

Reflections on the International General Examination Teaching in Chinese Universities Taking IELTS Teaching as an Example

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ABSTRACT

IELTS (International English language testing system) acts as an official and international exam that organized by the British Council. IELTS pays more attention to the examination of students' practical English language ability, and initiates a comprehensive examination of English ability from listening, speaking, reading and writing, it provides a "benchmark" with great credibility and influence for the establishment of Global English assessment standards. The IELTS teaching is also introduce to Chinese university in order to satisfy the need of students who are major in the Chinese-foreign cooperation running programme. In this paper it will be argued that whether the teaching of IELTS in Chinese university is effective and scientific. In this passage, with the use of the experience of university teachers and the real teaching plan they made. The first part will introduce the widely use of IELTS, the second part will outline the key points on the weakness about IELTS teaching for Chinese university such as passing the exam become the only aim of teaching, focusing on teachers too much and the plan of teaching is not scientific, memorizing all vocabulary is without selecting and relying too much on the skills, the third part will provide with some methods about how to improve the teaching quality on the IELTS for Chinese university such as applying culture introduction to the teaching of IELTS, teachers need to make more scientific teaching plan and carefully analysis the marking criterion of IELTS, making fully use of the other part of material in the exam and students should pay more attention to practical exercise rather than some tricks. And the final part will conclude with a further view on the development of teaching quality in the IELTS for Chinese universities.

Keywords: *IELTS teaching, Chinese universitites, improvement, problem analysis*

test in China in order to figure out the way to improve the quality of IELTS teaching in Chinese universities.

1. INTRODUCTION

IELTS (International English language testing system)acts as an official and international exam that organized by the British Council. IELTS pays more attention to the examination of students' practical English language ability and initiates a comprehensive examination of English ability from listening, speaking, reading and writing, it provides a "benchmark" with great credibility and influence for the establishment of Global English assessment standards. In this paper it will be argued that whether the teaching of IELTS for Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run programme in Chinese university is effective and scientific. Drawing upon the work of Kramsch Claire, Heyifei, the paper will show the weakness about IELTS teaching for Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run project and some methods about how to improve the teaching quality of the IELTS for Chinese university. Whether the teaching quality of IELTS for Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run programme can be improved? The writer use the approach of comparing the statics and outline of IELTS and similar

2. CURRENT PROBLEMS

First, passing the exam become the only aim of teaching. The traditional English teaching in China is based on the idea of examination-oriented education, but the goal of IELTS is fundamentally different from that of traditional English teaching. The objectives of IELTS are guiding students to improve their learning ability in English and lay a solid foundation for students to live and study abroad, for example, the material for IELTS reading part covered a wide range of areas including social sciences, meteorology, mechanical engineering, in order to develop their fluency in reading English newspapers or long professional academic literature [1]. Some university teachers without careful analysis the standard for evaluation of IELTS are using the examination outline of CET4 AND CET6 to teach IELTS and they also form wrong attitude towards IELTS based on that CET 4 or 6 can be regarded as pass if the grades of candidate accounted 60% of the total grades. Some

universities will stop the English lesson if their students pass the CET and pay less attention to the real improvement of English ability. This lead to the lack of cognitive ability and result in the lack of the information or background knowledge to get better results in the writing part [2].Among the top 40 places of origin, the testers from German and Greece have achieved the first and second place with 7.37 and 6.97.The average individual band scores achieved by testers from mainland of China only reaches 5.76, but the average individual band scores achieved by testers from Taiwan and Hongkong of China that introduce teaching and the using of English widely both above 6. This typically shows the weakness of IELTS teaching in the mainland.

Second, focusing on teachers too much and the plan of teaching is not scientific. The Traditional College English course is public basic course with a large number of students at least 70 or 80, it is difficult to achieve one-to-one interaction with students. And the normal process of class including these steps such as discussing the topic and background knowledge, then read by themselves and finish the exercise after reading, finally, teachers will explain the vocabulary and grammar even the structure of the passage. But this kind of traditional teaching method is difficult to mobilize students [1]. Take the teaching plan made by the universities. For example, relevant IELTS classes accounted 40% of total class hours [3]. Meanwhile, with the document published by the British council, the performance of Chinese students from mainland is not well and they ranked thirty-four among the forty countries. These four parts of IELTS grades are of difference, the only part that grades above 6 is reading and the grades of writing is the lowest among these four parts. Although the average total score has improved since 2012, the average grades of speaking and writing are lower compared with the other parts [4].

Year	Overall	Speaking	Writing	Reading	Listening
2017	5.76	5.39	5.37	6.11	5.90
2016	5.64	5.28	5.24	6.01	5.79

Figure 1 The average scores of Chinese students

Third, the students are told to memorize all vocabulary without selection. Vocabulary is the basis of learning English and the improvement of English must be based on the mastery of a large number of words. Meanwhile, reading can help readers better understand the meaning of words in context and vocabulary accumulation. This theory has been tested by Linguists that foreign language learners' reading accuracy is directly proportional to their vocabulary and this theory has been applied in other different areas. We can compared the vocabulary requirements of CET4 and CET6 which are the compulsory exam for university students. The vocabulary requirements of CET4 and CET6 are 4500 and 6000 respectively, but that of IELTS reaches 6000 and 8000. The simply compare of the amount is not

meaningful and apparent, so we move on to the command requirement of these vocabulary. The vocabulary of CET4 and CET6 requires reading, listening, spelling and specific use. About 50% of the questions are about meaning discrimination, or to distinguish between the use of four words or words that are similar in shape or form [5]. But for IELTS, it focuses more on the actual use of words and the understanding of words in context. In reality, many teachers mixed the requirement of vocabulary of these exams and misunderstand the real aiming of memorizing vocabulary [1].

Fourth, the teaching focuses too much on the skills. As a result, students rely too much on the skills. Compared with CET4 and CET6 reading that able to read and understand practical English materials and academic literature which are common in work and life, IELTS reading involves more and more skills, because the latter has the characteristics of long length, large vocabulary, wide topics, and many types of topics. The most famous IELTS reading skills consist of two aspects: skimming and scanning. Searching for the location of sentence and key words in the sentence are other aspects of skills for IELTS. The use of these skills is useful without deny but recent years, IELTS examiners have noticed this phenomenon and try to use more matching questions [1].

3. SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS

Firstly, culture introduction should be added to the teaching of IELTS in the university. Kramsch Claire has written in an article that Culture is the fifth indispensable skill in foreign language learning, besides listening, speaking, reading and writing, and cultural factors should permeate into English learning from the beginning of language learning [6]. So, during the process of teaching, teachers should encourage students to read more relevant material about the topic of the passage and add more cultural factors, in order to rise students interests in learning the foreign country culture. This will help the students in improving the efficiency of preparing for the IELTS. As for reading part, they will learn more about the background of a topic and this will reduce their stress during taking the exam. And for listening part and speaking part even the writing part, this will help students to figure out the native way of foreigners' expression and get used to the thing that mentioned in the conversation. This problem can also be solved by increasing the number of foreign teachers who participated in the classes or provide students with more chance to be exchange students to study in the field. Chinese universities can also send teachers to study abroad or recruit teachers with a foreign education background. This will help them in forming a better understanding of foreign culture and teaching with more effective way.

Secondly, teachers need to make more scientific teaching plan and carefully analysis the marking criterion of IELTS. Based on the survey that done by the British council, Self-drive is the main driving force for IELTS candidates to achieve their current English level [3]. So when making the teaching plan, teachers need to provide more time with

students themselves in order to encourage them to learn more about English via watching English movies or reading English novel or journal magazines. This kind of way will help them rise the interest of learning English. Meanwhile, the careful analysis of marking criterion of IELTS by teachers will certainly diminish the harmful of using the outline of CET.

Thirdly, students should be taught to make full use of the other part of material in the exam. Teachers should try to use the other part of the material provided in the exam. For example, the listening material in the exam could offer the sample of how to communicate with foreign people and reading material will help students figure out how to organize the structure of a passage and how to express personal ideas about a topic. Meanwhile, the preparation of each part of the exam should not be separated and the skills in the each part could be gathered to work out better results [7].

Fourthly, students should pay more attention to practical exercise rather than some tricks. Students should pay more attention to follow the preparing tips offered by the British council and change the habit of relying on the tricks of passing the exam that collected by some "experienced teachers". For example, many IELTS teachers will tell their students that the True/False question in the reading exam not always begin with Not given and ended with false. But these tricks are just collected by them and not be tested as settled rules. By using these tricks, the real aim of preparing and taking IELTS are misunderstand [8] This will make students face more difficulties during the time abroad and has negative impact on their learning state. So, students need to change their attitude towards IELTS and regard the process of learning IELTS as a way to improve their English skills that necessary for their further study abroad rather than simply an exam.

4. CONCLUSION

The teaching of IELTS in Chinese university has become an inevitable trend in China, but IELTS curriculum planning and design has a long way to go. This paper analyzes the misunderstanding of IELTS teaching in Chinese university such as passing the exam become the only aim of teaching, focusing on teachers too much and the plan of teaching is not scientific, memorizing all vocabulary is without selecting and relying too much on the skills. And discussing the improvement and promotion of IELTS teaching in Chinese university by applying culture introduction to the teaching of IELTS, teachers need to make more scientific teaching plan and carefully analysis the marking criterion of IELTS, making fully use of the other part of material in the exam and students should pay more attention to practical exercise rather than some tricks. The planning and construction of IELTS courses run by Chinese-foreign cooperation should arise our attention, only in this way our IELTS teaching can make progress and achieve the real sustainable development.

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