, and finally, the method of situation introduction has 2 times in total, the methods of experience introduction and suspense introduction have not been used. Compared with the use of knowledge introduction and emotion introduction, the use of interest introduction is quite small. In the fun lead-in, only the method of song introduction was used, accounting for 7%, the other methods were not used. Experiment introduction has never been used by teachers.

*D. Research Results of Lead-in Effectiveness*

Through the observation of 60 class examples, it is found that most of the classroom lead-in basically realized the effective.

TABLE IV. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION RESULTS OF THE EFFECTIVE OF LEAD-IN

<b>Lead-in Effective</b>	<b>Lessons</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Stable learning mood	42	70%
Attract students' attention	46	76%
Stimulate interest in learning	36	60%
Communication between teachers and students	30	30%
Define teaching tasks	40	66%
Enlighten students' thinking	34	56%
Set the keynote of the whole class	40	66%

As can be seen from the above "Table IV", most introductions in English class can play their roles. For example, there are 46 times of introductions that can attract students' attention, 42 times of introductions that can stabilize students' learning mood, 40 times of introductions that can clarify teaching tasks, and 40 times of introductions that can determine the keynote of this class. Relatively speaking, in the 60 class examples fewer lessons can stimulate students' interest in learning and enlighten students' thinking, among which 36 times of introductions can stimulate students' interest in learning and 34 times of introductions can enlighten students' thinking. The weak role of classroom introduction is to communicate the feelings between teachers and students, a total of 30 times. In addition, in the process of classroom observation, it is found that very few of the content introduced into the classroom had nothing to do with the teaching of this course, and there appeared the phenomenon of "doing an introduction is just for an introduction", which should arouse people's attention.

V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

*A. Analysis and Discussion of Lead-in Subject*

The research showed that there are two types of English class introduction in D university: teachers' introduction alone and teachers and students' introduction together, among which teachers' introduction alone accounts for 33% and teachers and students' introduction together accounts for 67%. Due to the different emphasis on the class, teachers have different understandings of the form of teachers' introduction alone or teachers and students' introduction together. Every form has its own advantage, so teachers may not be limited to which one in the selection process, but teachers should know that no matter which one is chosen, students' subjectivity cannot be ignored. The main problem existing in the introduction of English classes in some universities is that students' subjectivity was ignored, which is embodied in the fact that although teachers are aware of the need to respect students' subjectivity in the teaching process, there is a great discount in the actual introduction of classroom teaching. The main reasons for this phenomenon are as follows: On the one hand, teachers ignored the main position of students in the lead-in process. Teachers simply regarded the lead-in as the introduction of a classroom teaching. In the interview, some teachers said, "due to the limitations of various conditions, I prefer the way of teachers' guiding students into the classroom. In actual teaching activities, activities cannot be carried out completely in accordance with students' enthusiasm, otherwise it is difficult to control the classroom." It is worth noting that the way of introduction by teachers alone can easily lead to the situation that teachers speak freely and the students listen silently. On the other hand, teachers' understanding of respecting students' subjectivity is deviant. Some teachers who participated in the interview thought that "my introduction in the class basically respects the dominant position of students, because I have tried every means to let students participate in class activities as much as possible". It can be seen that teachers believe respecting students' dominant position is to let students participate in teaching activities as much as possible, which is one-sided. The so-called respect for the dominant position of students is not only to let students participate, but also from the perspective of students' personality, based on the consideration of learning situation and design students' favorite way of introduction, so as to stimulate students' interest in learning.

*B. Analysis and Discussion of Lead-in Time*

Studies have shown that the best time to start a class is within 3-5 minutes. In the 60 classroom observations, it is found that more than half of the instructions were less than 3 minutes, and some of the instructions were more than 5 minutes. Therefore, it can be seen that the instruction time of English class was inappropriate. The author believes that the short time of classroom introduction may not be completely undesirable, and its measurement criterion should be whether it can achieve the expected introduction effect and whether it can give play to the classroom introduction as a powerful means of teaching. If it takes more time in doing an introduction, then on the one hand, the efficiency of

classroom introduction may be reduced, on the other hand, it will occupy the necessary time of teaching content. Scientific and reasonable allocation of teaching time can effectively improve teaching efficiency. The best time for students to think is 5-20 minutes in the class, during which students' thinking level is higher. Teachers use too much time to lead in and do not grasp the time for classroom teaching, the result is that it is difficult to improve the teaching effect. As for the problem of using more time on lead-in, the research found that the specific reasons are as follows: On the one hand, teachers have a poor concept of time. In actual teaching, teachers' concept of time is one of the important factors that affect the use of teaching time in classroom teaching. Teachers with a strong sense of time will estimate the time spent in each teaching step before class and can flexibly control the teaching activities, while teachers with a weak sense of time will prolong the time spent in the teaching lead-in step because of their poor classroom control ability. On the other hand, the design of classroom introduction is unreasonable. For example, when using the method of game introduction, teachers should consider how much time each step needs at least, how long it takes to complete a game, whether to repeat or not, but obviously they can do that. It can be said that if the teaching design is not supplemented and the actual situation is not fully considered, it would be easy to lead to the problem of introduction time overrunning.

#### *C. Analysis and Discussion of Lead-in Methods*

The selection of introduction methods is the key step to complete the lead-in step in class, which directly affects the final effect of the introduction. The selection and use of introduction methods should be flexible. According to the classroom observation records, among the four kinds of introduction methods, teachers tend to use emotional introduction and knowledge introduction, but seldom use interest introduction and never use operation introduction. Specifically, the most frequently used introduction methods are direct introduction and intuitive introduction, which indicates that teachers still prefer to use direct introduction to organize teaching, while some introduction methods are not used by teachers at all. The main reasons for this phenomenon are as follows: On the one hand, teachers' own teaching skills are insufficient. The teaching skill is the comprehensive teaching practice ability which teachers gradually formed in the actual teaching based on the theory. Introduction skill refers to a kind of teaching behavior that teachers adopt appropriate teaching means and teaching methods to guide students into learning state at the beginning of a new learning content and process according to teaching objectives. If there are some limitations in teachers' introduction skills, they cannot flexibly use various introduction methods to complete classroom introduction. On the other hand, about the limitation of teachers' teaching style, there are no two identical leaves in the world, and every teacher's teaching style is different. Some teachers focus on mastering the classroom, so the teacher will focus on the use of direct introduction, some teachers are willing to active classroom atmosphere, and they will use game introduction, riddle introduction and other methods which

are easy to active learning atmosphere. Due to the limitation of teaching style, the methods available to teachers are not rich enough.

#### *D. Analysis and Discussion of Lead-in Effectiveness*

According to the research results, most of the introductions are effective, but there are still some problems in some classes. The existence of these problems is mainly due to the lack of teachers' understanding of the role of introduction. To be specific, the role of introduction is not divided in teachers' mind, and the different functions of introduction as a teaching step are not clear for teachers. In the interview, some teachers said: "I think the main purpose of the introduction is to attract students' attention, let them return to the classroom from the break, and have a good mental state to continue learning." It can be seen that some teachers believe that an introduction is necessary to improve students' learning effect. However, they only know that an introduction can attract students' attention, but ignore the existence of other functions, such as clear teaching objectives and stimulate students' interest in learning. This is also the main reason why some teachers focus on attracting students' attention by introduction in class and neglect other functions.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the research and analysis of the present situation of college English classroom lead-in, it is easy to find that there are the following problems: The subjectivity of students is not enough, the time allocation of the lead-in is not reasonable, the method of lead-in is single, the role of lead-in is not fully played, teacher's understanding of lead-in is not sufficient.

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