

Rational Thinking on Reform of Vocational English Textbooks

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Abstract. Due to different territories and levels of regional economic development, the talent demand is also different. Different majors and professions have different requirements for students' English ability. Due to different requirements for oral English and literary foundation at future employment posts, the colleges can teach students in accordance with their aptitude and carry out humanized teaching based on the features of different majors. The textbook selection becomes more diversified; it takes students' occupational demand and development as basis and provides students with rich learning selection. This paper carries out a discussion on problems existing in the reform of English textbooks for vocational college students and corresponding solutions for the purpose of providing certain help for English teaching of vocational colleges.

Introduction

With the deepening of China's economic reform, there are more and more sino-foreign joint ventures and foreign-funded enterprises in China, and more domestic enterprises also go abroad in succession, thus the enterprises propose more requirements for talents' English ability. Furthermore, more and more vocational graduates select to work in foreign companies or provide labor service for export; their ability in mastering English not only directly relates to their employment, but also influences their development in future work. The vocational English course is a compulsory public foundation course for vocational college students; it serves for the objective of cultivating high-end skills-oriented talents towards front-line production, construction, service, and management, and it is an important course about cultivating vocational college students' comprehensive quality and improving their sustainable development ability at career. Therefore, the reform of this course is especially important for improving students' ability to adapt to future career.

Analysis on current situation of vocational English teaching

Current situation of vocational English teaching

The hot period of English teaching in vocational colleges has gone far away; currently, the foreign English courses in vocational colleges are under cooling stage. Most of vocational colleges have listed English course as an elective course, and some even have cancelled English course. In most of vocational colleges, the English teaching course is continuously being compressed, and even arbitrarily occupied and changed; furthermore, the students commonly lack of interest in this course, and the phenomenon such as late arrival, early leaving, and skipping class is a common occurrence. The position of English teaching in vocational colleges has been on the hazard.

Cause for current situation of vocational English teaching

1). China's vocational education starts lately, and most of vocational colleges focus on professional courses in teaching activities, thus the English course, as a public course, gradually becomes marginalized. Actually, this phenomenon doesn't merely happen in English subject, and the college Chinese course also faces similar problem. Due to weak professional feature and strong universality, the public courses are always ignored by school teachers and students. The original two-year English course is shortened to one year, and the weekly course quantity is also shortened from 4 lessons to 2 lessons. Under this condition, the vocational English teachers' teaching confidence is frustrated and then they gradually lose their enthusiasm in their work. Besides, the "inessential" learning concept is generated in students' mind.

2). The vocational English lacks of obvious boundary in textbook compiling. From perspective of difficult degree of course, the level of difficulty of vocational English is always lower than that of high school English. However, as the express edition of college English, the part related to vocational education is not set in vocational English textbooks, thus it is unable to implement language teaching into professional application, which causes the situation that the vocational English can't help students' professional learning. As for vocational college students, their primary task is to master professional knowledge and skills; if the English learning is not related to them, the English just becomes a chicken rib for vocational college students.^[1]

Reform goal of vocational English

The function of English subject is to cultivate students' scientific and cultural quality, let them serve for career, and lay a foundation for students' future development. However, it is pointed out in Basic Requirements for English Course Teaching in Higher Vocational Education that the teaching goal of vocational English course is to cultivate students' ability of applying English to confront career environment, especially English listening and verbal communication ability. Meanwhile, the cultivation of comprehensive cultural literacy and cross-cultural communication awareness of English is of great importance for improving students' overall English level.

In the process of guiding students to master basic English learning methods, the vocational colleges shall also pay attention to students' learning interest and autonomous learning ability, guide students to pay attention to language accumulation and perception, and make students master effective learning method and learning strategies and actively accept the cultivation of western culture. In this way, it is able to comprehensively improve students' English cultivation and actual English application ability.^[2]

Reform principle of vocational English textbooks

In the process of English learning, the large difference in students' academic result often happens, and the students with excellent performance may be 100 scores higher than students with poor performance. Due to difference in students' English basis, their learning ability is also different, thus the general teaching mode is not good for the improvement of students' overall level. The textbooks of same difficulty may be too easy for students with excellent performance, but may be too difficult for students with insufficient learning ability, thus both breakthrough of excellent students and the improvement of poor students are limited.

The higher vocational education is a kind of vocational education which takes skill and practicability as education guidance; as a kind of language subject, English is also an application skill in daily life. Therefore, the higher vocational English teaching shall highlight its practicability, such as business English and medical English; with clear classification, the students can master the English application related to their majors while they master professional knowledge.^[3]

Therefore, in the adaptation process of vocational English textbooks, we shall follow the principle of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude and studying something in order to apply it.

Features of reform of vocational English textbooks

Generality and individuality of vocational English textbooks

As a public course established in vocational colleges, the vocational English textbooks shall have certain generality to meet wide vocational college students' demand. Meanwhile, the English subject is set for all majors in vocational colleges. In the English teaching, we shall do well in grafting between textbooks and different majors, and establish different professional English teaching in different majors, which is also the reflection of individuality of vocational English textbooks.

Standard of vocational English

As a language subject, the English is an essential tool for communication in students' future career development, and this is the knowledge we shall keep for the standard of English. No matter how the English textbooks are modified, there shall be no deviation from basic positioning. Therefore, in the process of grafting with students' majors, it is inadvisable to add entertainment or relevance but ignore the essence of English. Meanwhile, the language serves for human; in the process of reform of vocational English textbooks, we shall insist on human orientation and ensure that the English textbooks can provide the assistance for students' development; this is also a kind of rational regression on the English function.

Professional compilers of vocational English textbooks

The English textbooks compilers are the first guard which ensures the quality of vocational English textbooks, thus they must be professional. The compilation work of textbooks must be completed by composite talents in vocational specialty and English major. After all, it is a very difficult thing to span across the wide gap between vocational specialty and English. Only professional talents can accurately master their relation and avoid their detaching in the textbooks compilation. Moreover, the textbooks compilers shall have innovation awareness, not rigidly adhere to the mode of traditional textbooks, broaden the vision of textbooks selection, and select teaching materials closer to reality and students' majors from current social life and then compile them in the reformed vocational English textbooks.

Problems existing in vocational English textbooks

The English textbooks pay attention to grammar teaching and ignore language competence teaching

In most of vocational English textbooks, the grammar knowledge accounts for a large proportion, and the teachers also focus on deeply explaining grammar knowledge in the classroom. However, most of students have made a systematic learning of English grammar in the middle school and high school learning process; if they learn grammar knowledge again in colleges, it is inevitable that they have a resistance psychology. While the English textbooks are full of grammar knowledge, there is no more space to guide students to carry out oral English practice. The biggest drawback in ignoring the language competence teaching is causing students' high scores and low abilities in English. While they apply for a post in foreign enterprises, they often have excellent performance in written examination but poor performance in oral examination. Compared to written English, the oral English can be often applied in future relevant works; in case of weak development, it will certainly influence students' development.

The English textbooks are general and lack of relation of relevant majors

Most of majors in most of China's vocational colleges adopt uniform English teaching materials, but make no difference according to different majors. For example, as for students majoring in electronic engineering and medicine, there is no difference in their English textbooks; however, in their future work, there is great difference in the English application. Take medical students as an example: they shall have a special knowledge of medical English vocabulary, and background while they publish medical papers or browse foreign medical periodicals. If the English teaching for each major is not distinguished according to major difference and the uniform English teaching is carried out for all students, there will be detaching of English teaching from English application; while students search for jobs related to their major in the future, they will lose many original advantages.

The vocational English textbooks are rigid and limit the innovation of classroom teaching form

Due to rigid form of vocational English textbooks, the teaching in vocational colleges still adopts the traditional mode that "the teachers focus on explaining and the students listen to the instructions". In the classroom, the situation that the teachers make a torrent of words but the students are sleepy often happens. Under the guidance of this mode, the students' classroom enthusiasm can't be motivated, and there lacks of necessary interaction between students and teachers, and between students and students, thus it is hard to implement the practicalness of English. The old teaching

mode limits teachers' exertion space and restricts students' growth space, thus it must be corrected and reformed. ^[4]

Countermeasures and suggestions for reform of vocational college textbooks

To cut down the length of grammar, and pay attention to the oral English communicative competence

In order to improve students' oral English communicative competence, we shall firstly make reform on the content of English textbooks, greatly cut down the original length of English grammar, and add more reading content. In those reading contents, we can also add the excerpts of some famous poetries and novels, and it will be better if we can add the excerpts of some western drama scripts. In this way, the students can not only be linked with more English reading, but also place themselves in English drama scripts. In the performance process, they can deepen the mastery of oral English and deepen their knowledge of western culture. Furthermore, in the process of English reading, they can also review English grammar that they have been familiar with, thus it is able to achieve many things at one stroke.

To pay attention to close relation between English textbooks and students' major

In the process of cultivating vocational college students' English application ability, we shall pay special attention to effectiveness, carry out multi-perspective and multi-level division as for different schools, different majors, and different posts, formulate different learning objectives according to division result, and then confirm students' learning content. Only after we realize the close relation between students' majors and their future employment direction, we can ensure that the teaching effect can be implemented in students' later work.

To revise English textbooks and activate teaching form

The ancient Chinese people always pay attention to adjusting measures according to time, local condition, and different persons, which shall be also followed in English teaching. Due to invariable English textbooks, it is neither able to teach students in accordance with their aptitude nor able to ensure teaching quality. In the English teaching, it is able to broaden the vision, not rigidly adhere to book education, but carry out innovation of English textbooks. ^[5]

In ancient time, the sage Confucius often applies trivial matters and common things in the life to carry out deep philosophy education on his students. However, in our life, the materials which can be used in vocational English teaching can be also seen everywhere. A Justin Bieber's song, an Obama's speech video, a Hollywood film, a Bacon's literary work, and even an advertisement in American TV can be reasonably introduced to be integrated with whole classroom teaching. Although those English teaching materials closely related to the life weaken education of English knowledge, they pay more attention to practical application, thus they are more helpful for vocational college students who will step into the society and take the job.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there still exist many problems in vocational English textbooks, and there is also great improvement space. The countermeasures proposed by the author are just the tip of the iceberg, and there is still a long way to promote the development of China's vocational college English education. As for the problems such as lacking of oral practice, detaching from students' majors, and rigid form of textbooks, the compilation departments of textbooks shall pay high attention to them, enhance the cultivation of students' industrial accomplishment, enhance the correlation between English textbooks and students' majors and future jobs, carry out active exploration and brave practice, and develop and innovate more English teaching methods to help students to improve their vocational skills and work competitiveness.

Here, the author hopes that more professional personnel can devote themselves to the research of this task, and propose correction suggestions for deficiencies existing in this paper so as to make important sharing for promoting the reform of China's vocational English textbooks.

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