

On the Self-improvement of College English in Vocational Colleges Based on the Six-word Diagnosis Methods

--- Taking W Vocational College as an Example

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Abstract. The student diversity makes the English teaching in vocational colleges more and more difficult, and the teaching efficiency is dissatisfied. The six-word diagnosis methods such as "watching", "interviewing", "doing", "testing", "checking" and "analyzing" are adopted accordingly to locate the problems existing in College English and the reasons for such problems. Based on the diagnosis methods, this paper draws five conclusions and takes 5 improvement measures in response to the diagnosed conclusions. The interview results show that the improvement effects are satisfactory.

Keywords: College English; the six-word diagnosis methods; diagnosed conclusions; improvement measures; improvement effects.

1. Introduction

College English is a public compulsory foundation course for freshman students in vocational colleges, which serves to cultivate high-quality laborers and talents with practical skills required on the front line of production, construction, service and management. It is also an important course helping to cultivate the comprehensive quality of vocational college students and improve their ability of sustainable career development. In addition to laying a good language foundation for vocational college students, College English takes up the heavy responsibility of the cultivation of their practical language skills, especially of their ability to handle business related to future careers in English.

W vocational college is a national exemplary college characterized by railway industry background. In recent years, with China's higher vocational education examination enrollment system changed and reformed, the types of admissions in this college have changed a lot, characterized by the student diversity. As far as the teaching objects are concerned, College English is learned not only by high school graduates admitted into colleges through the National College Entrance Examination but also by secondary vocational school graduates admitted into colleges through the Provincial Skill-oriented College Entrance Examination, solely-enrolled students from secondary vocational schools, and "3+2" students jointly cultivated by this college and five secondary vocational schools, who study in such secondary vocational schools for three years and in the college for two years. One of the drawbacks of the co-existence of students from varied sources in the college is that students differ from each other in learning foundation and abilities, which leads to the difficulty of the classroom teaching. As a result, the teaching efficiency is dissatisfied.

In order to guarantee the implementation of the construction objectives and the syllabus of College English, it is very necessary to find out its problems and deficiencies in teachers' beliefs, teaching objects, teaching contents, teaching modes, teaching approaches, and evaluation standards. However, the most important is that the reasons for such deficiencies should be discovered and that the countermeasures should be sought, and actively put into practice.

2. The six-word Diagnosis Methods

In order to accurately locate the problems, such 6-word diagnosis methods as "watching", "interviewing", "doing", "testing", "checking" and "analyzing" have been adopted.

As far as "watching" is concerned, English teachers should observe the classroom constantly and attentively so that they can learn about students' classroom performances, thus discovering students' weaknesses in English learning, and making sure of the reasons for such difficulties.

As for "interviewing", English teachers should actively interview students, and at the same time, they should often interview enterprises, college graduates, specialized course teachers, and senior college students. In this way can they benefit a lot. On the one hand, they can learn about their students' opinions and suggestions on College English classroom teaching; on the other hand, they can collect lots of information on how to optimize the construction objectives and the syllabus of College English. And on the basis of the proposals put forward by the above two sides, English teachers can carry out needs analysis and due to the results obtained from the analysis, the pertinence and suitability of College English classroom teaching can be greatly improved.

In terms of "doing", students are required to do different kinds of tasks in class alone, in pairs or in groups, including oral and written ones. In this case, English teachers will know about their pre-class preparation, in-class concentration and post-class review.

With regard to "testing", such quizzes as dictating, spelling, reading, reciting, speaking, and retelling, mid-term and final exams are applied to understand students' mastery of the language knowledge and the application of the language skills.

In the case of "checking", English teachers often refer to relevant literatures, searching for similar cases, and providing theoretical and practical support for accurate positioning.

As far as "analyzing" is concerned, the data collected through "watching", "interviewing", "doing", "testing" and "checking" are analyzed, induced and summarized so as for English teachers to locate the problems existing in College English classroom teaching, and find out the solutions to them. By doing so can the teaching efficiency be improved a lot.

3. Diagnosed Conclusions

Through the collation, analysis, summary and comparison of the collected data, the English teaching team in this vocational college finds out that, in general, the role of College English has been valued by all parties and the teaching effect has also been affirmed by them. However, the data show that there are still some deficiencies and problems in College English, which are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

Firstly, the construction objectives and the syllabus of College English have not been widely publicized. Students are in a state of passive acceptance and have a weak consciousness of taking an active part in curriculum construction.

Secondly, the classroom teaching environment of College English is a little dull, so students feel quite bored and have no interest. In this case, students' learning enthusiasm and initiative need to be further stimulated, and the effectiveness of classroom teaching needs to be improved.

Thirdly, the teaching contents of College English are not closely related to students' learning of specialized courses, job needs and future development and they play an insufficient role in promoting students' employment and entrepreneurship.

Fourthly, the English teachers in this college seem to have no clear goals in career development. They don't have strong consciousness of actively serving students and their majors, and neither are they willing to infiltrate programs. Therefore, the English teachers in this college don't know specialized courses and program construction well, which has a bad effect on their career development.

Lastly, the concept of morality and nurturing has not been permeated deeply into classroom teaching.

4. Improvement Measures

In response to the above diagnosed deficiencies, the English teaching team in this vocational college has made improvements as follows:

(1) Strengthen the promotion of College English and effectively have the first lesson of Guide to the Course.

Through group discussion, content determination and centralized lesson preparation, the English teaching team in this college effectively has the first lesson of Guide to the Course. The first lesson of Guide to the Course is carried out by semester, whose contents cover the curriculum construction objectives, the syllabus, teaching modes, teaching contents, teaching approaches, evaluation methods, and so on.

(2) Strengthen classroom organization to create a relaxing learning atmosphere, and strive to create a high-efficient classroom.

Through such measures as strict attendance, frequent communication with students, optimizing teaching modes and teaching approaches, enhancing the consciousness of serving students and assisting the college authorities to carry out the activity of Morning English Reading, a relaxing learning atmosphere has been gradually formed, which leads to the steady improvement of classroom teaching effectiveness. And at the same time, the English teaching team in this college has been studying the forms, methods and contents of the teaching research activities in order to improve the effect of the English classroom teaching. Owing to the above measures, a solid foundation for the improvement of teaching efficiency has been laid.

(3) Deepen the curriculum reform, optimize the teaching contents, and help students' learning of specialized courses, job needs and career development.

It's true that the teaching contents of College English are not closely related to students' learning of specialized courses, job needs and future development. And students from varied sources of admission differ from each other in English language foundation.

Taking such factors into careful consideration, the English teaching team in this college has put forward the reform idea of "enhancement of basic English language + acquisition of general professional information" on the basis of the teaching platform of optimizing the teaching contents as well as the teaching goals of "serving students, satisfying their needs, and helping them to develop themselves". As far as this reform idea is concerned, Successful English for Vocational Colleges is applied in the first semester to assist students to lay a solid language foundation. And the consolidation of language foundation should focus on the training of students' comprehensive language ability, especially their reading and speaking abilities. In the second semester, General English for Railways is used to help students to obtain professional knowledge, and extract professional information. In order to realize the goal of the reform idea of "enhancement of basic English language + acquisition of general professional information", the language training should be integrated into the learning of general professional knowledge, and the emphasis should be laid on the cultivation of summarizing and expressing.

(4) Enhance the English teachers' awareness of actively serving students and their majors.

The English teaching team in this college volunteers to be among students so as to have a better understanding of them. In order to enhance their awareness of serving students and their majors, the team actively participates in professional construction and assists professional development. In the meantime, the team takes advantage of their opportunities to study and research in enterprises to fully learn about the requirements of different positions on students' foreign language ability. And classroom teaching is optimized accordingly so that the pertinence, practicality and suitability of teaching can be improved.

(5) Integrate the concept of morality and nurturing into the whole process of classroom teaching.

Through various forms of learning, the team has improved their standpoint and attached great importance to the ideological and political education. In order to integrate the concept of morality and nurturing into the whole process of classroom teaching, the team has made plans, and determined contents through discussion, which has led to the formation of the ideological education system.

5. Improvement Effects

The above improvement measures have clear objectives and strong pertinence, so significant improvement effects have been obtained. And the interview results also show that the popularity of College English is rising steadily.

In the first place, students have enhanced their understanding of the importance of College English, and their learning enthusiasm has been improved to a certain extent. And what's more, the proportion of students who take the initiative to study by means of modern information technology has been steadily increased, and the first lesson of Guide to the Course has been institutionalized and normalized.

In the second place, English teachers' awareness of serving students and majors has been enhanced to a certain extent. They take the initiative to require the teaching majors to be relatively fixed. As a result, the pertinence of teaching has been reflected, and the teaching effect has been improved to a certain extent.

In the third place, the team's classroom teaching ability has been improved a lot, and they are becoming more and more popular with their students. In term of students' evaluations of teaching in the second semester of the academic year of 2017-2018, three teachers in the team ranked top 3 in their teaching department, and as for teachers' comprehensive achievements in the same semester, five teachers in the team ranked top 10 in their teaching department.

In the fourth place, students' learning enthusiasm and initiative have been inspired. As a result, few of them are absent from class, let alone be late for class, and they are more and more attentive in class, too.

In the last place, owing to the integration of morality and nurturing into classroom teaching, students' patriotic feelings have been steadily enhanced, laying a solid foundation for training them into qualified laborers and reliable successors needed by the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a New Era.

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