



Foreign Language Teaching Reform and Improvement of College English Teaching Quality

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Abstract

With the development of China's reform and opening, it is quite necessary for Chinese college students to improve their English competence, hence calling for reform in current college English teaching and strengthening practical English teaching. After analyzing the problems in China's English teaching, this article puts forward some solutions.

Keywords: Practical English teaching, Education management system, Assessment system, Multi-level teaching, English test

With the further development of China's reform and opening, college graduates are demanded more in their English competence. Facing the integrity of global economy and internationalization of science and technology in our new times, it appears to be particularly important to reform college English teaching in China. In order to achieve that, finding out causes of problems should come before planning for any effective measures. In our opinion, the factors influencing the development of China's college English teaching mainly include the following ones.

1. Imperfect Education Management System

At first glance, Chinese college students' poor English competence are caused by some problems in college English teaching, however, a second thought would reveal that the real reason lies in the inconsistency between college English teaching and that in primary and middle schools. Actually, this problem can be reflected in teaching materials, teaching contents, arrangement of courses, experiment environment as well as teaching methods, which has resulted in a waste in teaching resources and time, even students' reluctance to study (Shujing Wu, 2003). In addition, because there are some repeated parts existing in English teaching in college, middle school and primary school, some students who did well in middle school English even believe that they have achieved little in college English learning (Raoxue, Zhang, 2002).

2. Unscientific Assessment System

Due to the large area and population in China, regional high school entrance examination and national college entrance examination are adopted in which it is impossible to conduct oral tests. Accordingly, English teachers in middle schools take every effort to improve students' examination grades instead of their comprehensive abilities, hence resulting in so-called "deaf English" and "dumb English". As for CET-4 and CET-6, they have really made great contribution to China's college English teaching by drawing the attention of education departments, college directors and the whole society to English, especially college English, laying down higher objectives for college English learning and helping teachers to make some positive adjustments in their teaching courses. As a result, many universities even bind students' performance in CET-4 and CET-6 to their job assignments after graduation. However, with some changes in our social demands, students' oral English is more important than before. In this case, CET-4 and CET-6, as standardized tests, seem unsatisfying with their inability to test students' practical English competence, low passing rate caused by over difficult questions and therefore, a great waste of manpower and material resources (Shujing Wu, 2003). Therefore, it is quite necessary to reform *College English Curriculum* and the test system of CET-4 as well as CET-6. Actually, CET-4 and CET-6, designed by the Ministry of Education to examine the implementation of College English Curriculum at college, shouldn't be connected with Students' graduation and jobs. Instead, students' practical abilities in English should be attached importance to (Raoxue Zhang, 2002).

3. Unscientific Teaching Objectives

At present, teaching objectives of college English are set mainly on students' reading abilities and less on comprehensive English competence. It must be admitted that this objective really exerted some positive functions when we only relied on document resources to learn about the development of science and technology in other countries due to our lack in transnational exchanges. However, this reading-oriented objective, due to its unscientific positioning and lack of classified instructions, tends to cause the failure in improving students' listening and speaking abilities, that is

so-called “deaf English” and “dumb English”, and will certainly fail to satisfy the demands for a variety of talents in social economy, science and technology and culture. Therefore, only starting from our reality and scientific demonstrations to form teaching objectives and plans shall we stand the examination in practice (Yuan Gao, 2003).

4. Insufficient Attention and Input to English Teaching

This problem can be revealed in the following two aspects:

- (1) There are not enough language laboratories and multimedia classrooms for students to study in.
- (2) There is a severe shortage of teaching faculty in quantity as well as quality (Raoxue Zhang, 2002)

Taking the above problems into consideration, I think some measures should be taken at present:

1. Converting ideas to promote English teaching reform. First of all, enough attention should be paid to the whole society's dissatisfied reactions with present college English teaching, and accordingly, we should reflect on how to set our objectives for college English teaching and what standards should be fixed for college graduates' English competence and so on. Students' comprehensive competence should be emphasized rather than reading abilities only, in which listening and speaking should come first and the four skills should be developed in an overall way. Only in this way shall we succeed in cultivating the practical high-quality English professionals for the whole society. Accordingly, *College English Curriculum* should be set above the one for high school English, based on which different universities should lay down their own ones according to their different realities (Shujing Wu, 2003, Yuan Gao, 2003).

2. Further strengthening English teaching reform (Raoxue Zhang, 2002) .

3. Abolishing the current college English test system, through which the socialization of English test should be fulfilled and students will not be organized by their universities to take this test (Shujing Wu, 2003).

4. Strengthening the construction of teaching faculty and adding more high-quality teachers. First, a great number of high-quality English teachers should be cultivated and be qualified as soon as possible for teaching practice. Second, foreign teachers as well as teachers in specialized English should be made full use of to improve teaching quality.

Meanwhile, teaching reform should be strengthened with the emphasis on cultivating practical talents in English. First, in teacher materials, reading should give way to listening and speaking to some extent. Second, in teaching forms and methods, interactive and multimedia teaching should be conducted with full use of language labs and network, and small classes should be organized in English learning, in which teachers' one-way teaching and students' cramming should be avoided. According to different situations in different universities, bilingual teaching and college English teaching should complement each other, through which the objective of bilingual teaching will be achieved finally (Raoxue Zhang, 2002).

5. Increasing input to improve teaching conditions. Greater amounts of input should be given in language labs, multimedia classrooms, network construction, teacher training and teaching allowances and so on.

6. Establishing and conducting multi-level English teaching system. According to students' English competence, we can divide them into two levels: the common level and the advanced level. In order to strengthen the latter students' competitiveness and ability to communicate with others in English on some academic issues, special teachers should be assigned to teach them and dynamic management system should be adopted to form a competition system among them. In this way, these students will be able to finish their basic English learning earlier to spare more time learning other English courses, hence preparing themselves better for their future.

7. Establishing reasonable assessment and evaluation system. English teaching cannot do without test. In spite of the indispensable functions of CET-4 and CET-6, more attention should be paid to students' practical English competence, which should be our main objective for college English teaching (Shujing Wu, 2003, Raoxue Zhang, 2002).

8. Reforming teaching methods. No matter in basic English courses or in optional ones, practical exercises and activities, such as discussions on hot issues, journalists' interviews and forums, are required in class to realize the interactive functions of the English language. Some principles should be stuck on in English teaching, such as emphasizing students' participation and avoiding onefold class activities, advocating activity and avoiding passive learning style, calling for interactions and avoiding teachers' one-way teaching, emphasizing practice and deemphasizing studying for examinations. All in all, we are pursuing the development of students' comprehensive English competence.

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