

College English Teaching Reform based on CBI Teaching Philosophy and Thematic Teaching Model

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Abstract: The content-based instruction abbreviated as CBI was introduced into China in the 1990s, CBI is a more scientific, advanced foreign language teaching concept. This paper introduces the CBI teaching concept and its model, and discusses the advantages of this concept and its theme model. Based on the current situation of college English teaching in China, some suggestions are put forward for the reform of college English teaching based on CBI teaching concept and theme teaching mode.

Keywords: CBI concept, Thematic pattern, Reform of college English teaching.

1. CBI Teaching Philosophy and Its Mode

CBI is an idea of teaching language based on a certain subject or a certain subject. It abandons the traditional teaching methods that artificially separate language teaching from subject teaching or subject teaching. According to the second language acquisition theory, the CBI teaching concept is recognized by many scholars as the most effective way to combine foreign language teaching with thematic teaching. CBI teaching philosophy can be embodied in many ways according to the subject content or related topics. It not only includes traditional teaching methods such as grammar-based language teaching and vocabulary extension teaching, but also includes contemporary language teaching methods such as communicative language teaching and humanistic culture methods. The CBI teaching concept is also supported by Krashen's language monitoring model whose main idea is as followed: if students are provided with comprehensible input, the difficulty in learning the target language will be greatly reduced, and they can eventually master the target language. At the same time, Krashen highlights several ways to reduce student anxiety such as providing interesting teaching materials and engaging in meaningful activities that students can understand. The characteristics of CBI teaching philosophy are: to develop effective learning strategies and language ability by learning a subject, subject matter or participating in interesting activities. Thus, the concept emphasizes the learning of content rather than learning of language.

2. Advantages of CBI Teaching Philosophy

2.1. CBI Can Stimulate Students' Interest and Motivation

CBI advocates making students contact a large number of languages, exploring interesting content and participating in teaching activities related to the target language through supplying them with interesting thematic teaching content. Therefore, CBI stimulates students' interest and motivation in learning, and the process of language learning changes from passive learning to active learning. Keeping students' motivation clear and stimulating their interest are important

factors contained in CBI teaching philosophy. Motivation and interest can help students successfully participate in classroom activities that enhance language knowledge and help them learn complex skills. When students are motivated and interested in what they have learned, they can recall what they have learned and better review the information they have been exposed to. In short, students acquire more knowledge when their intrinsic motivation is clear. Accordingly, the more knowledge they acquire, the stronger the sense of accomplishment will be. This will form a positive learning cycle.

2.2. CBI Teaching Philosophy Can Support Language Learning in Context

The teacher should embed the target language in the relevant context, rather than let the students learn the language through isolated language fragments. Therefore, students will mix the learnt content with the target language at the maximum degree. Placing students in real contexts enables them to master complex teaching content more effectively.

2.3. CBI Can Make Students Learn with Passion and Autonomy

CBI teaching philosophy enables teachers to transmit teaching information to students under the right circumstances, so that students can learn with passion and autonomy. The CBI model of the classroom is student-centered, not the teacher-centered. Students acquire knowledge by actively participating in the learning process in such a classroom, and they do not rely on the supervision of teachers to complete the whole learning process. The core of CBI teaching philosophy is: the acquisition of knowledge is not only through the knowledge transmission of teachers but also the observation and interaction of students themselves on the transmitted information. Accordingly, students play an active and social role in the classroom. This role requires interactive learning, negotiation, information gathering, and joint construction of information content.

2.4. CBI Can Supply Great Flexibility in Course Design

In teaching process, teachers can organize teaching according to students' interests and their foreign language level. The syllabus is made by the teacher, and the teaching

time is flexible according to the level of the students.

3. College English Teaching Reform Based on CBI Thematic Teaching Model

There are a lot of teaching modes based on the CBI teaching philosophy, some ones seen usually in foreign language teaching are: theme-based approach, sheltered-content courses and adjunct course. Thematic mode is to select all kinds of topics and themes that students are interested in, and to provide a large number of real materials for students in the form of print or video, so as to let students participate in teaching activities for improving their language skills by experiencing real context and using foreign languages. The course mode refers to the ability of acquiring the language by mastering the knowledge of a specific subject. The auxiliary mode refers to the simultaneous implementation of language courses and specialized courses. Language is a kind of tool and language courses serve for specialized courses. Although the CBI teaching model is content-based, student-centered model, which focuses on the experience in the learning process and emphasizes the ability of students to learn independently, the curriculum model and the auxiliary model are more suitable for students with higher foreign language level, so these two modes are usually adopted in the teaching of specialized courses. There is no doubt that the CBI thematic teaching model is the most ideal and effective teaching method for college English teaching. However, does the actual college English teaching adopt the CBI teaching philosophy and the CBI thematic teaching model? What is the current situation of college English teaching?

3.1. The Current Situation of College English Teaching in China

Although the reform of college English teaching has never stopped since the reform and opening up, and some achievements have been made, it is undeniable that there are still some noticeable problems in college English teaching in China.

3.1.1. Language Teaching Focuses on Language Form Rather Than Content

Current college English textbooks are usually divided into several units. The learning of each unit consists of two parts: the part in class and the part out of class. The learning in class is usually confined to an article of less than 2,000 words, including the learning of word, analysis of difficult sentences, explanation of structure of chapter and completion of exercises after class. In extracurricular activities, students are required to read one or two articles on related topics. Teachers focus on the understanding and mastery of surface language phenomena such as key words and sentences at class, rather than the cultivation of students' communicative competence. The enjoyment and practicality of the teaching content are ignored.

3.1.2. Teacher-centered Teaching Model

Teachers are still in the dominant position in the current college English classroom. Taking the intensive reading class as an example, teachers teach words, texts, then students take notes, even some reading tasks are replaced by teachers. Students are in a completely passive and dominated position. The reasons for this phenomenon are as follows: the

monotony of teaching materials and teaching contents fails to arouse students' interest in language learning, which makes the student-centered teaching model difficult to operate in the actual teaching process; The capacity of class is so large that the teacher is difficult to grasp each student's specific study situation and the progress of course; Due to the poor autonomous learning ability of students, they are unable to complete the task of pre-class preparation assigned by teachers, which ultimately makes the student-centered teaching mode time-consuming and ineffective.

3.1.3. Lack of Real Language Environment

The learning of a language cannot be separated from the language environment in which it is spoken. Students are easy to master the language knowledge by associating with the specific language in the specific language environment. The teaching goal of the requirements of college English teaching curriculum refers to that the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching is to foster learners to be successful language communicators and intercultural communicators. How can we achieve this teaching goal? What do we need most in English classroom teaching? The answer has nothing about the grammar, nothing about the sense of meaning, nothing about the sentence structure but the real language and its language environment. Nowadays, many English teaching activities in universities prefer paying attention to the teaching of language knowledge to putting the knowledge into the corresponding context. There will be no doubt that the above problems will be solved if using the CBI teaching philosophy and its thematic model in college English teaching. The present situation of college English teaching will be changed to a great extent in China, students' interest in learning English will be improved a lot.

3.2. Suggestions on the Reform of College English Teaching Based on CBI Teaching Philosophy and Thematic Teaching Mode

3.2.1. Curriculum Setting

Curriculum setting is a key link between teaching philosophy and teaching practice, which prescribes what to teach and what to offer on a macro level. The curriculum setting firstly points out the direction of the development in teaching and the teaching key point. If the curriculum is not properly designed, it may restrain the mind, restrict the hands and feet, and go the wrong way. The CBI teaching philosophy and its thematic model emphasize provision of comprehensible input for students, so as to reduce the difficulty in learning the target language and improve the effect of mastering the target language. Therefore, in terms of curriculum setting, multi-level, multi-textbook and multi-form compulsory English courses should be set up according to different situations of students. For example, taking departmental teaching for the students majored in arts and the students majored in science; taking graded teaching for the students with higher English level and the students with lower English level. At the same time, to increase the setting of elective courses with rich content, diverse forms and wide range. For example, set up courses like computer English, legal English, biological English and so on by cooperating with various professional departments. As well as movie English, song English and so on according to students' interests. That is to say, we should fully consider the needs of reality, the trend of students' interests and so on from the beginning of the curriculum setting. The reform in curriculum

setting will help college English teaching change from the teaching of language form to the teaching of English content, which will make the teaching enjoyable and practical.

3.2.2. Teaching Materials

The main elements of the CBI teaching philosophy and its thematic model are the interesting thematic teaching content and the real language environment, which can not only promote students' autonomy in language learning, but also can make students know their learning motivation well so as to participate in teaching activities actively to experience language and grasp language skills in the real context. The selection of teaching materials directly affects the enthusiasm of students in learning English and the creation of real language environment. For more than a decade, the college English textbooks we use have made students feel that what is learned is useless, what is useful is not learned. Therefore, the key to change the present situation of college English teaching in China is to select college English teaching materials suitable for students of different types, majors, levels and needs. For example, arts and science textbooks, textbooks for students majored in arts can be of literature, art, education, philosophy, history, tourism topics; textbooks for students majored in science can be of physics, mathematics, environment, biology, aerospace; textbooks for students majored in medicine can be of public health, disease prevention, daily health care and so on. Textbooks for ethnic minority students can be of local rich ethnic culture, local characteristics closely related to the teaching materials. The extensive application of multimedia and network in college English teaching makes it possible to apply English film and television materials in college English classes. With the integration of hearing and vision, English original film and television creates a real language environment for students to experience and learn English language and culture in a real language environment. Film language provides real materials for training and improving students' English listening level and oral expression ability, as well as the creation of good learning conditions. The use of English original movies in college English classes can put students in a real context which is conducive to students' interactive learning, discussion and construction of understandable information.

3.2.3. Teacher Training

College English teaching has high requirements for teachers under the CBI philosophy. It not only requires teachers to be proficient in foreign languages and related subject knowledge, but also requires teachers to be able to integrate the two ones. The teaching philosophy of CBI and its thematic teaching mode put forward higher requirements on teachers' knowledge structure and teaching skills. It can be seen that the training of teachers is a prerequisite for the success of CBI teaching model. Moreover, the teacher training project should take the form of cooperative project,

that is, the cooperative training project among liberal arts teachers, science teachers and foreign language teachers. At the same time, teachers need to improve their ability in curriculum design and classroom organization.

3.2.4. Assessment and Testing Methods

In the traditional college English teaching mode, students are evaluated mainly by a comprehensive evaluation system, which requires students to complete separate and context-free test tasks. However, under the CBI teaching mode, students cannot be tested in the traditional way. The reason is that students receive a lot of input information and content in the CBI teaching class. They need a test system that is interactive and content-based. Kasper pointed out that students in CBI mode must complete the tasks at the conversational level, and the test of certain skills must be placed in a specific real context. Therefore, the test and evaluation methods under the CBI teaching mode should not be simple and isolated. It requires that the estimator must test students' ability in integrating information, forming and expressing their own opinions on a certain topic, rather than analyzing the structure of the target language at the language level.

4. Conclusion

Compared with traditional teaching methods, CBI pays more attention to the content of learning rather than the form of learning. The CBI philosophy and its thematic model are an effective way to learn the target language, which conforms to the law of second language acquisition. It can meet the needs of students. Therefore, the reform of college English teaching based on CBI model is a new direction for college English teaching in China.

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