



# A Study on the Teaching Methods of Chinese EFL Teachers

## -Based on the Six Principles of TESOL and Krashen's Input Hypothesis

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**Abstract.** With the accelerated development of world multi-polarization and economic globalization, the learning needs of English as a global language are constantly increasing. Compared to the international community, and influenced by traditional educational concepts and cross-cultural differences, the shortcomings of English teaching in China have gradually emerged, and the disadvantages of Chinese English teachers' teaching methods have also sparked deep reflection in the education community. In native English-speaking countries, the development of TESOL teaching mode has become complete and forward-looking. The Six Principles of TESOL and Krashen's Input Hypothesis in TESOL related research are particularly valuable for Chinese English teachers to learn from. This article delves into the above theories, analyzes and compares them, then concludes that the Six Principles of TESOL coincide with the Core Competencies of Chinese English Discipline. Based on TESOL teaching theory, suggestions are proposed for improvement in the teaching methods of Chinese English teachers, and the author is looking forwards to a bright future of English subject education in China.

**Keywords:** Six principles of TESOL, Core Competencies of Chinese English Discipline, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Professional development of teachers, Course design.

## 1 Introduction

English is currently recognized as a global language of communication, and the objects of English education can be divided into native English language learners and non-native English language learners according to their mother tongue <sup>[1]</sup>. In 1966, TESOL, a foreign English teaching program, was first launched in the United States. For many years, this project has focused on the innovation of English teaching theory and the cultivation of excellent English teachers. In the 21st century, in order to inject energy for international cultural exchange and meet the learning needs of non-native English speakers, experts in this field proposed six principles for English teaching in

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the new era at the TESOL conference in 2018. The Six Principles of TESOL treat all steps of English teaching as a harmonious and unified whole <sup>[2]</sup>. It reveals the essence and laws of English teaching, serves as the cornerstone of innovation in English education in various countries, and is a last-standing lighthouse in the sea of education.

Among the numerous studies on TESOL, the Monitoring Model Theory of Second Language Acquisition proposed by American linguist Krashen in the late 1970s is undoubtedly a shining star. The model consists of five hypotheses, namely the Acquisition-learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitoring Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective-filter Hypothesis. The most noteworthy one is the Input Hypothesis <sup>[3]</sup>.

Krashen explains the Input Hypothesis as follows: in second language learning, acquisition only occurs when there is "comprehensible input". That is to say, only when the language input is fully understood by the recipient can the necessary grammar of the language be automatically obtained. This hypothesis provides a specific and scientific approach for later English teaching.

In China, building an educational power has always been regarded as a fundamental project for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and people demand that education be given priority <sup>[4]</sup>. As a bridge for communication between China and the world, China has listed English in the three basic disciplines and arranged English courses at different educational stages, aiming to improve the comprehensive English quality of its citizens.

However, due to the profound impact of traditional educational concepts, Chinese English teachers still have many disadvantages in their English teaching methods, such as obvious exam-oriented tendency, single teaching content and methods, lack of critical thinking ability, and neglect of students' subjective initiative.

Therefore, in order to change this situation, this article analyzes the shortcomings of Chinese English teachers based on TESOL teaching theory, and lists good methods in TESOL teaching theory for reference in English teaching in China. The author hopes this article can trigger widespread reflection and contribute to solving the dilemma of English teaching in China.

## **2 Six Principles of TESOL & the Core Competencies of Chinese English Discipline**

### **2.1 Similarities**

The Six Principles of TESOL guide the professional development of teachers and are new requirements and achievements in English teaching in the new era. Although the principles are mainly aimed at non-native English learners in the United States that had certain differences with the actual situation in China, there are many similarities between the English teaching reform and the Six Principles of TESOL in China's current basic education stage <sup>[5]</sup>.

**Know the Learners and Create Conditions for Language Learning** Know the learners is a prerequisite and key to implementing teaching. The TESOL Association believes that teachers should not only understand students' difficulties in knowledge, but also know their previous language background, social background, and even cultural background, so that teachers can prepare learning materials more effectively and ensure the accuracy of teaching. In the United States, schools collect relevant information through registration information cards and feedback to teachers to help them understand students' background information. Many states evaluate students' language, communication, and reading and writing abilities at the beginning of the new semester.

It's an important guarantee that teachers create a good learning atmosphere for students to acquire a new language. The TESOL Association believes that a good learning atmosphere includes physical atmosphere (student seat arrangement, peer mentor, etc.) and a psychological atmosphere (appropriate and timely communication and interviews with students). Creating a good learning atmosphere is beneficial for students to develop a sense of security can reduce anxiety and embarrassment caused by language barriers.

In ancient China, there were stories of Confucius teaching students according to their own aptitude, which is similar to the TESOL teaching principles. The Chinese nation has followed this teaching method since today.

At present, China's English Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High Schools (2017), based on core competencies, takes the three themes of "man and self", "man and society" and "man and nature" as important course content [6]. According to the document, "man" should not be an abstract concept, but should take students' cultural background and knowledge structure into the specific classroom teaching situation. In "man and self", learning can not be separated from individuals, family and community; in "man and society", learning cannot be separated from interpersonal relations, national culture and social hot spots; in "man and nature", learning cannot be separated from the interaction between human and environment. Therefore, only by knowing students in all aspects can teachers integrate curriculum design with relevant resources to meet students' learning needs.

**Course Design, Teaching Adaptation, Evaluation and Feedback** The TESOL Association believes that high-quality course design and teaching adaptation as needed are the core links in cultivating students' English learning abilities.

Firstly, teachers should establish clear teaching objectives and make them clear to students. After understanding the goals, students will adjust their own state, prepare for course tasks, and generate psychological expectations. This is conducive to students' self-management and self-regulation, and beneficial to the development of students' critical thinking. Secondly, teachers need to design the pathways to achieve their goals and provide 'comprehensible inputs' known as Krashen's Input Hypothesis through various channels and techniques. Krashen emphasizes that the level of input language needs to be higher than the current language proficiency of second language learners, but not too much higher.

This viewpoint is also known as the  $i+1$  theory in second language acquisition. If the current language level of a second language learner is  $i$ , the difficulty of language input

should be  $i+1$ , not  $i+2$  [7]. In other words, the difficulty of language input is higher than the second language proficiency of learners, so that they can understand most of the content of language input, but this input is still challenging for second language learners. The level of language input should not be too high above the language proficiency of learners to lose their confidence in acquiring, nor should it be too close to the language proficiency of learners to lose their motivation to manage the language.

After the input is completed, the teacher then outputs through real language use and practice. This requires teachers to provide meaningful content and teaching materials that can arouse students' interest. When the materials provided are related to students' values, worldviews, and beliefs, students' motivation to participate will be strengthened, which helps teachers implement teaching through various channels.

In addition, teachers should adjust their teaching according to the specific situation and should not be the slaves of the teaching plan [8]. TESOL states that teachers should test students for "what they know" and "what they don't know" based on their responses in class and then conduct more targeted teaching. For example, when facing students with weak language foundation, teachers should not blindly talk about knowledge, but need to provide relevant practice opportunities to students.

TESOL also gives some activities that can be used for reference, such as "10-2 activity", that is, teachers provide a 2-minute opportunity for students to communicate with relevant learning content after 10-minute teaching. Similar activities can also use "Turn and Talk" and "Think-Pair-Share" to allow all students to participate and speak. For students with weak language level, teachers try to simplify the content, use short and common words, avoid complex idioms and slang, and give students certain time to give feedback on the problems.

TESOL also believes that timely evaluation and feedback of students can not only test learning outcomes, but also an important way to promote language learning. Teachers can evaluate and give feedback on students' language development through the communication and interaction in class. When students make progress in language development, teachers make positive evaluation; when language mistakes occur, teachers should point out what mistakes are "negligent" and what mistakes are caused by the relevant knowledge bug. TESOL association also pointed out that while teachers timely evaluate and feedback students' language "mistakes", they should pay attention to the timing and method of error correction, and put forward methods such as "Explicit Correction", "Recasting Method" and "Self-repair" [5].

At present, China's English learning activities directed to the core quality of discipline, emphasize that teachers need to shift from "experts of teaching" to "designers of students' learning", and encourage students to actively construct the learning process and thinking development in the design of teaching [9]. Instead of just "completing" the teaching of lesson material, teachers should always consider the quality and whether the learning objectives can be met. They should also be able to modify their goals as needed. In order to timely modify the learning objectives and teaching materials in accordance with the current situation, teachers should always pay attention to the replies of the students as well as the quality of the genuine interaction between teachers and students.

### **Teachers Should Enhance Their Professional Ability by Practice and Cooperation**

Although the Six Principles of TESOL directly point to classroom teaching, their essence is inseparable from the professional development of teachers. Only when teachers realize their work is practical and creative, and lifelong influence the development of students, teachers will gradually realize their own value, thus the teaching process will become the process of realizing self-value and self-development of teachers and students. Then it will promote the individual specialization and promote the further development of teachers' profession<sup>[10]</sup>.

At present, more than 100 countries and regions, including France, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, have opened TESOL professional courses. TESOL curriculum seeks diversification and personalization in the field of English language teaching; In practice, TESOL promotes extensive participation of all people and obtains more professional practice opportunities<sup>[11]</sup>. Teachers' teaching concepts, teaching ability and teaching strategies all need to adapt to the changes of the era of Core Competencies of Chinese English Discipline. They must treat this profession with a lifelong learning attitude, so as to constantly promote their professional development.

## **2.2 Current Situation and Existing Problems of Teaching Methods of Chinese English Teachers**

**Obvious Exam-oriented Tendency** The direction of English teaching in China depends largely on the content of the test, and some provinces do not include the listening test in the total score, nor examine the students' oral proficiency. In order to spare time for the targeted practice of the test content, many English teachers choose to give up daily listening and oral English training. In the long run, Chinese students' listening and speaking ability, communication and cooperation ability are generally weak. The aim of teaching English is to develop students' "comprehensive English application ability," particularly their listening and speaking skills. This will allow them to use English in their future studies, employment, and social interactions, as well as to improve their overall cultural literacy and ability to learn independently.

**The Single Teaching Content and Method** At present, the Chinese English courses are mainly based on grammar and translation, but few about intercultural communication. There are not many English courses that students can choose and are interested in<sup>[12]</sup>.

Chinese English teachers take themselves as the main body in class, and focuses on the explanation of English vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammar for the purpose of taking exams. As a result, students have strong test-taking ability, but their vision is not broad and lack of certain creativity.

**Neglect the Students' Subjective Initiative** Many teachers focus on "imparting knowledge" and ignore the significance of students' learning initiative in English classroom teaching. Therefore, most students are in a state of passive acceptance of knowledge in the classroom, and lack of motivation and interest in learning.

**Neglect to Cultivate Students' Critical Thinking Ability** "If the ability to analyze and solve problems is the educational goal, this comprehensive, migratory and systematic ability can benefit students for life<sup>[13]</sup>." Teachers impart a lot of knowledge, but students can understand and apply the knowledge of very little. Knowledge transfer and the ability to draw inferences from other cases still needs to be improved. Teachers should guide students to try a variety of thinking pattern in teaching and cultivate their critical thinking ability.

### **3 Enlightenment of TESOL Teaching Mode for Foreign Language Teaching in China**

#### **3.1 Focus on Ability Cultivation**

In class, teachers should implement teaching based on students, from the learning ability, learning motivation. An experienced teacher will analyze learners' individual differences to design a personalized class, in the form of dialogue practice, group discussion, combined with movies, games and singing in English teaching. It can arouse the enthusiasm of students learning English, and make the language really become a communicative tool. At the same time, the evaluation system should be adjusted, and the school-enterprise alliance should be strengthened to make students realize the importance of language application ability from practice.

#### **3.2 Input from a Variety of Languages**

The primary source of language input in conventional English instruction is textbooks. To assist pupils in completing greater corpus accumulation, bilingual teachers could provide more corpus input based on textbooks.

Speaking, reading, listening, and writing are all parts of learning a language. Language acquisition never occurs in four discrete steps but rather as a continuous process. Reading can be a useful tool for teaching students how to perform corpus input. This calls for teachers to give a thorough introduction prior to the explanation, including background information and the use of simple words. Students are urged to gather pertinent background material on their own to increase their active involvement. The background knowledge portion of the topic can be fulfilled by short films or reading short articles.

#### **3.3 Student-centered Teaching Model**

Teachers should now act more as designers and guides rather than as the class's leader. Teachers set up language games, group activities, and classroom debates for their students. The students are in charge of the class at this point.

Teachers should focus on the content of the chosen topics and language input materials as designers and mentors. According to the  $i + 1$  theory, learning shouldn't be too challenging to sap students' motivation, nor should it be too easy to make them lose

interest. In order for pupils to understand the input content, teachers must promptly explain the issues and guide them in finding solutions.

### **3.4 Realize the Teaching Informatization**

The integration of information technology with education and the utilization of cutting-edge information technology and network platforms are essential components of education in the digital information era. A key strategy for achieving individualized instruction is to incorporate contemporary teaching techniques into the study of foreign languages. The teaching of foreign languages should make full use of cloud platforms and diverse open educational resources. Mobile devices like smartphones and laptops on the go can offer a range of help, and in the near future, online guidance and collaborative learning will dominate language teaching<sup>[14]</sup>. Teachers take on the roles of leaders and designers in individualized learning. Students can use their free time to learn and implement the modules they are interested in so that information technology is fully integrated with practice.

## **4 Conclusion**

Development of students 'Core Competencies' in the 21st century is the common mission of the world curriculum reform. In such a background, China has established the present point to the core competencies of English curriculum reform goal, promoted students' all-round development, comprehensively developed students' language ability, thinking quality, cultural consciousness and learning ability by learning English. This not only puts forward the requirements for the growth of students, but also requires that teachers 'quality must be improved in an all-round way to meet the needs of students' development in the era of core competencies. This profound change has brought a deep question to our English education and the professional development of English teachers: How should Chinese English teachers respond to better shoulder the historical mission of cultivating global citizens? Chinese English teachers need not only to learn from international experience and automatically benchmark international benchmarks, but also to root China's reality and promote the implementation of core competencies.

Whether the English curriculum reform from the perspective of core competencies can achieve the expected goals lies in the deep participation and implementation of teachers. To this end, teachers should constantly improve their professional level and develop simultaneously with the curriculum reform. Specifically, Chinese English teachers should "constantly update the professional knowledge, improve their language and cultural literacy; accumulate the teaching knowledge, based on the teaching efficiency; strengthen practice and reflection, promote the sustainable professional development; build the teaching team, form the teaching research mechanism, and carry out cooperation and research among teachers."

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