

Thinking on the Improvement of Teaching Knowledge Structure of College English Teachers*

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Abstract—At present, many college English teachers lack technical knowledge, background knowledge and content knowledge of teaching. They must clearly realize the importance of knowledge, seize opportunities and face challenges. At the same time, it is also important to continuously improve their comprehensive knowledge level and build perfect knowledge structure. In this way, we can better promote the reform and improve the overall quality of college English teaching.

Keywords—college English; teachers; teaching knowledge; knowledge structure

I. INTRODUCTION

English is a distinctly important course in the course system of higher education. In order to better teach and effectively improve teaching quality, English teachers should have rich teaching knowledge. In terms of the specific meaning of college English teaching, the teaching knowledge structure of college English teachers include: the first is the content knowledge of college English teaching including college English teachers' understanding and mastering of textbook contents, English application level, attainments in English literature and linguistics as well as Chinese linguistics and literature; the second is technical knowledge of college English teaching including the comprehensive ability in applying traditional and modern teaching media, innovation ability in teaching methods; the third is environmental knowledge of college English teaching including the understanding of students' psychology, ability in organizing classroom teaching and dealing with accidents in class; the fourth is background knowledge of college English teaching especially the knowledge related to humanity, engineering and natural science. For example, English teachers in university of economics should know knowledge about finance, management as well as finance and taxation; English teachers in university of engineering should know knowledge about machinery and computer technology. Under the background of knowledge explosion, English teachers should ceaselessly reserve, expand and improve knowledge structure to become competent. Therefore, it has crucial practical value to recognize the necessity of improving college English teachers'

teaching knowledge structure and analyzing the reasons why they lack it, and find out countermeasures to improve it for them.

II. NECESSITY TO IMPROVE COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS' TEACHING KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURE

College English education aims at training college students' comprehensive English ability. College English is an important course. with the development of times and continuous deepening of higher education reform, the task, contents, objects, media, feedback and evaluation of college English teaching have changed. It has new requirements for enrichment and completion of college English teachers' teaching knowledge structure.

Firstly, the teaching technique changes with each passing day, requiring college English teachers to enrich technical knowledge of teaching. Burgeoning modern educational technology like audio and video technology based on computer networks and communication technology, language experimental system and micro-teaching system promoted newly [2] are applied to college English teaching. The teaching technology revolution with soaring development requires college English teachers to establish the idea of timely reforming teaching technique and actively learn new technique and methods according to characteristics and requirements of English teaching practice, in order to grasp more teaching skills and better teach students.

Secondly, the new definition of object and subject of teaching requires college English teachers to unceasingly expand environmental knowledge of teaching. In modern higher education, students are subjects and teachers are leaders in classroom teaching. Students and teachers can be compared to "actors" and "directors" respectively in classroom teaching. In this process, teachers should "enlighten students instead of leading them by the nose; be strict with students instead of letting them feel depressed". College English teachers must be familiar with the law of physical and mental development of college students "born after the 1990", have skilled management ability in teaching and abundant environmental knowledge of teaching. They should be able to orderly organize teaching and deal with emergency situation in teaching.

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Thirdly, the teaching reform of college English and the reform of CET-4 and CET-6 require college English teachers to timely update teaching content knowledge. Teaching reform of college English is an important field of higher education reform and attracts much attention. At present, colleges provide the public elective course of *College English* and elective courses covering English skills, practical English and English culture. CET-4 and CET-6 add translation, dictation and writing and delete the examination of words and grammar. It shows the teaching reform of college English is integrating with international foreign language teaching, in order to improve college students' language output ability and promote the social function of language. Previously, college English teachers repeatedly correct students' pronunciation and intonation and explain the origin of words. Nowadays, college English teachers must timely update content knowledge of teaching, anew set teaching objectives and arrange teaching contents, plan teaching links, in order to improve students' practical ability in applying English through providing more and better opportunities and ways for them to practice English.

Fourthly, the self-improvement of college English teachers requires them to expand background knowledge of teaching. College English teachers are not only "educators" to teach professional knowledge and train professional quality but also "engineers" to cultivate students' taste and shape their souls. The self-improvement of college teachers is to work on "professional education" and carry out "general education". Therefore, college teachers must be like "encyclopedias". They must realize the importance of knowledge, seize the opportunities and face challenges, continuously improve their comprehensive knowledge as well as build perfect knowledge structure.

III. ANALYZE THE CURRENT SITUATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS' TEACHING KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURE

At present, many college English teachers lack technical knowledge, background knowledge and content knowledge of teaching. On the whole, the current situations of college English teachers' teaching knowledge structure are as follows:

Firstly, the separation of teaching idea and practice makes college English teachers neglect the improvement of teaching knowledge structure.

National Research Center of Foreign Language Education once carried out questionnaire survey for English teachers in 49 colleges of our country. The results show 97% of college English teachers agree the student-oriented educational idea and propose to create interactive, pleasant and relaxed environment of language communication in class. [3] However, English teachers spend 78% of teaching time in explaining the text, words and exercises, only 22% in group activities and interactive practice. It shows although college English teachers agree the "student-oriented" educational idea, they fail to apply it to teaching practice. They teach through indoctrinating teaching and think the teaching quality depends on teachers' teaching level, which is determined by teachers' English proficiency. Therefore, most college English teachers only pay attention to the improvement of their ability in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation and fail to realize the

importance of technical knowledge, method knowledge, background knowledge and environmental knowledge of teaching. Meanwhile, they neglect the improvement of teaching knowledge structure. Inevitably, they will mislead the younger generation and make mistakes in teaching, greatly disappointing us in teaching quality and effects. For example, in a sentence of Bai Juyi's *Song of Eternal Sorrow*, "Wan Zhuan E Mei Ma Qian Si", the word "E Mei" is the substitution of beauty, here referring to Yang Yuhuan, but some English teachers translate it into "those moth—eyebrows" by mistake. This is because English teachers lack the knowledge of Chinese language culture and fail to know the multiple meanings of allusion and literary quotation in Chinese well [4].

Secondly, the rigidity of English major education leads to narrow teaching knowledge structure of college English teachers.

At present, most in-service college English teachers are graduates of English major in normal colleges. However, restricted by specific teaching contents, English teachers pay attention to learning of language skills when attending school and take TEM-4 and TEM-8 as standards to balance their knowledge level. They know little about other knowledge related to teaching like pedagogy, curriculum science and psychology. Although they learn some useful teaching knowledge, because of lacking corresponding practice, it becomes "showy and not substantial" and teachers only use it to deal with the exam. Courses provided to improve English majors' background knowledge about natural science and culture and history are dispensable in training plan of English major. Some teachers obtain limited teaching knowledge through short-term further education and school-based training, but they fail to meet the complicated and changeable teaching practice, often trapping in embarrassing situations.

Thirdly, poor accomplishments lead to slow update of college English teachers' teaching knowledge structure.

With the development of times, new culture, technology and knowledge continuously emerge in large numbers and knowledge changes quickly. Teaching knowledge of college English teachers is seriously backward. Some teachers fail to keep pace with the times and update teaching knowledge. Instead, they still "live off their past gains". Therefore, the knowledge structure of some English teachers is outdated and cannot change with the times. For example, many college English teachers literally translate the new word "WeChat" into "Micro message" but Americans call it "Moments". Therefore, in practical teaching, these teachers are incompetent to timely introduce and comprehensively explain new knowledge to students, let alone train students' ability in learning English knowledge. It is adverse to students' integrated development in the long run.

IV. MEASURES TO IMPROVE COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS' TEACHING KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURE

A. *Strengthen College English Teachers' Self-Consciousness to Improve Teaching Knowledge through the Evaluation of Classroom Teaching Effects*

The evaluation of classroom teaching effects is important to assess college teachers' work and one of the important contents of evaluation system in school. College English teachers' self-consciousness to improve teaching knowledge can be strengthened through effective evaluation of classroom teaching effects. Therefore, colleges should realize the important influence of English teachers' teaching knowledge structure on English teaching, educate, supervise and guide them. It is necessary to regularly evaluate teaching effects, timely summarize and give specific guidance on corresponding teachers according to actual evaluation results, urge English teachers to improve teaching knowledge structure consciously.

B. *Use Diversified Forms of Continuing Education to Update College English Teachers' Teaching Knowledge Structure*

1) *Improve college English teachers' content knowledge through diploma education:* Colleges should make every endeavor to create conditions for teachers, encourage them to take postgraduate entrance exams, study for a doctorate and take courses for on-job postgraduates through providing special funds and priority of professional title appraisal. Meanwhile, they can support college English teachers to go abroad for short-term further education and as visiting scholar through paying for some expenses, giving subsistence allowance and transferring learning time to workload. It makes for English teachers to ceaselessly update knowledge about English language and literature, history of Britain and America, culture and society, and timely grasp advanced English teaching ideas and methods at home and abroad.

2) *Improve college English teachers' teaching technique and environmental knowledge through school-based training:* School-based training is a learning style for teachers in school. Its contents center on the requirements and principles of teaching of the school, in order to improve teachers' professional skills and educational ability. School-based training can yield twice the result with half the effort in improving teaching technique and background knowledge. Schools should realize the significance of professional knowledge and educational theory on teachers' professional development. Furthermore, integrate school-based training with construction of learning organization, create good learning atmosphere, and promote English teachers to actively improve their knowledge structure, in order to enhance their level of modern teaching theory.

Colleges should innovate in the pattern of school-based training according to the actual situation, in order to improve English teachers' basic skills in education and teaching. They should timely know about the newest basic theory and educational reform of English discipline to continuously improve teachers' background knowledge. For example, teachers, teaching and research office and administrative departments for teaching can form the training pattern of

mutual cooperation; schools can formulate the training pattern of self-examination focusing on teaching. The principal, the deans, the heads of teaching and research offices as well as all teachers reflect on difficulties and hot topics in teaching; the school of foreign languages and the teaching department of public English can develop research-based training pattern according to teachers' research direction and the design of main courses, organize English teachers to carry out teaching observation and collective preparation of instruction; colleges should depend on advanced database and implement training pattern of internet-assisted teaching research, taking technical knowledge of education as the key link of school-based training. Technical knowledge of education is the tool for teachers to improve teaching knowledge structure. Database is the platform for teaching reform and scientific research and communication. Except for Chinese Science Citation Database and China Dissertation Database, colleges should bring in the world famous English databases like Oxford University Press, John Wiley and Project Muse. Establish college English resource database specific for English teaching and scientific research, including English simulation test system, English application tool and English resources.

C. *Depend on Teaching and Research Platforms to Promote College English Teachers' Application of Teaching Knowledge*

In order to unceasingly improve teaching level in practical teaching, English teachers must integrate teaching with scientific research and roundly apply teaching knowledge. At present, many colleges pay inadequate attention to English teachers' teaching and research. There are few achievements in teaching and research. Many on-the-job college English teachers even neither write any papers of teaching research nor participate in or hold teaching and research projects at all levels. Therefore, colleges should depend on teaching and research platform to promote English teachers' application of teaching knowledge and build high level teaching and research group. Firstly, schools should establish research center of higher education and take it as the base for teaching and research activities; secondly, establish special teaching and research fund for English, encourage English teachers to participate in teaching research and reform in groups, transfer teaching experience and knowledge into results of teaching research; moreover, colleges should furthest create opportunities for English teachers to realize academic exchanges, invite off-campus experts and scholars to give academic reports and dispatch English teachers to research in other prestigious universities or attend top teachers' lectures.

V. CONCLUSION

Teaching knowledge structure is an important part of college English teachers' integrated quality. Its perfection level will greatly influence the teaching level of college English. In order to better promote the reform and improve the overall quality of college English teaching, we must continuously improve and optimize college English teachers' teaching knowledge level.

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