

College English teaching mode research and practice under the background of higher education transformation

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Key words: college English; Colleges and universities transformation; Teaching mode

Abstract: The rapid development of information and economy in the process of globalization has to some extent accelerated the cross-cultural communication among countries around the world. As a globalized language, English is universally acknowledged as an international tool of communication. College English is a compulsory course in higher education institutes and the important content of humanities education and general education. In the face of the transformation of local colleges, this paper in view of the problems existing in the transformation of current colleges, combining with the present situation of common colleges, points out that college English teaching mode is the direct factor relating to college English teaching reform and plays a decisive role to achieve the goal of college English teaching. Under the overall framework of applied talents cultivation, it is of great necessity to explore and reform college English teaching mode, apply the theories of modern foreign language teaching to college English education, build stratified teaching system of college English, adapt to the development of each student in a more flexible way and meet the social demand for English applied talents.

Introduction

With the advent of the information age and the economic globalization, more and more international cooperation and communication are promoted and multicultural “global village” is formed. Since language and culture are closely related to each other, the necessity of integrating culture teaching in foreign language education has been long recognized by scholars and educators. They all agreed that the purpose of foreign language teaching is to help learners to understand communicative and cultural context where the language is used. College English curriculum as an important part of humanistic education in higher education has humanistic and instrumental characteristics. Its instrumental characteristic is embodied in cultivating students' English comprehensive application ability, especially cross-cultural communication ability, making them have effective communication ability in English in the future study and work. Humanistic characteristic is embodied in the cross-cultural education, strengthening students' understanding of different cultures and improving their consciousness of cultural differences. The College English Teaching Guidelines (draft) (hereinafter referred to as the “Guidelines”) clearly points out that the teaching aim of college English to cultivate the students' English application ability, strengthen the consciousness of cross-cultural communication and interpersonal skills, ability of autonomic learning and development, improve the comprehensive cultural quality, make them use English effectively in the social interaction in future work and meet the needs of the development of the state, society, school and individual. College English teaching model is the direct factor relating to college English teaching reform and play a decisive role to achieve the goal of college English teaching. At present in our country, social and personal demand for English talents are multiple, which needs us to pay attention to various factors in the hierarchical teaching system, improve and

standardize the operation of teaching system and construct teaching goal and applied talents cultivation standard of college English teaching mode to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.

The present situation of college English teaching

In College English Curriculum Requirements, it is clearly regulated that college English teaching is divided into basic and application stage. Now, the English teaching mode in each college is large-class lecture. Especially after the enrollment expansion, many colleges suffer from a serious shortage of teachers. The college English teaching class holds more than 50 students. Because college English teaching is not to impart knowledge, and what is more important for college English teaching is cultivating students' foreign language skills. The study of foreign language learning is also paying more and more attention to the role of communication and foreign language output, there is no doubt that large-class English teaching mode has reduced the face-to-face communication between teachers and students. In addition to the great difference in students' English level, it is easy for teachers to attend to one thing and lose another. Students with higher English level tend to become the center of the classroom activity but those who are weaker in English level are almost ignored in classroom activity. On the whole, this increases the difficulty to achieve the purpose of the Guidelines: so that they can exchange information in English. Therefore, there is still a large gap between the present situation of college English teaching and the regulation of college English teaching goal in the Guidelines, and the main problems are as follows:

In terms of teachers, there are several problems.

1. Teaching concept relatively lags behind and cultivation goal of applied talents is not clear. College English teaching has been influenced by traditional grammar teaching theory. In the teaching process, teachers pay too much attention to the interpretation and infusion of language knowledge, ignoring the listening and speaking skills. There is no teaching theory set to conform to the cultivating goal of applied talents: cultivating students' English comprehensive application ability, especially listening and speaking skills of the college English applied talents.

2. Single teaching mode and method.

College English teaching basically adopts the "teacher-centered" teaching mode. This kind of teaching mode is based on grammar translation method. Through the interpretation of the vocabulary and grammar rules in the textbook, teachers set a lot of practice for students to passively accept all the language information. It inevitably kills students' interest in English learning and students can't be fully active to participate in the teaching process, which fails to effectively cultivate students' comprehensive language application ability.

In terms of students, there are also some problems existing at present.

1. Students' integrated application ability of English is poor, especially listening and speaking skills. Ignorance of listening and speaking skills for a long time and the lack of the exchange of learning language environment give rise to serious phenomena of "deaf English" and "dumb English".

2. Students' independent learning ability is poor, students' initiative in English learning is not strong and English learning goals are not clear. Quite a large part of students' purpose of learning English is to pass exam. The passive English learning method directly impacts on the students' English learning motivation and consciousness.

3. Students have little knowledge in other fields. The lack of understanding of the background knowledge in English speaking countries such as society, economy, culture and politics affects the improvement of students' English comprehensive application ability.

To solve the above problems, the education policy of teaching students in accordance of their

aptitude provides us with the improvement of teaching ideas. In order to improve the teaching efficiency and quality, the teachers in freshman year at our school began to implement hierarchical English teaching in marketing and foreign secretary specialties in 2010. Our requirement and practice were theoretically supported. Requirements stated that due to the difference of various types of higher education institutions in conditions of school operation, teachers' quality and students' level, teachers must stick to teaching students in accordance of their aptitude(2007:8). In the practice of implementing this principle, we also got success. Two years after hierarchical teaching in 2010, the passing rate of entire province university English level Grade 3 examination was 70%, which is more than the average passing rate of the whole province vocational colleges. By contrast, before hierarchical teaching, the passing rate of Grade 3 examination in 2009 in the same period was only 55%. The passing rate of Grade 3 examination in 2011 and 2012 were also on a rise. This shows that the teaching practice is in accordance with the Guidelines, implements the principle of "classified guidance and graded teaching", improves the teaching environment in college and complies with college English teaching pattern.

The hierarchical teaching system construction and operation

Modern foreign language teaching theory believes that in order to improve the efficiency and quality of foreign language learning it is necessary to explore: (1) What are the conditions to promote foreign language study? (2) How do create these conditions in foreign language teaching in the classroom? College English teaching is a kind of hierarchical system and the goal is to provide the convenience of college English learning conditions. This system not only includes classroom teaching but also has a complete set of extracurricular support systems. Therefore, the composition of this system is actually a kind of the construction of teaching environment, including environmental construction and learning emotion.

1. The construction is operated according to the specific situation of the colleges and students' actual level. This structure can generally consist of four parts:

(1) Division of classes according to the English level of students. At a new entrance, students will be organized to participate in the grading test and divided into A and B two levels in reference to their English scores in college entrance examination. According to different methods, steps and contents, teachers teach students in accordance of their aptitude. Students at A level start from the first level according to the requirements of the teaching outline and upgrade the level in each semester. The basic phase teaching is completed in two years.

(2) Preparatory stage teaching. B refers to preparatory stage. In accordance with the requirements and regulations on preparatory stage: students from preparation stage after study of four semesters should reach Level 3 and continue to reach up to Level 4, so as to achieve the basic requirements stipulated in the basic stage. But because most of the colleges conduct English teaching in the first two years, our teaching method was adjusted accordingly, in order to make sure students at preparatory stage complete all the compulsory courses in the first two years.

(3) The mechanism of rolling. The hierarchical teaching provides condition for teachers to conduct teaching according to students' aptitude and also produces motivating factors among students. This is a dynamic mechanism of teaching, requiring the implementation of competitive rolling mechanism in different levels.

(4) System support project. According to modern education theory and foreign language teaching theory, students are the main body of learning and the key factor to achieve the success of learning. Teachers are the organizers of the classroom teaching and helper of students' learning. This constitutes the project relation in the first level, namely the main body of the whole system. There is

quite a part of knowledge in college English teaching up to the students' autonomous learning, which is related to teachers' corresponding examination measures and means and departments' supervision and encouragement to students, this constitutes the project relation in the second level. College and academic guidance and coordination constitute the project relation in the third level. The smooth implementation of hierarchical teaching and the improvement of college English teaching quality depends mutual positive roles of these three hierarchies. The following figure presents students' English score in marketing at our school in 2012.

Fig. 1 Students' English score in marketing at our school in 2012

Major	entrance examination score	average score in test	number of students	level
Marketing	>100 (150 points scale)	98.7	49	A
Marketing	<100 (150 points scale)	75.5	56	B

2. Paying attention to students' study emotion is an important factor of modern foreign language teaching theory because in foreign language learning emotion is the engine of learning, and problems in this engine can lead to pause in learning. In order to mobilize students' positive emotion, we arranged 60% students in Class A and 40% students in Class B. The teaching progress in both Class A and B was reasonably arranged so as to make students compete on the same level in final exam. Students at preparatory stage were once divided into two levels (B, C), expecting to make elaborate guidance for those who were particularly poor in English, but it turned out to be ineffective. Many Level C students produced a self-esteem emotion, thinking of they are "third-class citizens" and being in fear of difficulties in English learning. Later, we combined the two levels as one at preparatory stage, which rapidly reduced students' psychological pressure. With teachers' active guidance, a lot of Class B students enhanced the confidence of learning English.

Reflection of system support functions

College English teaching is a systematic project, so the hierarchical teaching system needs to be equipped with support and supervision measures. In addition to the support and coordination from school and the relevant departments, hierarchical teaching is to establish a good mechanism of inside and outside the classroom teaching and teaching system of examination. School administrative department guidance and support for college English teaching is mainly embodied in the two aspects.

1. The establishment of a mechanism inside and outside the classroom teaching

Each semester's teaching should be carried out according to the hierarchical teaching requirements. Detailed teaching plan and schedule should be conducted at the beginning of a semester for the purpose of making students fully contact English learning material and get plenty of English training opportunities. Outline regulated that the percentage of learning hours inside and outside class shall be not less than 1:2. In our semester teaching plan, the content of the student extracurricular self-study is increased. At the same time, we notice that English learning is a kind of subtle and gradual process, which needs students' unremitting efforts.

2. The midterm examination system

It's set up as a regular system in mid semester aiming to evaluate both teaching and learning. Modern foreign language teaching theory recognizes that it is the learner who plays a decisive role in the final results of learning. Setting up midterm examination system aims to examine students' learning situation and response to teaching tasks and plans. Simple mid-term exam cannot absolutely reach the expected purpose and effect.

Although foreign language teaching puts emphasis on students, the role of teachers must not be underestimated. Teachers play the integrated roles of student demand analyzer, curriculum organizer, textbook editor or shapers, courseware producer, advisors, mentors and teaching researchers, whose main purpose is to organize and guide students and motivate the students' learning. At present, foreign language teaching fields at home and abroad have put teachers' role in the key status of research topics and focus on the whole quality of teacher education. At the same time, we shouldn't ignore the training of basic teaching skills. In order to ensure the teaching to run on the right track and make teachers carry on critical reflection on their own performance through teaching practice and constantly update their teaching theory and practice, it is necessary to adopt incentive measures at present. The construction of hierarchical teaching mode in college English teaching must adapt to the specific situation of colleges.

Conclusion

It is now a guiding principle of education to teach students according to their aptitude. How to establish a complete and effective teaching system under the framework of college English teaching is a long-term process of keeping pace with times. We only list a system to create a teaching environment and support mode in foundation phase of college English. Indeed, there are many topics can be done in order to make good use of all aspects of support system and promote the students to have a positive emotion. In China's accession to the WTO, the operation into the global economy today, the social demand for college graduates of English major proposes a bigger challenge to our college English teaching. How to improve and build a reasonable learning environment in the stage of application in college English and effectively improve the quality of students in learning English is subject to our further efforts.

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