

Probe on Professional English Teaching on Agricultural Resources and Environment

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ABSTRACT

Professional English teaching on agricultural resources and environment contains the same teaching procedures as other courses, but almost every procedure has the problems that other courses basically do not exist, such as the allocation of teachers, teaching materials, teaching focus, teaching methods and course assessment and assessment methods, etc. In this article, the author analyzes the current situation and puts forward corresponding suggestions for promoting the progress and improvement of professional English teaching.

Keywords: *agricultural resources and environment, Professional English teaching, teaching procedures*

1. INTRODUCTION

The course of professional English on agricultural resources and environment is set as a professional limited elective course in Qingdao Agricultural University, which belongs to the professional development course. Through the study of this course, students will be familiar with the characteristics of professional English literature, and master the commonly-used vocabulary of professional English, translation skills and key points of academic English writing, on the base of which, students could read professional English journals and books, translate professional literature and communicate simply.

Class teaching is guided by lecturers and mainly participated by students. It pays attention to the cultivation of students' self-study ability. Students are encouraged to consult relevant English materials to understand the latest research progress and development trends in related fields abroad.

Through the study of this course, it is hoped to cultivate professional talents who have the professional knowledge of agricultural resources and environment, and have the ability of reading, writing, listening, speaking and translating professional English.

Professional English teaching of agricultural resources and environment contains the same teaching links as other courses, but almost every link has problems that other courses do not exist, which are worth mentioning and discussing.

2. PRESENT SITUATION and PROBLEMS

2.1. Allocation of teachers

First of all, the problem of the allocation of teachers, that is, who is to teach?

Agricultural resources and environment specialty, as a multi-disciplinary discipline, includes soil science, soil analysis, plant nutrition, plant and fertilizer analysis, plant nutrition research method, crop fertilization principle and technology, and involves plant physiology, environmental science and other disciplines.

The content of professional English of agricultural resources and environment covers the above courses, and is mainly taught in the main courses. But, Every Field Has Its Master and the characteristics of lecturers in colleges and universities are that they specialize in their own subject. In addition to professional English teaching, their teaching and scientific research work is generally focused on a certain professional field. However, in order to ensure the continuity of professional English learning and do a good job in the connection of various disciplines, lecturers should not only be familiar with their own research field, but also have a deeper understanding of the knowledge and theory of other disciplines.

In addition, lecturers should have a high level of English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. Only in this way can the teaching contents of specialized courses in English be well integrated

together, and the Professional English teaching can be well completed.

However, the reality is that the lecturers of professional English course are proficient in teaching and scientific research of their own research field, and experience certain difficulty to use English to narrate professional knowledge which involves reading, writing, listening, speaking and translating.

Moreover, with the increasing pressure of scientific research in colleges and universities, lecturers are not only shouldering the teaching task of professional English course and several other courses, but also need to carry out scientific research at the same time, which is difficult for them to spent a lot of time and energy in only one course. In view of this situation, universities or colleges should purposefully select professional teachers to improve their English level, especially their ability of listening and speaking.

In addition, a certain number of professional lecturers go abroad to cooperate as visiting scholars through the fund of China /Shandong Scholarship every year, and most of them choose English-speaking countries for long-term or short-term cooperation. The expertise of these teachers should be gave full play and enriched the teacher reserve of professional English teaching.

2.2. Course-choose requirements

Secondly, is it necessary to set standard for students who would choose to learn professional English? That is, who to teach?

According to the "College English Teaching Syllabus" issued by the Ministry of education in 1999 ^[1], students must take course in professional English at the stage of application improvement after completing the learning tasks in the basic stage and reaching CET-4 or CET-6, that is, students with CET-4 or above are qualified to study professional English

However, most of the students in agricultural colleges and universities come from rural areas. Their English foundation is poor and their ability to use English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating is weak, which have already made it very hard to learn public English. In the teaching period of professional English on agricultural resources and environment, the author found that more than half of the students still have difficulties in listening and translation, and the vast majority of students do not have the ability to speak and write; even those who have passed the CET-4, they are relatively weak in speaking, writing and translating, which is not the same as their reading level.

In addition, English learning has lost its important position in the past due to the influence of the whole environment. From middle schools to colleges and universities, English education has been weakened. Many colleges and universities, including our university, have decoupled CET-4 from degree awarding ^[2], which makes students more lack of

motivation to learn English, and their overall level is more and more lost.

In view of the above situation, and based on the relationship between the future development plan and English, students who plan to continue their further education after graduation or those who intend to enter foreign-related agricultural enterprises will maintain their previous initiative and constantly improve; while the remaining students will choose to meet the minimum English standard required by the University for graduates. As far as graduation feedback is concerned, except for those who continue to pursue postgraduate studies, those who are directly employed have little environment and need to apply professional English.

Therefore, based on the students' English level and their future planning needs for English, it is necessary to set the elective standards for students who want to take the course in agricultural resources and environment professional English. First, students who have no demand for professional English or even English in the future planning and development should not choose them. They should not take courses in order to collect academic points or follow the trend; second, on the basis of the above, they also need to have a good English foundation, Pass CET-4 at least to ensure the teaching effect.

2.3. Teaching materials

Thirdly, the problem of teaching materials, that is, teach with what?

At present, the lack of suitable teaching materials for the professional English teaching of agricultural resources and environment, is a common problem faced by most agricultural and forestry universities in China^[3].

Lecturers usually choose their own professional English textbooks or collect teaching materials and contents in the form of self compiled textbooks^[4, 5].

Professional English teaching of agricultural resources and environment in our university adopts self compiled teaching materials, the contents of which is taken from the original English materials, involving the courses mentioned above, and some general contents are selected. The content of each part is arranged in a gradual order from easy understanding to difficult one. On the basis of taking into account students' English level, the quality of teaching content is guaranteed ; Meanwhile, the important academic journals of this specialty are introduced to students, such as *Geoderma*, *European Journal of Soil Science*, *Soil Science Society of America Journal*, *Plant and Soil*, *Journal of Plant Nutrition and Soil Science*, *Environmental Science and Technology and Agriculture Ecosystem and Environment*, to encourage them to learn about the new progress in this field internationally.

However, one's own views are inevitably deficient,

which needs to be improved by learning from each other. Therefore, it is suggested that experienced lecturers should be organized to compile specialized English textbooks suitable for Agricultural Resources and Environment specialty.

In addition, the most commonly used professional English words could be introduced by professional lecturers when teaching the corresponding courses, so that students could master and be familiar with the most commonly used terms in these courses in advance, so as to lay a foundation for the future professional English learning.

2.4. Focus of teaching

Fourthly, what is the focus of teaching? Namely, what to teach?

"College English Teaching Syllabus" clearly stipulates the teaching goal of Public English, that is, to cultivate students' strong reading ability, certain listening, speaking, writing and translation ability, so that they can use English as a tool to exchange information^[1]. It can be seen that reading is the first requirement of college English teaching, and it has always been the focus of college English teaching.

Due to the limited class hours, listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation cannot be developed equally or comprehensively. Moreover, from the perspective of CET-4, CET-6 and university assessment internally, the important order of the other four is listening, writing, speaking and translating, which makes students' reading level higher than other four. But, the main application of professional English is translation besides reading, especially from Chinese to English, according to the students' needs for further study and the practical application of professional English after graduation.

Although a small number of high-level graduates could become researchers or scholars in future, can directly write research papers in English, most of them still would write their research results in Chinese first and then translate them into English according to the habits of most researchers or scholars in China.

However, because public English teaching does not attach importance to translation, students lack the necessary basic knowledge and skills of translation and the translation can not accurately reflect the original text, which has become an important problem to be solved in the teaching of professional English.

In addition, it is greatly increased for students in further study to have opportunities to proceed professional communication with their foreign counterparts and even to go abroad for further education, which strengthen the requirement for the ability of listening and speaking. Therefore, the focus of professional English Teaching for agricultural resources and environment specialty should be to help students get familiar with the basic vocabulary of their major, cultivate their ability to read and translate the

original English materials, and train their basic skills of writing academic papers in English, so that students can basically carry out academic communication in English. For this purpose, Professional English teaching should take reading as the basis of understanding, listening and speaking as the means of communication, and translation as the way to improve.

2.5. Teaching methods

Fifthly, what kinds of teaching methods should be applied? How to teach?

As for classroom teaching, the consensus is that the traditional "teacher talk only" teaching method leads to less communication and discussion between lecturers and students and between students, which cannot arouse students' learning enthusiasm and improve their language application ability. Compared with the traditional teaching mode, students are more willing to accept interactive teaching and task-based teaching methods^[3].

In teaching procedure, in order to enhance students' sense of participation in the classroom, lecturers could give several tasks of different English proficiency requirements in advance, let students choose one of them according to their English proficiency level and carry out interactive classroom practice in groups, such as reading paragraphs, translating simple or complex sentences, discussing and exchanging a certain professional topic, introducing the latest development of the field, etc. After the task of each group is finished, the other students evaluate the completion of the group in English, so as to achieve the purpose of teaching-learning promoting and improve teaching effect.

In terms of teaching tools, some professional knowledge and syntactic difficulties could be displayed and solved through multimedia courseware, and the application of network, audio-visual materials, film and television materials should be strengthened in the teaching of professional English.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that although students' English level is uneven and most of them have weak English foundation, it is necessary to give timely affirmation and encouragement to any progress made by students in professional English learning in the teaching process, so that students can establish self-confidence.

2.6. Curriculum assessment and its methods

Lastly, how to carry out curriculum assessment? What kind of assessment method should be chosen?

In most colleges and universities, the composition of professional English examination results is 30% in teaching process and 70% in final examination. This assessment emphasizes the final examination and weakens the assessment in the teaching process.

In the course assessment of professional English of agricultural resources and environment in our college, the proportion of process assessment is slightly higher, accounting for 40%, which mainly includes students' class attendance, homework practice, answering questions and group class performance.

The final examination score accounts for 60% of the total score and is carried out combined with the scientific research training in same term, which includes two sides. One is to ask students to read their instructor's research papers and choose the content they are interested in and translate from Chinese to English, the other is to choose a scientific research paper published in the last 12 months in excellent English journals designated in the field, and there is no repetition among students. The content, chosen by students with same tutor, should not be repeated.

This assessment method has increased the proportion of ordinary performance from 30% to 40%. However, the proportion is still insufficient according to the application nature and teaching effect of professional English. It is necessary to further increase the proportion of ordinary teaching, emphasize the process, weaken the results, and comprehensively evaluate the basis and progress of everyone.

Moreover, due to the combination of scientific research training, the final examination not only tests the learning effect of professional English, but also enhances the students' understanding of the research direction of their professional field and the research field of their tutors by consulting and translating the scientific research papers of them, so as to let the students understand the research frontier of their major by consulting and translating the English professional journal articles. This evaluation method is very effective and will continue to be used. According to the nature of the course and many years of teaching experience, the author thinks that the proportion of ordinary assessment and final assessment should be reversed. That is, the ratio of process assessment is significant (up to 70%), and the final assessment is small (down to 30%), which is more useful for

improving teaching effect and improving students' ability.

3. CONCLUSION

In summary, there is a certain distance between teaching effect and the expected goal in practical teaching, and there are many problems. The author analyzes these problems, and puts forward the corresponding improvement measures, and discusses with colleagues engaged in professional English teaching in similar colleges and universities to make progress together.

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