

On Art College English Teaching from the Perspective of Postmethod Pedagogy

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Abstract—Recently, people are paying more attention to College English teaching for arts undergraduates, which differ from that of science and engineering. This paper attempts to give some enlightenment on College English teaching in combination with characteristics of arts students and on the basis of a brief introduction of ten macro strategies in postmethod pedagogy.

Keywords—*postmethod; ten macro strategies; college English teaching*

I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout centuries of foreign language education history in our country, there have been a variety of foreign language teaching methods, mostly are “bringism”, where there are six methods exert a far-reaching influence on our foreign language education, respectively are: grammar-translation method generated in late 18th century and early 19th century, direct teaching method generated in European language teaching reform movement in late 19th century, audio-lingual method based on American structuralism and audio-visual method evolved from situational teaching in the 1940s, communicative approach based on functionalism and communication theory in the 1970s, and task-based teaching method in the 1980s (Zhang Zhengdong, 2000). Although methods and terms emerge endlessly, there is yet to be a single method that can be perfectly suited to foreign language teaching after demonstration and practice. In recent years, many domestic scholars and front-line English teachers have conducted extensive discussions and research on the teaching theory of postmethod, including introduction and comments of postmethod (Cheng Xiaoguang, 2006.; Liu Xudong, 2008; Chen Li, 2009; Dong Jinwei, 2008; Yang Fu, Liu Hong, 2009, et al.), as well as on development approaches of teachers in postmethod era and the enlightenment of postmethod on current foreign language teaching (Zhang Ping, 2011; Ni Xiyang, 2009, et al.). However, through summarizing we will find that we are more concerned about College English teaching under normal circumstances, there are rarely papers studying College English teaching under specific circumstances, different professions and different needs. This paper attempts to make a key analysis on the ten macro strategies in postmethod teaching theory in combination with

characteristics of arts specialties students and further propose problems need to be paid attention in practical teaching.

II. POSTMETHOD THEORY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

After decades of development, postmethod teaching theory is growing mature, forming a theory system with its own characteristics, including: three basic parameters, innovative definitions of three identities and ten macro strategies. Ten macro strategies refer to: first, maximizing learning opportunities. Classroom teaching is a process that creates and optimizes learning opportunities, in order to improve teaching effectiveness to the maximum extent, teachers are both the organizers and managers of teaching activities, but also mediators of learning activities. Second, minimizing perceptual mismatches. In classroom teaching practice, misunderstanding between teachers and students will have a negative impact on teaching, meanwhile, the teachers' short of understanding of education policy will also affect the quality of education. Third, facilitating negotiated interaction. Participants in teaching process should have equal status, the absolute dominant role of teachers should be adjusted, and student participation should be improved, rather than passive acceptance and response. Fourth, promoting learner autonomy. Namely guide students to learn to learn, manage their own learning behavior and monitor their learning process. Fifth, foster language awareness. Language awareness is the feeling ability of learners about language. Language learning shall not only pay attention to form, but also pay more attention to function, increasing cognition of language nature. Sixth, activate intuitive heuristics. It focuses on providing a lot of articles with original taste, letting students to experience the application of grammar rules and vocabulary in context. Seventh, contextualize linguistic input. The valid input of language is closely linked to the context, situation and cultural backgrounds used by language. Eighth, integrate language skills. The increase of listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating and other skills should be cultured synchronously with no neglect. Ninth, ensure social relevance. Classroom teaching contents must be closely related to current and local social, political, economic and educational environment, taking into account students' needs and experiences. Tenth, raise cultural consciousness. Encourage language learners actively create learning opportunities and participate in

classroom interaction taking their own cultural and educational background as the basis.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF ARTS SPECIALTIES STUDENTS

Several characteristics of arts specialties students in arts specialties of Eastern International Art College of Zhengzhou University of Light Industry where the author belongs to are summarized, including visual communication design, environmental design, product design, fashion and clothing design, sculpture, painting, arts and crafts, digital media art, etc., according to the teaching summary and reflection in recent years, combining studies by others of arts specialties students' English learning situation, including: (1) English proficiency of arts specialties students is relatively low, with weak foundation in English; (2) students' lack of internal motivation to learn English; (3) active mind, full of personality, easy to accept new things; (4) the lack of scientific method of English learning; (5) emphasis on learning specialized courses, while ignoring cultural courses; (6) strong creativity, short of discipline; (7) focus on personality, while despising generality; (8) overall enthusiasm of English learning is not high, with poor learning environment and perseverance; (9) utilitarian attitude of English learning is serious, the ultimate goal of learning English is targeted as passing the final exam or CET-4 and CET-6 (Zhang Mengya, 2010; Guo Shuli, Tang Ya, 2009, etc.)

IV. ENLIGHTENMENT ON COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING FOR ARTS SPECIALTIES

"Macro strategies in postmethod teaching theory do not specify teachers how to operate in teaching process, but to give guidance from a higher level, specific to micro environments, teachers need to make adjustments based on teaching situation" (Zhou Gang, 2010). In allusion to the characteristics of arts specialties student, as well as College English teaching situation of arts specialties in colleges and universities, we may reflect and improve from following aspects:

Establish rapport teacher-student relationship, understand students' learning, living, hobbies and other information as much as possible. For arts specialties students, College English is a public required course, usually scheduled in the first and second academic year. Class form is usually large-scale class teaching, teachers may teach two or three hundred students, which is hard for teachers to know students. What is more, teachers do not know or can not remember the names of students frequently occur. For this problem, a detailed roster may be created for each administrative class, including photos, address, preferences, personality traits, career aspirations etc. The classroom performance of students from different specialties may differ. Taking my college as an example, painting and sculpture students have poor overall foundation, but with high enthusiasm for learning and a strong sense of participation; new media students are practical and serious in learning, with a good foundation, short of discipline, lazy and difficult to complete homework on time. While teachers are paying an effort to

understand students, they should also allow students to understand them, including their work, learning methods and hobbies. Better two-way transmission of information can be made only by mutual understanding and mutual trust.

Increase the weight of students' right to speak, create opportunities for students to use English to the maximum extent. Since the overall English level of arts specialties students is not high, most students lack the courage to start to talk and are ashamed to speak English, leading to appearance of "dumb English". In fact, language learning is a learning behavior of individual learners, language can not be taught, but rather should be through the efforts and a lot of practice by learners to gradually master the ability of using this language to express himself. We can create opportunities for students to learn the language through curricular and extracurricular aspects. Teacher should encourage students to participate in topic discussion and opinion presentation in class, respect each student's viewpoint or idea, even though these ideas may sound inappropriate, view students' expression as the demonstration of life understanding, not just empty language exercises. Meanwhile, teachers can inspire students to think by asking questions, Bloom (1956) proposed five different questioning types according to students' cognitive level and complexity of problems, respectively are literal understanding type, reorganization type, inferential comprehension type, assessment type and appreciation type, teachers can adopt different questioning methods against different contents. After school, teacher should combine students' English learning with professional learning, encourage them to read original English books of the specialty, which may expand professional horizons while improving their English level, and then better learn professional knowledge by relying on English.

Effective integration of teaching contents of English course and comprehensive improvement of English language skills. The teaching of English course "should be based on needs and interests, making preparations for further study, career and cross-cultural communication in the future; give consideration to humanity while emphasizing instrumental nature; and strengthen the ability of listening and speaking." (Shi Jiaowang, 2011). Pure language teaching of English is detached from the atmosphere of real life, which is difficult to arouse students' interest in learning, English teaching and English application should be combined together, be linked to students' professional knowledge of art or to CET-4, so as to ensure relevance between learning and application, thereby increasing students' motivation from within. English proficiency of arts specialties students is relatively low, with large promotion space of language skills, certain results can be achieved in a short term under the guidance of scientific methods, helping to increase confidence in students to learn English well. Only with synchronous progress of listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating and other skills, students are possible to understand teachers' classroom expressions and teaching directions, grasp key and difficult points, and make class notes smoothly. Meanwhile, students are able to effectively organize their ideas and contribute their own ideas in group discussion based on thoughts, and

then confirm their efforts and dedication, thus forming a virtuous circle.

Encourage independent learning and create an active learning atmosphere for students. For most art students, it is difficult to make active learning of subjects with learning disabilities or disinterested ones, especially College English. In actual teaching, we found that even there are some students who are willing to spend time and effort in learning English, but due to excessive accumulation of problems in the past, they can not solve in a short time. To address this issue, teachers should encourage and help them build self-confidence, make an understanding of each student's English level, and then propose solutions. On the one hand, teachers should help students to develop viable learning objectives, which shall not be ambitious or unrealistic; on the other hand, teach students the strategies and methods to learn English step by step. In addition, set up models of English learning, let more people know there are students with higher English level around, drive other students to study English harder with the force of example.

Promote cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is a teaching activity taking group activities as the subject, focusing on the interaction among students and giving group members clear individual responsibilities, which is a collective independent study in its nature. Cooperative learning strategy focuses on developing students' autonomy and initiative, its introduction will help establish a new student-centered teaching mode, so that students' individual potential can be better developed and their learning enthusiasm will be greatly promoted. Classroom manifestation of cooperative learning model is not only learning cooperation between students and students, but also between teachers and teachers, teachers and students. First, the cooperation between students and students. A reasonable division of study groups may be made according to students' gender, interests, abilities, English performance and other major aspects, which will ensure the differences and complementarities of group members as well as fairness of reasonable competition between groups and groups. Second, the cooperation between teachers and students. The interactivity of cooperative learning also makes the relationship between teachers and students undergo tremendous changes. The central role of teacher in classroom turns to a guiding role, and teachers set the scene to encourage students to actively participate. In activities, teachers record, guide, review and summarize the participation of students. This teaching model transforms from teaching and indoctrination in traditional classroom into discussion, exchange, exploration and experience. The main task of class is to cultivate students' application and creative ability of language and the ability to solve problems. Finally, the cooperation between teachers and teachers. The famous American educationalist Dr. Cuskey strongly advocates cooperation between teachers, he said: "This common activity will not only reduce the workload of each teacher, but also improves the quality of work results. Teachers will be the magical source of ideas of one another. The forms of cooperation between teachers and teachers are

varied, such as collective lesson planning, co-teaching and mutual lectures and so on.

Attach importance to theory attainment of teachers, actively improve individual professional quality. The role of teacher is extremely important in the learning process of teacher. In highly specialized academies, cultural basic courses (such as English, Ideological and Political Education, etc.) are often in a marginalized position, with insufficient degree of attention, resulting in the quality and level of teachers fail to meet the needs of current education in colleges and universities. A qualified teacher in colleges and universities should have necessary linguistic theory, Qiu Tianhe (1993) pointed that if teachers are able to make a comprehensive application of linguistic theory into classroom English teaching process, it will greatly stimulate students' interest in learning English, improve English reading and comprehensive ability. He analyzed eight linguistic theories, in which I think schema theory has a relatively large influence on arts specialties students. Arts specialties students are good at composition with more developed imaginal thinking, teachers can help students to construct a vivid picture of the input language and knowledge in the way of association, thus helping students to better master knowledge. The individual professional quality and level of teachers directly determine the depth and breadth of English teaching, teachers themselves and schools should actively create opportunities to participate in training, so as to improve professional title, education background and lecture competitions.

V. CONCLUSION

College English course reform in the new era is ongoing, the successful reform experience of various academies is worth learning and referencing, but by no means changeless copy. English teaching methodology has a long standing, and the ten macro strategies in postmethod teaching theory are just a drop in the bucket, but it has had a certain impact for our College English teaching. Currently, various academies are trying to establish their own characteristic courses and specialties, it deserves our continuous reflection, attempt and exploration on how to build College English into a characteristic course of arts universities.

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