

Reflections on Teaching of the *Preparatory English* Course for Minority Student

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Abstract: *The Preparatory English course is a public compulsory basic course for ethnic minority students as a precursor course for the undergraduate English program. The author of this paper, as a teacher of the Preparatory English course, will first introduce the course and reflect on the teaching method, teaching process and teaching content. Only through continuous teaching reflection can the teaching level soar, the level of teaching theories can be improved, and we can grow up to be a more specialized English teacher. Teachers should develop a good habit of teaching reflection and cultivate the spirit of perseverance and research, so that every lesson taught will provide opportunities for reflection and improvement to benefit the students.*

Keywords: Preparatory English, Minority Student, Course Reflection.

1. Introduction

Under the situation of the development of cultural exchanges between countries, the demand for undergraduates' comprehensive English proficiency is getting higher and higher. Besides, it has aroused extensive attention from all sectors of society. The Teaching Requirements for College English Course, officially issued by the Ministry of Education, clearly states, "The teaching objectives of College English are to cultivate students' comprehensive application ability of English, especially their listening and speaking ability, so that they can communicate effectively in both oral and written English in their future work and social communication. At the same time, it aims at enhancing students' ability of independent learning and improving their comprehensive cultural literacy, so that they can adapt to the needs of China's social development and international communication."

2. Introduction to the Course

On the basis of the English Curriculum Standards for High Schools, the teaching objectives of Preparatory English are to consolidate the original vocabulary and expand it appropriately. It aims to train students' reading and writing skills, to cultivate students' English application skills, and to enhance students' cross-cultural communication awareness and communication skills as well as students' innovative thinking and critical thinking skills. At the same time, students are instructed to master English learning strategies, and to grasp the skills to learn independently and learn from each other, so as to help students to cultivate good English learning habits and complete the transition from high school to university.

The teaching significance of the Preparatory English course is to help students increase their knowledge, broaden their horizons, improve their cultural literacy, enhance their understanding of Chinese and Western cultures, focus on the development of students' personalities, and achieve the simultaneous improvement of their language ability and comprehensive quality, so that they can lay a foundation for their university studies one year later.

The textbook for this course is New Horizons English Course

(3rd edition), published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and edited by Zheng Shutang and Hu Quansheng.

This course mainly focus on: 1. helping students master English language knowledge and expanding their rich vocabulary; 2. guiding students to improve reading ability and master reading skills; 3. leading student to be able to use words and phrases to express their opinions, and to have certain reading, writing and translating practical ability. The teaching difficulties of this course are: 1. to master and apply the key vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammar points learnt in each unit as well as to improve students' reading and writing skills; 2. to cultivate students' habits and awareness of practical use of English for reading, translating and writing; 3. to guide students to master the strategies of English language learning, and to acquire the abilities to learn on their own and from each other.

The whole class of the Preparatory English Class is composed of ethnic minority students. At the beginning of the semester, through the preliminary understanding of the students in this class, we found that the number of students with good English abilities was relatively small, and the performance of English skills of the students within the class are in different levels. There are some students with positive learning attitudes, but they do not account for the majority. There are two types of students with positive learning attitudes: 1) students with good English fundamentals and positive attitudes; 2) students with weak English fundamentals but willing to learn and positive attitudes in class. Under such kind of situation, in addition to enriching the classroom content, increasing the interest of the classroom, and continuously improving the students' motivation to learn, teachers also need to continue to supervise the students' revision and pre-study for the English course.

3. Reflections on Teaching Methods

Since the 18th Party Congress, China has introduced a number of policies related to accelerating the process of education informatization, which has played an active role in promoting the digital transformation of education. During the epidemic period from the beginning of 2020 to the end of 2022, digital teaching and online teaching are even playing a crucial

supporting role in the teaching and learning process at all stages. Competency-based education that is tailored to the individual student is a future direction for education. Intelligent digital education can provide learners with personalized learning solutions based on each learner's different learning situations, with the help of individualized choices in the learning process. For a long time to come, online education will remain a supplement and extension of school education and classroom teaching, and classroom offline education and digital online education must be integrated with each other. It also inspires teachers to focus on the process and method in education, and on students' feelings and experiences.

3.1 Analysis of Teaching Methods

The importance of linguistic input in the teaching of foreign languages cannot be overstated. As we all know, language communication, whether oral or written, requires learners to be able to notice the differences between their own language and the language they are exposed to in terms of linguistic forms, and to borrow linguistic forms, including various forms of chunks of speech, from the language they are exposed to (Ding Yanren, 2008). In previous classroom learning, students focused on the meaning of words and the content of the text under the teacher's explanation rather than the form of the language. Therefore, when finishing the exercises after class, many students found it difficult to complete, which is a reflection of the fact that students cannot use what they have learnt.

According to the students' learning situation, some changes should be made in classroom teaching. Firstly, word learning is replaced by lexical chunks learning. In the pre-teaching task of students' words, students were guided to learn based on lexical chunks, i.e., new words that students encountered were tied together with previously learnt words to form phrase or lexical chunk. Secondly, when students expressed and presented their prepared word phrases or chunks in class, the teacher derived the new vocabulary words and used the derived words to complement the students' words. In this way, students can not only combine the new and old language points organically, but also compare and analyze the new words and the derived words, and gradually master the meaning, speech and usage of the new words. In the communication and interaction between teachers and students, teachers are more effective in avoiding the way of cramming teaching in the classroom, while students' learning change from passive waiting to active preparation, with higher motivation. In addition, on the basis of their understanding of the text, students were divided into groups to summarize and study the phrases and chunks of words in the text.

3.2 Deficiencies and Improvement Measures of Teaching Methods

Teaching of English course, due to the content of the textbook as well as students' motivation, purpose and other factors, is easy to cause students to learn with little interest or even cause low teaching effect. Therefore, in the whole teaching process, the teachers should constantly reflect on the classroom teaching, in which there are indeed some shortcomings, such as: the lack of innovative consciousness when introducing

new lessons. Besides, teaching language is not attractive enough to students, and in terms of the word and grammar explanations, the teaching method is relatively old-fashioned, and the students' enthusiasm and initiative are poor.

In view of the above deficiencies, the strategies and methods to improve the teaching ideas are as follows: firstly, the teachers should strengthen the study of education and teaching theories, and endeavor to improve their own ideological level, and grasp the education and teaching concepts of English teaching in the Preparatory English course. Secondly, it is necessary to stimulate students' interest in learning by choosing appropriate introduction to each unit. Compelling introduction can make students improve their interest in learning. At the same time, teachers can integrate stories, songs, famous quotes, current events and other issues of interest with teaching materials to lead in new lessons. Furthermore, it is also necessary to improve students' comprehensive analysis ability by using the research-based learning method. Teachers should prepare thinking questions, and then let the students summarize them. In this way, both the leading role of the teacher and the main role of the students are reflected in the classroom.

4. Reflections on Teaching Process

4.1 Emphases on the Teaching Process

In the teaching process of the course Preparatory English, considering the foundation of minority students and the performance of their English accent, I would like to focus on highlighting three aspects in the teaching process:

First of all, in the teaching process, teachers should emphasize on students' independent perception, respect for the students' main position in learning. Students are the actors of learning. Teaching activities should be designed around them. After the introduction of the text, I encourage students to read aloud the whole text, and encourage them to translate the text independently. When analyze the text, the teachers should set the students thinking route as teaching clue, which will reflect the subjectivity of student learning and the understanding of the content of the text.

Besides, it is important for students to be taught how to learn and develop their learning ability. After analyzing the teaching materials, teachers can assign after-class discussion questions for students to discuss and express their views independently after class. Evidence show that students can learn well on their own and actively participate in class and after-class discussions.

Furthermore, teachers and students can make full use of the online teaching software. For instance, in the teaching process, conducting "Pick-up" activities in the Chaoxing apps will help teachers record the students' performance in detail in terms of the participation of the whole class. Through the software data, teachers and students can jointly visualize the points status of each student and each class, thus motivating students to actively participate and building a positive and lively classroom atmosphere.

4.2 Deficiencies and Improvement Measures of Teaching

Process

In response to the current problems, in the process of classroom activities, sometimes the expected time is exceeded due to internet problems and student motivation. Therefore, the control of time in each classroom session should be strengthened. In addition, it is important to know more about the students at each level and in each marking scheme, so as to be able to “tailor the teaching to the needs of the students”.

In designing teaching programs, although teachers have prepared for different learning programs, they may encounter some unexpected problems in actual teaching, such as students not being able to answer questions within the planned time, or disputes among classmates during classroom activities, etc. At this time, teachers should reflect on “why did this happen?” At this time, the teacher should be based on the students’ feedback information, reflecting on “how can I adjust the teaching plan, and what effective strategies and measures should be taken”, so as to follow the students’ thinking to organize the teaching program, to ensure that the teaching process proceeds smoothly. After teaching, teachers could ask themselves “whether the teaching is effective?”, “What can be further improved”, “What have I learnt from this”, and so on, which will be more helpful to the development of teachers’ teaching process.

5. Reflections on Teaching Contents

College English teachers are practitioners of English classroom teaching. How to research and learn teaching methods, update their teaching concepts, and focus on the implementation effect in the teaching classroom is a serious issue worth exploring. In teaching reform, teachers’ analysis and reflection on their teaching play an important role. Here, I will further analyze the reflection on teaching content. English teaching is a language subject, which is different from the teaching of other subjects. It cultivates students’ ability to use the language, while College English requires more urgent language skills. As college students will soon enter the work world, whether they can use English in practice is quite important. Therefore, the process of lesson preparation should be tailored to this feature, emphasizing the cultivation of language skills, focusing on the use of language, and taking English teaching out of the classroom and into the society.

In addition to providing students with chapter content related to the textbook, we should also provide the corresponding extracurricular content and ideological content according to the text unit setting and theme. In the previous teacher-student relationship, the teacher is the center, the transmitter of knowledge, and the students are only passive receivers. And the quality education requires us to be student oriented. Teachers imparting knowledge should give full consideration to the learning needs of different students in every teaching step, respect students’ individual differences and encourage students’ innovative spirit. The collation of course chapters and the addition of extracurricular knowledge, and making reflections based on the teaching process, help teachers to be able to learn and progress together with students.

English language teaching is the teaching of language skills, not the mere transmission of language knowledge. If English teachers place too much emphasis on the transmission of

language knowledge, the students will only turn into a group of mutes who cannot speak English. Therefore, in the practice of teaching materials, it is necessary to consciously increase the practice of speaking, reading and writing, and reduce the teaching of grammatical knowledge; reduce the difficulty of grammatical test questions in the assessment, and reduce the number of knowledge-based objective questions. In addition, since English language is a constantly developing language, it is more necessary to attach English application in real life situation to the teaching content. In addition to the content of the text, to keep pace with the times, to input contemporary language into the teaching, and to add the buzzwords of the times on the basis of the original teaching materials, so that the students can express themselves in the popular language.

6. Summary

The teaching methods for College English are constantly changing with the updating of teaching concepts and the enhancement of students’ needs, from the initial grammar-translation teaching method to the communicative teaching method which takes language communication as the purpose and students as the main body and carries out meaningful dialogues or discussions between teachers and students. It will lead to the more popular and humane task-based teaching method nowadays. Instead of simply explaining the text in the classroom, specific tasks will be set according to the style and content of the text, and students will solve the tasks individually or in small groups, which will enable them to exercise their listening, reading, writing and interpreting skills, and also cultivate their ability to work as a team.

Personally, the author tries to explore teaching methods suitable for different classes and students, to make multimedia teaching materials, to interact with students to the maximum extent in the classroom, to organize colorful classroom activities, and to guide students to consciously exercise. All these actions aim to improve students’ speaking and listening skills, and to add extracurricular contents that are closely related to real life for students. In line with the implementation of the College English teaching reform, teachers are encouraged to acquire the relevant technology about the online classroom, and constantly expanded knowledge within this area, which has played a good supporting role in teaching and carried out positive and beneficial exploration of the implementation of the new mode of English teaching.

References

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