

Research on Student-Centered English Teaching Strategies in Higher Vocational Colleges

Zhang Jinfang, Carmela S. Dizon

Angeles university foundation

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ABSTRACT

In the process of implementing English teaching activities in domestic higher vocational colleges, students' poor foundation of subject knowledge learning and students' weak overall English learning ability are very prominent problems in the teaching process. These have adverse effects on the development of students' learning and serve as obstacles to the achievement of the goal of talent training. In order to better meet the learning needs of higher vocational students, higher vocational colleges need to organize and carry out corresponding teaching activities around the student body, take student-centered teaching as the guidance, solve the teaching problems at the present stage, adopt corresponding teaching strategies to improve the adaptability of teaching methods and improve the teaching effect of English subjects.

Keywords: Higher vocational education; English subject; teaching strategy

INTRODUCTION

Under the circumstances of the continuous development of the higher vocational education in China, the higher vocational colleges have undertaken more and more talent training responsibilities in the domestic society, and paid attention to and completed the higher vocational English education and teaching activities, which has gradually become a key teaching task. In the traditional higher vocational English classroom, teachers often allow students to absorb knowledge through knowledge indoctrination. When students' subject knowledge and skill level is limited, the overall subject literacy level of students cannot be well improved, and their interest in English learning will also be ineffective. To organize and carry out student-centered English teaching activities in higher vocational colleges, teachers need to pay attention to and tap students' inner potential as much as possible, so that students can actively participate in English learning activities and improve their initiative for independent learning.

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF STUDENT-CENTERED ENGLISH TEACHING IN HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

- **Brief analysis of the existing problems in higher vocational English teaching**

Through the result of some studies, the lack of "double" English teachers, and ordinary public English teaching, English teaching in higher vocational colleges need to highlight professional demand. English teachers should not only master English knowledge, but also need to master professional English related vocabulary required in instruction, and the lack of this kind of teachers in higher vocational colleges, to a certain extent, will have a negative impact on the effectiveness of their teaching. In addition, after the interview survey, the domestic higher vocational colleges teachers experience job burnout^[1]. Some teachers said, due to the students' poor skill level in English, teachers are unable to carry out interactive activities. This condition contributes to the perceived ineffectiveness of the English teachers' teaching level which contribute to their job burnout. This sense of job burnout may also lead to a sense of ineffectiveness in other

areas such as lack of confidence in their teaching content. The teachers also reported experiencing passive knowledge transfer, which again makes them feel ineffective. The teaching methods adopted by teachers may be considered sub-standard. The teachers are only able to proceed with very general content and without making targeted English communication skills training according to the needs of students which makes it difficult to effectively improve students' ability to speak, read, listen, and write well in English.

- **Discussion on the value of student-centered English teaching in higher vocational colleges**

Most of the English subjects of students in higher vocational colleges are general, so it is very important for teachers to organize higher vocational English teaching activities. This teaching practice is conducive to the improvement of students' literacy.

First, under the case that higher vocational English teachers organize teaching activities with student-centered orientation, teachers observe and focus on individual differences in students, emphasizing the uniqueness and development potential of each student. This can stimulate students to a large extent to be more active to carry out English subject learning activities. Second, to improve the overall self-drive of students, student-centered English teaching activities in higher vocational colleges can guide the students to carry out the learning activities by actively exploring and building a knowledge system. During the implementation of these activities, students, as the subjects of learning, may actively engage which contributes to the effectiveness of their learning ^[2]. On the basis of the active development of learning activities, students will conduct independent thinking and solve problems faced in the learning process. Higher vocational English teaching emphasizes the development of independent thinking among students. This will greatly enhance the competitiveness of individual students in terms of academic and career development. Third, student-centered activities will have a direct impact on the effect of higher vocational English teaching education when teachers organize teaching activities that provide more targeted learning outcomes. Also, on the basis of better meeting the individual needs of the students, it is easier for them to understand and master the English language. In addition, with the more targeted teaching plans, students can have the opportunity and the platform to practice the subject knowledge, through peer learning, which will further improve their overall literacy learning ^[3]. Fourth, teacher's effectiveness boosts student-centered orientation ^[4]. In the case of student-centered English teaching activities, teachers need to pay attention to individual differences. This places a high level of requirements for teachers' sensitivity, flexibility, and professionalism. Higher vocational English teachers not only need to have a solid subject knowledge but also need to master flexible teaching strategies. Being able to apply flexibility to classroom teaching methods on the basis of respect and understanding of individual differences of students, teachers are not only able to provide knowledge but also guidance to students.

STUDENT-CENTERED ENGLISH TEACHING STRATEGIES IN HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

- **Optimize the introduction of English courses in higher vocational colleges to guide students to think independently**

In the process of the implementation of English curriculum in higher vocational colleges, there is a need to optimize and improve the teaching guidance. It is necessary to let students increase their independent thinking ^[5]. The specific strategy ideas are as follows: story introduction and optimization. Teachers can use attractive stories in delivering the curriculum content. In practicing the student-centered teaching philosophy, the teachers should capture the curiosity of the students ^[6]. By guiding them to carry out independent thinking activities, the teachers, for example, can also ask students to discuss the recent hot news of current events. They may be arranged in small groups where they can share their thoughts about the recent events in their communities. The teacher can also present problems and require students to share their ideas on how to solve the problems, giving them opportunities to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed

solutions. Another strategy is to require students to ask questions ^[7]. The way to introduce this is to allow students to think about questions before their learning activities are carried out. Reviewing the previous lessons will also provide opportunities for students to think deeply using the English language. Teachers can use the knowledge previously taught to conduct classroom teaching. By mobilizing the students' recall of previously learned materials, students are able to expand their relevant subject knowledge. In this case of introducing new concepts or knowledge, students can be more receptive when they are encouraged to participate more actively in class ^[8]. With the use of videos and other multimedia resources, students may be more encouraged to engage in class ^[9]. Teachers can play videos related to English language teaching which can definitely attract the students' attention, and therefore stimulate their active initiative in learning.

- **Student-centered orientation to optimize the teaching content**

In the process of implementing domestic English teaching activities in higher vocational education, it should be made clear the teaching goal of higher vocational education. The purpose of English teaching activities is to improve students' English skills, help students improve their professional skills, and to provide important support for students' future career development. In order to better carry out English teaching activities in higher vocational colleges, teachers should take the student at the center of the teaching process and to provide guidance as they learn the curriculum content ^[10]. There is a need to take into consideration that learning the English language should contribute to their learning of professional skills and have them ready for employment in the future ^[11]. The world has gone global and individuals who can speak English tend to have better career opportunities. Thus, the teaching of the English language should be situated in such context. In order to achieve this, first there is a need to provide for differentiated learning to address the differences in English language abilities of students. Second, higher vocational English teachers need to have a clear understanding of students' requirements to meet their professional characteristics in the future. Teachers should have a good grasp of the actual employment needs of the talent market and other relevant information to suit their teaching activities accordingly. The fundamental goal of talent training is to improve human resources which can address the needs of the industry. Teachers should promote also the social development of students which will help them become more marketable in the future. Thus, the content of daily classes should be focused on the development of necessary skills so that students can be relevant to the talent market in the future. Third, with the continuous development of the modern society, the Internet and information technology has paved the way for a rapid development trend. Teachers need to have adapted to this trend. They should be able to use the Internet teaching resources because students are very comfortable in this space. The use of varied resources should make the teaching the English courses more vivid and interesting for students. This will allow for the enrichment of the course teaching content. As well, this will provide for diversified teaching and learning platforms for higher vocational college students.

- **Make full use of the Internet information technology; implement the student-centered teaching concept**

In the implementation of English teaching activities in higher vocational colleges, the existence of teacher burnout and weak student foundation hinders the healthy and long-term development of English teaching activities ^[12]. In terms of teaching environment, studies show that actively creating a relaxed and pleasant classroom teaching atmosphere stimulates students' interest in learning ^[13], mobilize students' English learning initiative, reveal the students in the subject position of the process of classroom teaching, the implementation of the student centered teaching idea, but also can help students develop good learning habits. By guiding students to improve their own English subject comprehensive accomplishment, this may encourage students to carry out the learning of English subject on a long-term basis. In order to create a healthy English learning environment, higher vocational teachers can make full use of the function of Internet science and technology utility. The students may be guided in finding suitable references to accomplish their learning tasks like understanding concepts, solving problems, or analyzing cases. By allowing students to make full use of this available technology, they can go about their learning on an independent basis.

Another approach to carry out a good job in English classroom teaching activities in higher vocational colleges, the teachers need to rationalize the application of hybrid teaching modes, by combining in-person classes and online teaching platforms. This provides for more flexibility for both teachers and students. For example, before the class, teachers should guide students to carry out independent preview activities by watching online teaching micro-videos. This will provide the students with a basic understanding of the course before even attending the class. If and when students have problems understanding the concepts, they can always go back to their online resources. Teachers can help students to sort out the key and difficult knowledge in class in time. During the classroom teaching process, teachers need to fully apply the network teaching resources. Through the production of micro-videos, students may be attracted to pay attention in class. This of course will help improve the students' initiative in classroom learning. Outside of the classroom, students can find answers to the questions encountered during their studies through the online resources. After the classroom teaching activities, the higher vocational English teachers need to arrange and collect students' English homework through the online teaching platform. All in all, these suggested strategies may help contribute to the English language literacy of students.

- **Respect individual differences and strengthen group cooperative learning**

In student-centered teaching, the individual differences of students should be respected during the implementation of higher vocational English teaching activities, and the opportunity of group cooperative learning should be strengthened. Group cooperative learning is a very effective teaching method in the field of education and teaching ^[14]. Under this teaching method, teachers will divide the students into several study groups according to certain group rules. Students conduct cooperative learning within the group scope. Students are expected to accomplish specific tasks or projects as a group. In the course of the students' learning activities, communication and discussion activities in English, students may be grouped as a team and should have a clear division of labor. The learning efficiency and quality of the whole team can be improved accordingly. It can also help students to exercise their own oral expression skills. In the group cooperative learning session, vocational English teachers need to play the role of mentor and guide. They should carefully observe the learning performance of each student in the group team. Appropriate guidance must be provided to the students to carry out their learning activities. When problems are encountered in the group learning process, the teacher should give the corresponding guidance opinions. The teacher should also ensure that students are able to solve problems through diverse approaches in the process of collaborative learning. The group team will jointly achieve the expected English subject learning goals. It is worth noting that in the student-centered English teaching classroom environment, teachers need to fully respect students' individual differences, interests, and learning styles. The strategies also help team members to learn from each other and communicate, promote the common progress of each other, at the same time encourage the students to participate in the discussion.

The learning goals of group collaboration can also be as close to the students' real life as possible ^[15]. While attracting students' interest, it can also provide some help to students in their practical life, for example. In higher vocational English classes, English teachers can organize a mock interview learning activity. Different students in the group members play the role of job seekers, interviewers, On the basis of full consideration of the possible situations of professional graduates, the interviewer asks the assessment questions, while the job seekers answer questions. In this simulation scenario, team members can fully discuss and analyze the questions related to the employment interview. On the basis of training and the students' oral English expression ability, the teachers can also help the students to analyze the actual situation and let the students have the corresponding thinking and action preparation for the job fair after graduation. This can help students to get into their favorite companies. This exercise will give students the feeling of "familiarity" with the interview process. It should give them the necessary preparation for their job-seeking ventures after their graduation.

CONCLUSIONS

Within the scope of higher vocational colleges, English learning for students is geared towards preparing them for their personal career development. Teachers should always bear this in mind as they provide

various student-centered activities in their English classes. Taking advantage of the availability of technology as well as the combination of in-person and online classes, the teaching and learning of the English language may be done more seamlessly. Thinking of the students' career plans in mind, teachers may provide a myriad of class activities, such as collaborative learning, that will engage the students in learning. An important perspective as well that teachers should always consider is the level of English language level of students. This will be an important factor to consider in designing student-centered activities. Ultimately, students must learn to think and learn independently, which is an excellent skill that all learners should develop.

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