



The Comparative Analysis of English Teaching Methods: Based on the Comparison between Chinese Traditional English Teaching Methods and that of TESOL's

Xinrui Li¹

¹School of International Education, China Foreign Affairs University, Shahe Campus, Changping District, Beijing, 102206, China

lixinrui@mail.cfau.edu.cn

Abstract. Nowadays, Chinese students must learn English in the nine-year compulsory education and the international elites also need English as an asset. However, there are apparent differences when people examine the methods that teachers across the world use to teach English. Through the comparative analytical method, this paper discusses and compares the differences between Chinese traditional English teaching methods and that of TESOL in their teaching goal, class activities, homework and results. The former uses fixed teaching methods under the exam-oriented curriculum, and there can be more changes in the ways it uses to teach to make classes more interesting. Yet, it is good at making students remember grammar rules or words. The latter continues to develop other approaches, and the related homework takes on various forms for students of different age groups (such as presentations, essays, listening to English music and word hunts). The use of mixed methods is recommended to avoid the unbalanced practice of language domains for both Chinese traditional English teaching methods and that of TESOL.

Keywords: Chinese Traditional English Teaching Methods, TESOL, Grammar-translation Approach, Audiolingual Approach

1 Introduction

In traditional Chinese classrooms, students have to face troubles such as “Mute English” (unable to communicate with others in English, despite having a good grade) or “Chinglish” (spoken or written English that is influenced by the Chinese language) while trying to gain the English language proficiency. These troubles can greatly impede their learning efficiency and language fluency in daily conversations. It is nearly impossible for native English speakers to understand English that is said based on Chinese expression (e.g. Fall Carefully, which truly means reminding people to be aware of the slippery floor). Besides, a lack of interest in English learning is a common issue among Chinese students. Even for those who are into English learning and have the basic patience to learn, the process soon turns dull for them. One can hardly

© The Author(s) 2023

S. Yacob et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2023 7th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 779,

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-126-5_42

keep up the passion under that circumstance. The causes of these problems and the further solutions are all hidden within the methods that teachers use under the instruction of the Chinese education board. English is the only second language that Chinese students are required to learn, however, its importance in examination has exceeded the functional uses of this language itself. By comparing the Chinese traditional English teaching methods with the TESOL ones, the author can find out how they are different in terms of teaching goals, the process (including homework, and class activities) and results. This even allows the author to organize the flaws and cons of them.

2 Traditional English Teaching Methods

2.1 The Grammar-Translation Approach

The traditional schools in China must teach English under the instruction of the education board, and English classes are generally taught by local teachers in their mother tongue: Chinese. Due to the restrictions on teacher resources (especially in remote areas such as certain villages in the hills), native speakers of English are hard to find. Besides, the distrust towards foreign teachers also makes teaching classes in English more difficult (foreign teachers speak English in class and many students cannot catch up, or their teaching methods do not suit the Chinese curriculum or textbook)^[1]. Another feature of the grammar-translation approach is that new words are taught in the list^[2]. To make students better understand the contents of the textbooks (as well as using these terms in short passages and listening exercises), Chinese teachers always begin the lesson by teaching new words which appear in the text first. The way they teach is by leading students to repeat those lexical terms or common collocations after the teachers several times, and that allows students to learn the pronunciations and Chinese meanings of those words in the process. Next, students are led to read the passages in the textbook with knowledge about the new words or collocations in mind. Teachers will also guide students to read the text sentence by sentence and translate everything into Chinese. When students are learning the sentences, teachers are going to emphasize the grammar and the changes in word forms (e.g. be done, have done, saddened). The teachers will be leaving homework about grammar practices and words reciting at the end of the class to enhance students' memories.

2.2 The Audiolingual Approach

Ever since the audiolingual approach was spread to various countries, China has been applying the audiolingual approach in their classrooms and textbooks^[3]. In most Chinese schools, English classes use the same set of textbooks designed and printed by the education board. The textbooks for students from primary school to secondary school have one shared feature which fits the teaching intent of the audiolingual approach: everything focuses on dialogue. For example, grade one students from primary school will see dialogue about responding to greetings in their English book's first unit. The English textbook of Chinese high schools have different modules, and each module is centred around a certain topic (e.g. sports, greetings). Furthermore, a mod-

ule can be broken down into seven parts: warming up, pre-reading, reading, comprehending, learning about language, using language, and reading for fun. For the part “using language”, the textbook’s designers aim to make students practice four domains of language at once, it includes listening, speaking, reading and writing. This part always begins with reading a long passage concerning British culture, followed by the listening section and then speaking and writing (all the sections are of the same length in comparison to each other’s). However, because listening and speaking do not take up the main proportions in exam questions (speaking will not be tested at all), Chinese teachers seldom pay attention to these parts in the textbook.

2.3 The Audiolingual Approach Practice Law/Practice Methods

Chinese teachers have to be efficient enough when teaching English for there is an exam-oriented curriculum to follow. Under this mindset, interesting class activities and group conversations are not crucial in the English classroom. The best way to enhance students’ memories and get them to understand grammar rules is through practising questions that will appear in the final exams repeatedly. The questions in the exercise books and exams all have the same formats, unchanging from primary school to high school (even colleges). In Tianjin, the English examination papers for students of different grades share the same question formats and even order: choices, word forms, sentence completion, cloze test, readings and writing. For daily exercise, teachers will give out homework about exam questions or the examination papers directly for students to do after class. By laying more emphasis on grammar and words in the exam questions day after day, students get to focus on what leads them to higher scores. The only problem is that some students can hardly understand everything just by repeating the same mistakes in the question, and teachers have very less time to spend equally on forty students in class ^[4]. The only choice is to get help from after-school classes, but it becomes harder for students since the education board has banned them from doing that. Even when this method was still feasible, teachers in after-school English classes would do the same thing: find out the student’s weaknesses in examination papers and then focus on improving them.

3 TESOL’s Teaching Methods

3.1 The Grammar-Translation Approach

The grammar-translation approach first made its appearance in the early 19th century, and it was developed from the conventional approach for Latin and Greek studies ^[5]. Since there have been newer methods in TESOL that have greater effects on language teaching, its use is limited to some schools or countries. This method’s main focus is the accuracy of grammar in language translations, as for the other domains of language, the speaking and listening parts are not of the highest priority (so is the pronunciation). Thus teachers must spend a great amount of time explaining the grammar rules of the target language and making students practise grammar and translations. Moreover, teaching students the fixed common expressions in English and the rules of

word forms is important knowledge as well. To use this approach, teachers do not have to be native speakers of the target language, which means one may teach English in Indonesian or Chinese. When it comes to reading passages, learning the content is not as essential as learning grammar practices. Sentence translation (which can be found in the text) is an example of a grammar-translation approach.

3.2 The Audiolingual Approach

The audiolingual approach is based on behaviourism and developed from the direct method. Its relation with behaviourism can be shown through how it tries to enhance students' memories through repetition, drilling and habit-formations ^[6]. Lessons will begin with dialogue and then centre around the patterns of grammar structures. Teachers using this method do not need to explain grammar rules in detail for students to understand but to help them learn through repetition. For instance, students are asked to listen or read the same conversation twice after learning the unknown expressions and grammar in it. Since this approach requires students to utilize their ears, eyes and mouths to learn, teachers can make use of the media such as sound-tracks and videos. The audiolingual approach also encourages students to speak the target language with higher accuracy in pronunciation and over-learning can happen in classrooms that adopt this approach.

3.3 Total Physical Response

This teaching method was initially developed by an American psychologist named Dr James J Asher, and he gained inspiration from the way children learn their mother tongue: imitating parents' body language and following instructions (e.g. "Look at mummy") ^[7]. The teacher will link body movements with new knowledge to help students learn English, playing the role of "parent" in the classroom. For instance, the teacher can act like a certain animal (using facial expressions or body movements) with an English name that has just been learned in the lesson and make students better understand what it is.

3.4 The Communicative Approach

In this approach, the essence of language learning is defined as being able to use it in daily conversations. Thus it mainly focuses on making students speak and listen to the target language, and miniature attention is paid to practising grammar or reading long texts. Even if there is a text for students to read, it will be a conversation based on the daily circumstances and remain exceptionally real. The TTT (Teacher Talking Time) is reduced to save time for students to do group activities (e.g. talking about a certain topic that is relevant to what they've learned today) and practice their English together. Besides, the teacher will simulate the situations that can appear in daily life and it allows students to use the target language when in need. Over the years, it has spread to schools for different grades all around the world.

4 The Comparison Between Chinese Traditional English Teaching Method and that of TESOL's

Table 1. The Comparison Between Chinese Traditional English Teaching Method and TESOL'S Teaching Methods

Methods	Teaching Goal	Class Activities	Homework	Results
Chinese Traditional English Teaching methods	The final score matters the most to both students and teachers (Exam-oriented curriculum).	Little or no class activities; teachers lead the whole study process	Since the question formats of the exams are often fixed, exam papers or related exercises will be given	Students' interest in English will reduce and they fail to gain a deeper understanding of native expressions and more students' knowledge of English words and grammar can be relatively more solid
TESOL Methods	Teaching purposes vary from different methods. Each method focuses on separate domains of language	Class activities are designed for students of different ages, and they have different effects in terms of helping students to practice grammar, communication skills and more	Homework can take on many forms, including writing short paragraphs, making group presentations and more	Students using only one type of method might be relatively weak in grammar and words or otherwise: cannot speak the target language fluently. Some methods can greatly increase students' interest in learning the target language

Chinese teachers have entirely adopted the grammar-translation approach in their English classrooms and the way they use it is no different from TESOL. However, the English classrooms in China have adjusted the audiolingual approach's main goal into laying less emphasis on speaking from secondary school to high school. The practice law of Chinese teachers can be seen as a skill derived from the audiolingual approach's repetition of dialogue or audio. Students are the classroom's main characters no more, because the teacher will head them to study (as Table 1 shows). Besides, TESOL has at least nine types of methodologies and the number continues to grow as people make progress in the fields of physiology and pedagogy. But Chinese traditional English teaching methods have hardly ever changed over the years. The exam-oriented curriculum can be the cause of this: since Chinese teachers must concentrate on teaching grammar and words which will appear in the exam, the necessity of class activities and real-life communication skills are none.

5 Problems and Suggestions

The disadvantages of the grammar-translation approach are gradually surfacing in Chinese classrooms. For students in Chinese high schools, they have to use textbooks that have translation questions strictly related to the English texts^[8]. This results in students not having enough ability to translate new sentences or words that aren't in the books. Chinglish will appear as well since they do not know how to use native expressions. The grammar-translation approach also produces boring classrooms, less motivated students and pronunciation problems. The effect of the audiolingual method is limited in Chinese secondary schools or high schools. Since the curriculum is exam-oriented, the teacher tends to spend more time teaching grammar rules and words. Speaking is hardly practised, so most of the Chinese students at school do not know how to communicate in English. However, this kind of situation will get better in universities. This method allows college teachers to use various media tools (movies, videos, and songs) in teaching^[9]. In addition, the audiolingual method in TESOL only sees speaking and listening as the priorities. Language skills regarding grammar and words might become the weaknesses of students. Compared to all the TESOL methods in use, Chinese traditional English teaching methods are limited in numbers.

One possible solution to these problems above is to not only use one teaching method solely. Building a solid foundation for English learning is a good thing indeed, but the lack of practice in speaking and communication skills makes students ignore the true uses of language and vice versa. Besides, the Chinese education board should also modify old textbooks to make them more suitable for practical language learning (with more local expressions, and idioms). The English curriculum can lay more emphasis on balancing the demand for both competitive examination (students in China are of massive number, and schools aren't enough to accept all of them) and language practice (the value of English learning is conspicuous in different career paths, and international language tests such as IELTS are more acceptable than the Chinese certificate for the English language)^[10]. Chinese teachers should also apply other methods in the teaching process for students of different grades to make progress in English.

6 Conclusion

This paper has shown the English teaching methods that are adopted by Chinese classrooms and the modifications they make: while fully adopting the grammar-translation and practice method, there are fewer speaking practices in the use of the audiolingual approach. In terms of the teaching goals, Chinese traditional English teaching methods are more exam-oriented instead of focusing on enhancing different language domains like TESOL. Class activities are rare in China and there will be more exam-related homework whereas TESOL designs various forms of both for students to practice English. After showing the weaknesses of grammar-translation and audio lingual approaches, this paper has also suggested that any English method

should not be used only since different language skills need different teaching methods and students might become bored by the unchanged classes.

This paper is not written without flaws. Although the author has suggested the Chinese education board to balance the attention spent on examination selections and language acquisition, there aren't many detailed or feasible solutions provided. Besides, the teaching process and certain methods applied in Chinese classrooms are mostly found in primary schools or high schools. Although there haven't been many changes in the English teaching methods of Chinese universities, there can be more specific descriptions of this. For future work, researchers across the world will make amendments and further studies on this topic regarding these deficiencies.

References

1. Lin Xiaohong Research on Cooperative Teaching of Spoken English by Chinese and Foreign Teachers in Colleges and Universities Journal of Chongqing University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition) (17), 202-204 (2011).
2. Teaching Methodologies and Approach- TESOL. (n.d.). [tesol.ws/study, http://tesol.ws/study/teaching.methodologies.pdf](http://tesol.ws/study/tesol.ws/study/teaching.methodologies.pdf). Retrieved March 7, 2023.
3. Zeng Fangben & Ouyang Yanping, The Development of English Teaching Methodology and Its Linguistic Basis in China Journal of Shaoguan University (Social Science Edition) (01), 96-100(2003).
4. Mohammed, Z. (n.d.). The Advantages & Disadvantages of Practice & Drills in Teaching. Seattlepi. <https://education.seattlepi.com/advantages-disadvantages-practice-drills-teaching-3685.html> Retrieved March 18, 2023,
5. Dildora, A. & Uzbekistan State World's Languages University. TEACHING IN GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD (GTM). ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ НАУКА И ИННОВАЦИОННЫЕ ИДЕИ В МИРЕ, 2181-3187(No.16), 130-132. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=zh-TW&as_sdt=0,5&q=%22grammar-translation%22&scisbd=1#d=gs_qabs&t=1678172689353&u=%23p%3D2uE0WSzDMioJ (2023).
6. Nodira Hamidovna, E. & Uzbek State World Language University. (2022, May 15). AUDIO LINGUAL METHOD OF LANGUAGE TEACHING. Web of Scientist: International Scientific Research Journal. Retrieved March 18, 2023
7. Total physical response - TPR. (n.d.). British Council Teaching English. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/managing-lesson/articles/total-physical-response-tpr> Retrieved March 18, 2023.
8. Zheng Fang. Analysis of the Application of Translation Practice in English Review Teaching in Senior Three Exam Weekly (64), 105-106 (2019).
9. Ma Xin. The Application of Listening and Speaking in College English Teaching Chinese Journal of Multimedia and Network Teaching (first ten-day issue) (01), 171-172(2020).
10. Liang Yang. IELTS Testing Social Impact in China. Overseas English (07), 252-255 (2019).

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

