

Discussion on College English Teaching Research from the Perspective of Holistic Education

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Abstract—The traditional philosophy and mode of teaching and learning must be innovated in order to promote the reform of teaching and learning of college English, cultivate talents with solid professional and comprehensive knowledge as well as good moral characters. Holistic education is of significance in guiding college English teaching and learning. It requires teachers to innovate education philosophy, optimize knowledge structure and improve teaching skills. Moreover, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary teaching content should be provided and inquiry-based teaching and formative evaluation system should be implemented in classroom teaching.

Keywords—holistic education; learning and teaching of college English Introduction

I. INTRODUCTION

According to *Outline of the National Program for Medium and Long Term Educational Reform and Development* (2010-2020), the core of higher education is to improve the quality of talents by cultivating high-quality professional personnel and top-notch innovative personnel. This trend is required by the current social economic development. The vision of human wholeness is an ancient one. It can be found in cultures in indigenous people as well as the cultures of Greece, India and China. It is a different story today. Our culture and education systems have become obsessed with acquisition and achievement. However, there are people who have a different vision of education: a holistic view. They still hold the ancient perspective of educating the whole person and not just training the students to compete in the global economy [1]. College English, as a compulsory course in higher education, should absorb the holistic view so as to teach the knowledge and cultivate the talents in the meantime. This paper aims at exploring new approach of the college English reform in the holistic perspective.

II. HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Holistic education attempts to nurture the development of the whole person. This includes the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual. Perhaps the defining aspect of holistic education is the spiritual. Progressive education and humanistic education dealt with the first five factors but generally ignored the spiritual dimension. The idea of holistic education dated back from ancient Greece,

such as Plato's "harmony" and Aristotle's Liberal education theory. Educationists in Renaissance time also advocated that education should be oriented on human and considered the integrated development of human. In ancient China, holistic education was the goal of the traditional education. Confucius emphasized that the goal of education is the balanced development among several elements.

The concept of "holistic education" was first promoted in 1970s by some radical educationist who inherited the education idea of humanism. American scholar R. Milller systematically elaborated such theory and officially called it holistic education. Since then, it was widely supported and promoted. One of the examples was that Obara Kuniyoshi, a famous Japanese educationalist, held that education should keep balance among knowledge, morality, art, religion, body, and living. Chung Yuan Christian University in Taiwan, China, held "cultivating the whole person" as the educational goal of the university. Hong Kong Baptist University practiced holistic education by means of its curriculum [2].

Scholars in our country showed interest later than those in other countries. But the theories still provide grate value to education in China and bring a new perspective for educators to reflect.

Holistic education emphasizes that education should be integrated and comprehensive. The core is to criticize the traditional education which only focused on teaching knowledge and training skills. Instead, it turns to cultivate the whole person in all aspects, including body, knowledge, skill, morality, wisdom, spirituality, soul and creativity. Holistic education idea can be conclude in the following aspects:

A. Emphasis on Integrated Development of Human Being

From the core of holistic education, spirituality is more important than materialism. Therefore, education is supposed to think highly of the internal power, such as intelligence, emotion, imagination, creativity, compassion, curiosity, appreciation of the beauty, and most important, the self-realization . Education is not only to transmit knowledge and train the skill, but also pay close attention to the cultivation of human characteristics, and finally reach the harmony between human spirit and materials.

B. Emphasis on Connections among Individuals

Holistic education asks to seek the meaning of life and understanding among individuals. It encourages building up sincere interpersonal relationship, not only individuals with the same cultural background, but also those from different nations. Besides, relationship between teachers and students should be equal, open and dynamic. Only in the equal and open relation between teachers and students, among students themselves can they realize their integrated developments.

C. Emphasis on Human Experience instead of Basic Skills

Holistic education looks more at growing and exploring. It holds that there are limits in traditional textbooks and standardized testing. This idea is closely related to embodied cognition, which emphasizes that physical experience plays an important role in learning, especially the function of personal and social experience.

D. Emphasis on Critical Thinking

Holistic education promotes students' critical thinking towards their culture, ethics and political environment and their commitment to creation and reform the current culture. It requires the students not only receive the information from teachers, but also be able to judge and to criticize, the most importantly, to create.

E. Emphasis on Cultivation of Humanism

Educators realized that the current education pays more attention to the transmitting of practical knowledge while ignored the learning of art and literature. Nowadays, a lot of universities and colleges seek quick success and instant benefit so that students lack their concern about the environment and events around them and finally become the tools of material reproduction. This education disobeys the target of human education, which considers human as the core.

F. Emphasis on interdisciplinary integration

Holistic educators argue that knowledge can be learned separately. In that case, it is torn into fragments, which results in the learners' isolated and unbalanced thinking style. Take those vocational schools for example, they are able to provide professional education in practice, but they fail to provide education for harmonious development. Therefore, holistic education advocates integrative learning and emphasizes interdisciplinary learning to promote human development. That is because no single subject or issue can reflect or solve the current problems in the world. The only way is to break the limit among subjects and achieve interaction among interdisciplinary knowledge.

III. HOLISTIC EDUCATION IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

Holistic education has brought new requirements to the traditional college English teaching. First, traditional college English teaching made too much effort teaching students the language while ignored to cultivate their self-study ability. Teachers spent a lot of time explaining the words, practicing

the sentence structure, analyzing the passage so as to help students improve their skill of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teacher firmly mastered the power of discourse in class while students passively receive various tasks and hardly had time to think and explored independently. Secondly, traditional education lacks the cultivation of integration cultural quality. Students with different professional background learned from the same textbooks and teachers hardly broaden the relevant knowledge. Obviously, such English teaching can't satisfy the demand of the society for inter-disciplinary and innovative talents.

The primary goal of college English teaching is the acquisition of language, preparing the students with application ability of the English language for their future use. Another goal is to cultivate students' independent learning ability, help them figure out the best strategy, practice their thinking ability and most important, cultivate their innovative spirit and critical thinking. Besides, college English education is supposed to integrate the cross-cultural and interdisciplinary resources so as to help students set up cross-culture consciousness and integrated thinking way. Last but not least, as an important humanity course, college English teaching takes the responsibility of showing the students the right value towards learning, people and life, which may lay the foundation for their future contribution to the society.

IV. COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS' ROLE IN HOLISTIC EDUCATION

The teacher's role in education is most complex and demands flexibility and adaptation to situational changes, both global and local as well as to classroom settings. This complexity creates experiences that, together, form the teachers' understanding of their role [4]. A major factor is obviously the process of teaching. Teachers play a leading role in English teaching activities and are of great importance of promoting holistic view in the reform of college English teaching. Their role can be understood in a new way based on holistic education, which turns from the learning controller to the guide, from continuator of knowledge to the rebuildler, from the ossified follower to constructive criticizer [3]. From the practical aspect, teachers should constantly update the education concept, optimize knowledge structure and improve teaching skill.

A. Renew the Education Concept

Influenced by traditional English teaching concept, a lot of educators still hold the idea that English teaching aims at improving students' skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. However, it is the students who are the focus of learning. Therefore, teachers should renew the education concept constantly. Every learner is a special and valuable individual with different learning potential. Everyone deserves to be respected, tolerated and appreciated. It is necessary to provide them with free exploration and autonomic learning opportunities. However, even though there are different-level teaching modes, it is still far from enough to satisfy the personal demand. Only in a free

atmosphere of English learning, can the students truly be respected [5].

Their job is not only training students about the basic skills, but also let them master the ways in which they acquire the knowledge and educate their soul for them to live poetically and aesthetically. In the perspective of the relationship between teachers and students, students are the body while teachers serve for their learning and developing. Therefore, teacher who used to pass the experience to students now guide them find their own way of growing. They are not authoritative leaders any more but tolerant listeners, creating a freer environment and more space for students to learn, to explore, to create and to grow.

B. Optimize Knowledge Structure

Miller holds that holistic education is a journey in which all the students and teachers learn and grow together [6]. It is the teachers' responsibility to integrate all the knowledge and connect different subjects for the students, which obviously puts a higher demand for the teachers' knowledge structure and cultural quality. As English teacher, language is not everything they have to teach. Else things include history, cultures, religions, society and technology from other nations. However, if the teachers lack such information background, the teaching activities will be limited. Besides, teachers should be creators to set up new modes of teaching, aiming at building up an equal and open relationship between teachers and students.

Therefore, teaching can be a motive that drives the teachers to improve their comprehensive quality and urges them to absorb various kinds of information so as to put into teaching practice finally.

C. Improve Teaching Skills

In holistic education, teaching is supposed to be a meaningful experience for students because it is a bridge which connects them to the world. College English teachers should inspire themselves to do educational research actively so as to improve their teaching skills. Putting the students' need as first consideration, teachers should design the class and organize the activities elaborately to improve the students' both cognitive and knowledgeable level. Internet and information technology are developing rapidly, which put a higher demand to the teachers to master relevant skills, such as using the advanced teaching machines, optimizing the teaching resources, adopting information technology in classroom teaching and guiding students to search, acquire information and finally improve the ability of solving the problem[7].

V. COLLEGE ENGLISH CLASSROOM TEACHING IN HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Students cannot just rely on classroom learning even though it plays an important role. Due to the limit of time and function, it is far from enough to provide students with all the information and opportunity they need to acquire the target language. That is why classroom teaching should focus more on motivate students to learn and participate

actively and practice their ability to learn by themselves, especially before and after the class.

A. Cooperative Inquiry and Independent Inquiry Teaching Model

Traditional college English mode is classroom lecture with following process: revision, new lesson, practice, assessment, revision. However, this mode doesn't offer any opportunity to the students to feedback what they learn, not to mention their active participation and emotional engagement. Holistic education asks for changing the traditional way of learning, especially the students' role into multi-dimension learning. This requires students fully participate with their hands, hearts and brains to further promote their souls [8]. Teachers provide the students with environment in which they are able to put what they learn into practice and realize cooperative inquiry and independent inquiry teaching. The core of cooperative inquiry teaching is to ask students to solve problems through cooperation, integrate interdisciplinary knowledge in the meantime. Teachers are more like directors who offer help when necessary. Such mode can be realized in classroom activities including situational dialogue, play show, topic discussion, English debate or seminar. As to the independent inquiry teaching, teachers help students make plans of study based on their own condition so as to explore and solve the problems themselves under teachers' guidance. Such mode can be realized through delivering a speech, presentation, paper writing, extensive reading, movies appreciation and self-study on Internet.

B. Construct Multi-dimension Teaching Contents

Holistic education supports interdisciplinary curriculum arrangement with relevant teaching strategy including them-based learning, integration through Arts and value education. English, as a widely used language, is open and dynamic. Its history of formation reveals the combination of nations and their own evolution. Therefore, it is necessary for the students to learn different nations and cultures, which is not helpful for English study, but also helpful for the students to have multi-dimension points of view. When the teaching contents involve a large quantity of interdisciplinary knowledge such as politics, history, economy, science and culture, it is the teacher's responsibility to give a colorful quote. In this way, students can learn creatively and critically. What's more, some positive values can also be adopted in English teaching, such as the spirit of fighting, self-strengthening, and environmental awareness.

C. Critical Thinking Cultivation

Critical thinking has already been on the list of education objectives in western countries. Traditional education mode in China has a long history of memorizing, while lacks questioning spirit and creativity. Even though critical thinking has gradually became one of the curriculum standards, it is still not thought highly in classroom teaching, including in the English teaching classroom. From first learners in kindergartens to advanced learners in colleges and universities, students are supposed to practice the sentence

structures time and time again. Take students' writing exams for example, students are so likely to memorize a lot of sentences that a lot of the passages may look the same. Besides, there are too many inflexible items in exams in China with standard answers, which exert a bad influence to inspire students' creativity, not to mention critical thinking. And the purpose of the exams is to fail or pass the students. However, items in exams of western countries are usually open and various reasonable answers are welcomed. The purpose of the exams is to locate and make up the deficiencies which have a good wash back for students' future development.

D. Evaluation System

Holistic college English teaching requires setting up comprehensive, scientific and innovative evaluation system. There are three aspects in such construction. First aspect is the multi-dimension evaluation of the learning process. Traditional evaluation focused more on the result while ignored the process of thinking. In holistic evaluation system, students' daily learning is monitored and the performance in all aspects, including the emotion, the attitude, the desire, the strategy, is evaluated. Students will be given developmental assessment and strategic advice timely according to those evaluations [9]. Second aspect is multi-evaluator. Specifically, the evaluators are not only teachers, but also students themselves. They can evaluate the learning process, including motives, learning materials, learning methods and strategy of their own. They can also be evaluated by their classmates. In this way, their ability of discovering and solving problems is cultivated and encouraged. By reflecting themselves, they acquire the ability of think independently, creatively, and critically [10]. The third aspect is multivariate evaluation strategies. Even though testing is an important traditional way to assess learning achievement, some other supportive ways are also needed for objective and scientific assessment, such as recording activities in and out of the classroom, recording autonomous study on Internet, questionnaire, interview, students' self-evaluation, etc. Various evaluation strategies can efficiently observe, assess and monitor students' learning and promote teaching activities.

VI. CONCLUSION

To link body, mind and spirit is to seek wholeness that is at the heart of holistic learning. The ultimate target of education is to inspire human potential in all aspects so as to develop comprehensively. It is widely acknowledged to adopt holistic education concept in college English education reform. However, questions still remain for educators to answer from their exploration, practice, innovation and conclusion.

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