

Reflection and Reconstruction of College English Teaching in the Context of College Transformation

Taking Nanchang University Gongqing College as an Example

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Abstract—Nowadays, it is required that the newly-built colleges and universities in China should transform into the application-oriented ones for the training of applied talents. College English is an important compulsory course for the applied colleges to apply the undergraduate education for the purpose of cultivating students' comprehensive skills and abilities. Based on this, the paper taking Gongqing College of Nanchang University as an example has first analyzed the present situation of College English teaching objectives, curriculum and teaching staff, then put forward a new application-type College English teaching system to optimize the cultivation of English applied talents in accordance with the development of applied colleges, the orientation of transformation and the training target as well.

Keywords—college transformation; college English teaching; reflection and reconstruction

I. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, Chinese College English course, as an important compulsory course, plays a key role in developing students' subsequent learning ability and their ability to use English in a comprehensive way. At present, the new local colleges and universities are supposed to be transferred to applied undergraduate education. After the transformation, the colleges and universities should change the orientation of development, guiding ideology, teaching philosophy and cultivation methods. However, there are many problems in the applied universities and College English teaching. For example, the orientation is not clear, the teachers do not have a high aptitude for the teaching, the teaching means is single, and the selection of teaching materials is unreasonable. Thus, it is urgent to reform College English teaching in the applied colleges and universities so as to realize the teaching goals of cultivating the high-quality and high-skilled talents. Taking Gongqing College of Nanchang University as an example, this paper rethinks the present situation of College English teaching and explores the reconstruction of College English teaching system based on the transformation.

II. CURRENT SITUATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING IN NEWLY ESTABLISHED LOCAL UNIVERSITIES

A. The Status of Students

According to the investigation, the status of students has the following features. First of all, some students have a sense of inferiority. Because of the failure of the college entrance examination, they think that they are inferior to those good students and lose their confidence in learning. Secondly, some have poor knowledge in English. Although the students from the applied college have learned English in their middle school stage, there is still a clear gap with students from other colleges in vocabulary, grammar and reading. Thirdly, some lack interest in learning English. Under the autonomic learning mode without teachers' supervision, they do not take advantage of opportunities to develop interest in learning English but lack perseverance in learning. Fourthly, the development of students' English ability is not balanced. In order to adapt to the environment of examination-oriented education and to pursue the enrollment rate, schools pay more attention to English reading and writing in basic teaching and ignore the training of listening and speaking, which raises a trend to hinder students' full development. Finally, there are still a few students feeling comfortless towards transformation because they misunderstand the applied college as the vocational college.

B. The Status of Curriculum

College curriculum is generally divided into basic courses and professional courses, but there is a lack of relevance between the two courses. According to the basic requirements of the Ministry of Education, college teaching should follow the unified requirements and the principles of classification guidance. However, it has been proven that they are difficult to be effectively implemented in practical teaching. Therefore, there are the following defects in the setting up of College English courses. First, the periods for College English teaching are short. According to the basic requirements, students should spend 180-220 basic school time on English learning. However, because of the short period of school system, many colleges allocate the time of

College English and professional English, which undoubtedly cause students who have a weak English foundation lack interest in English learning. Owing to the poor English knowledge, they have difficulties in professional English courses, which wastes resources as well as their time. Second, College English teaching do not lay a good foundation for professional English teaching. Based on the guidance of the Ministry of Education, applied colleges have set up professional English courses, but because the time of opening is short, it is out of line with college English courses and there is no transition from college English courses to professional English courses, so that students cannot connect related knowledge and apply in practice.

C. The Status of the Selection of English Textbooks

The existing teaching materials in the transformational development institutions cannot meet the needs of practical training objectives. With the continuous expansion of students in China's applied colleges and universities in recent years, relevant English textbooks have gradually begun to rise. According to the latest related curriculum requirements issued by the Ministry of Education, the publishing houses have stepped up the publishing of English textbooks for applied colleges and universities. Currently, there are many kinds of publishing houses but their textbooks focus on different teaching emphases. In most colleges, they choose *New Century English Learning to Speak: An English Video Course* and *New Century College English Zooming in: An Integrated English Course* from Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press as basic textbooks. But in terms of professional teaching materials, colleges select textbooks according to their own development needs. However, it needs to be pointed out that the lack of distinctive and pertinent school-based and planning textbooks will lead to English teaching not to effectively guide students to develop and specialize in international English learning. Besides, in the fierce competition with ordinary universities, applied colleges would lose their own advantages, which is not suitable for the future survival and development.

D. The Status of Faculty

The "double-qualified" teachers in applied colleges are insufficient. The level of teachers is the key to the quality of teaching. Because of the rapid expansion of the scale of applied education in recent years, the number of students is increasing year by year, which leads to the relative shortage of teachers. The traditional big class teaching cannot satisfy students' individual needs, and once the big class becomes small one, it will add a heavy burden to the English teachers beyond doubt, and more teachers are needed to take on the class hours. Recently, although some applied colleges have been recruiting English teachers to expand the faculty or part-time teachers to improve the teaching level, the employed teachers are basically the students who have just graduated without teaching experience, so that the teaching effect is still less than satisfactory. Meanwhile, due to the arduous task of teaching, teachers have no extra time to carry out scientific research activities or improve their competences. In addition, the salaries of teachers in applied

colleges are generally lower than those of teachers in ordinary universities, resulting in greater mobility of teachers. Likewise, most teachers in applied colleges and universities have a low degree of education. Most of the first educational qualifications of teachers are bachelor's or master's degree. There are few doctoral qualifications. From the title, most of them are intermediate titles and few professional ones.

E. The Status of Teaching Methods

At present, most applied colleges still follow the traditional "three centers" (i.e. teachers, textbooks, and classroom) teaching mode, and teachers' teaching methods are single. According to the survey, in a 45-minute class, 65% of the teachers tend to spend more than 35 minutes on knowledge, while the rest of 35% are used to spending about 30 minutes. It shows that teachers' teaching method is still an instillation way and the teaching focus is decided by teachers. The classroom activities are determined by the teachers' preferences, but not the combination of students' interest and the basic teaching task. Students' English learning in the classroom still follows the model of "vocabulary — grammar analysis — text translation — practice — consolidation". The original teaching method imprisoned the students' innovative ideas and made them lose their ability of self-study. Apart from that, teachers spend too much attention and time on the teaching of basic English knowledge rather than training for English culture and oral pronunciation in the class, which cause students' poor participation and make their subjective initiative greatly restricted.

F. The Status of Teaching Evaluation

It is common to see that nowadays, most of the applied colleges take the examination as the means of evaluation, and some colleges and universities lower the evaluation requirements for students on the basis of the lack of teaching conditions and the weak foundation of the students. Some students reflect that colleges should set up College English courses as compulsory ones while professional English courses are divided into professional basic courses, professional optional courses, professional direction courses and basic subject courses according to different specialties. Besides, some students complain that only 30% of the teachers used a comprehensive test to evaluate students' listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating abilities in final exam while most of the teachers focused on the test of the basic knowledge of language and reading ability. In order to guarantee the students' graduation and the social employment rate, some colleges and universities reduce the qualification of the English application ability grade examination, which has led to a loss of the practical significance of the teaching test. At the same time, such a final assessment method of "checking and deciding on life and death" has dampened the enthusiasm of students who are more diligently and progressively engaged in English learning.

III. REFLECTIONS ON THE CURRENT SITUATION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

A. Unclear Self-positioning

Unclear orientation of development is a prominent problem in applied colleges, and it is also the main reason for the above status. On the whole, most colleges pursue a comprehensive guiding ideology but still use the original teaching system as the core of teaching materials. The guiding ideology and teaching system are not adapted to the goal of training applied talents, and because of the lack of “double-qualified” teachers, it is obviously impossible for those colleges to meet the current demand for high-quality skilled talents in China’s market and enterprises. At present, teachers in applied colleges and universities has not formed the school-based mode of College English teaching with characteristics and the English teaching has lost the distinctive features of the vocational English as the content of the teaching. In the course of teaching, it is difficult to develop practical talents that satisfy the needs of the society by overemphasizing the learning of grammar and vocabulary and neglecting the practical use of English and the training of basic skills.

B. Insufficient Investment

From the initial condition that all the people learn professional skills to the later vocational education, the development of applied colleges and universities sinks into a low valley. With the rapid development of China’s economy, senior technical personnel who can engage in frontline activities are strongly demanded. In this context, the application type education has entered a rapid development period. The state began to advocate the application type education vigorously, which causes the local new colleges and universities to transform into the applied ones, but because the special foundation is poor and the teaching facilities need to be added, the applied colleges and universities could not afford the heavy investment. At the same time, the government’s limited educational funds are biased towards basic education and ordinary colleges and universities, and they have little investment in the applied colleges and universities, which makes those schools in trouble and unable to replace teaching facilities so that students cannot conduct practical operation and practice well. In brief, insufficient investment causes the applied colleges and universities to pale beside the key provincial universities on both facilities and faculties.

C. Ingrained Traditional Teaching Concept

First, after the transformation, some teachers still take the old-fashioned teaching concept concentrating on exam-oriented education, and do not set up the teaching idea of “cultivating students’ practical ability and paying attention to practice”. Besides, there is still no new teaching evaluation system in colleges and universities, and the evaluation of English teaching quality is depending on the grade of CET4 and CET6 as before, which result in the phenomenon that both college leaders and teachers attach importance to the

training of students’ English test-taking skills. Furthermore, English classroom teaching is still teacher-centered. It is known to all that teachers should be the guide and illuminator of classroom teaching, but not the subject of the whole teaching^[1]. But from the situation of College English teaching in applied colleges and universities, some teachers ignore the problems that whether their instruction can be followed by students when they organize classroom teaching, which leads to a direct result that the teaching effect is not satisfied.

IV. RECONSTRUCTION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION

A. Setting up a Clear Development Orientation of Colleges and Talent Cultivation

The transformation of colleges and universities to applied ones should initially reconstruct the orientation of running schools and the goal of cultivating talents. To solve the contradiction between the social demand and the disjointed talents cultivation, we must focus on dealing with the difficulty of employment and enrollment. As for Gongqing College of Nanchang University, in the process of transformation, it should first take developing high-quality and high-skilled application talents who can satisfy the needs of regional economic and social development as college localization. Meanwhile, it is required for Gongqing College to set College English teaching goal as training English talents who have solid English language foundation, basic language skills and humanistic accomplishment, serve for local basic education and social economic development, and are competent for jobs such as working in primary and middle school, tourism, foreign affairs, trade, foreign enterprise and culture department, and so on. To make a conclusion, it needs to overcome the situation that the local ordinary colleges and universities have failed to compete with 985 or 211 projects and colleges with long history, and highlight the characteristics of applied undergraduate education with the college orientation of regional focus so as to serve for local economy and society.

B. Constructing a College English Curriculum System Based on “Application”

The construction of curriculum system is the core of the construction of College English teaching system. In the curriculum setting of applied colleges, the English curriculum should be organically integrated with the training objectives for students’ future employment^[2]. Colleges need to set up a much more professional and flexible curriculum system that adjusts to the students’ own characteristics and the needs of the society. Meanwhile, some practical courses are also designed according to the students’ different basis. In addition, when setting up the basic course, we should pay attention to the teaching of English knowledge and introduce the international development trend and related knowledge, so as to lay a good foundation for the next step of professional English learning. Furthermore, in order to supplement the basic class hours, English elective courses should be offered as a supplement to meet students’ different

needs for English learning, and many factors such as students' special interest, cognitive style, psychological characteristics, personality development and professional needs should be considered. At the same time, students should be entitled to choosing their own courses according to their own preferences. Only in this way can English curriculum system satisfy the students' growing personalized demands.

C. Compiling Distinctive School-based Textbooks

Application-oriented College English textbooks should be based on applied education and general education. To be more specific, applied education is designed to cultivate advanced practical talents to adapt to the social requirements, while general education is a non-technical and non-professional education with both instrumental and humanistic attributes. Because College English teaching has a dual feature of the above two education, we must carry out corresponding reforms in teaching materials so as to adapt the contents of textbooks to the needs of social development. At present, applied English textbooks and reference books are lagging behind the developing English language. Although the teaching materials are constantly improving in recent years and the publishing houses are also trying to publish professional textbooks to meet the needs of the market and enterprises, these textbooks are largely identical and have no unique features, and they do not take into account the needs of the students. In order to ensure the fundamentality, specialty, practicability and frontier of the teaching materials, applied colleges should compile the school-based textbooks based on their development direction, professional characteristics and the actual situation of the students, and highlight the characteristics of the school.

D. Setting up a "Student-centered" Teaching Model

It is acknowledged that students are the main body of school education and existence, and English is a technical ability course. So to let students learn English well, teachers must arouse their interest and initiative in learning, and guide them to participate in the classroom teaching making the class really "student-centered". Besides, the English classroom should be extended to extracurricular activities. Teachers need to encourage students to develop various forms of English second classroom, such as lecture, speech, competition and so on. In short, colleges should provide various supports to combine the classroom teaching with the extracurricular practice and share high-quality teaching resources through the training base for the cooperative talents, finally realizing the aim of College English learning with the interest of students as the guide and the application of communication as the goal. As thus, the teaching of College English is truly "people-oriented", and through English learning, students can not only have good English proficiency, but also be qualified to participate in international competition and cooperation with a comprehensive knowledge structure and broad international vision.

E. Strengthening the Construction of "Double-qualified" Teaching Staff

The transformation and development of teachers is the key to the transformation of colleges and universities, and the construction of "double-qualified" teaching staff is an important guarantee for the training of applied technical talents. Therefore, the transformation of the teachers' team is the key to the success of the applied undergraduate education and the transformation of colleges and universities^[3]. In order to improve the quality of teaching, colleges should highlight their characteristics, actively introduce enterprise personnel with rich practical experience to campus, and encourage young teachers to go out for further study so that they can increase practical experience and technical expertise and contribute to forming a "double-qualified" team. Not only that, colleges should also provide a good atmosphere for the growth of teachers. They need to establish professional standards and a diversified evaluation system for teachers, and perfect some mechanism for teachers' scientific research, training and incentive, so that teachers can improve their professional ability and broaden their teaching vision to constantly explore College English teaching methods and skills and conform to the new trend of English teaching reform. It is also necessary to strengthen the construction of teachers' professional moral quality, carry on the skill inheritance, pay attention to the combination of teaching and practice, and expand the space for the professional development of English teachers.

F. Improving the Comprehensive Evaluation System of College English Teaching

Teaching and examination evaluation system is the baton of course instruction. The formulation of quantitative and comprehensive assessment means can promote the teaching effect and play a decisive role in teaching. The purpose of English learning is to cultivate students' comprehensive ability to use language and to increase their language skills. Thus, it is necessary to change past examination-oriented evaluation method of "one volume for life", and to establish a quantitative evaluation system to check students' comprehensive quality in accordance with the rules of teaching. For instance, to explore the evaluation model of "normal achievement + final performance + application ability", that is to say, teachers should take students' regular class discipline, learning attitude, classroom test, answers to questions, homework assignments and applied English ability into consideration when they grade students' learning. By establishing a scientific and comprehensive teaching evaluation system and perfecting the academic evaluation methods, the function of English as a tool to promote practical communication can be effectively developed and the comprehensive quality and employability of students in applied colleges and universities can be improved.

G. Innovating the New Teaching Mechanism of Cooperation Education Between Colleges and Enterprises

It is the new teaching mechanism of school-enterprise cooperation practice that plays a key role in testing the

success of education after transformation^[4]. Applied colleges and universities need to take cooperative education as a point cut to create a teaching team with “double-qualified” teachers and a long-term mechanism with enterprises to provide qualified personnel. Apart from that, education practice platform and new teaching model will be formed for resources sharing and rotation of learning and work experience to consequently develop students’ practical ability and settle the contradiction between supply and demand of talents. With support from the government, it is important for applied colleges to attract social capital investment to strengthen the construction of campus facilities and enhance the soft power. Besides, because of the cooperation with enterprises, “order-type” cultivation mode can directly help graduates find jobs easily, which would promote a long-term development in many aspects. For example, in the past few years, Gongqing College of Nanchang University set up 78 practice and training bases for innovation in Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Nanchang, and Gongqingcheng etc., striving to build an applied college with both technical and vocational higher education in a different Jiangxi mode.

V. CONCLUSION

Gongqing College of Nanchang University has made some achievements through the transformation of school running practice. In recent years, students have triumphed in various competitions, including Red Dot Concept Design Award which is known as “Oscar” in design, the first prize for the National College Student Mathematical Modeling Competition, the gold medal of the Seventh National Vatti Industrial Design Competition, and the gold medal of the Ordifen Cup Chinese Underwear Design Competition, and so on. In addition, there are more than 50 students winning the first prize in the National College English Contest and the college has been receiving the first group prize in the Ganjiang Cup College English Competition for 13 consecutive years. And the employment rate of graduates in the past three years is nearly 100%. Therefore, the highest level of College English teaching in applied colleges is to “teach people to fish”, not to learn for examination, that is to say, teachers need to let students learn to use English as a tool to adopt themselves to practical work, life and study, which is the focus of College English teaching in applied colleges and the purpose of the transformation.

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