

Analysis Based on Non-English Major Doctoral Postgraduates English Learning Questionnaire

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Abstract

The survey of the non-English major doctoral postgraduates' English learning can help to improve the doctoral English teaching and education quality. With the questionnaire of a university in Jilin province, the paper indicates that more attention should be paid on communicative listening and speaking, academic writing, translating skills, etc. The Non-English Major Doctoral Postgraduates English education should be improved in teaching methods, contents, and modes.

Keywords

doctoral postgraduates; English learning; English teaching.

1. Background

Doctoral teaching, as an important part of Chinese high-level intellectual training system has always been much concerned. Only taking a comprehensive grasp of English —the important communication tool, can doctoral postgraduates keep abreast of the latest technology developments in today's world, better professional learning and research to play a role as Chinese technological , managerial and knowledge innovation body. Syllabus issued by the Ministry of Education regulates doctoral English teaching should "develop students with proficient reading skills, good writing and translation capabilities and listening ability , capable of using English as a tool skillfully to conduct the professional research and the professional academic exchanges. " However, from the current actual situation, due to overall prevalence that the age of the doctoral postgraduates is too large, incumbents ranking more , the lack of specific teaching methods and other issues, many doctoral postgraduates have a certain level of English gap to this requirement. As the above reasons, investigating and analyzing the characteristics of doctoral students extent of English learning has important significance to improve their English proficiency and quality . Taking a specific example in an anonymous university in Jilin province to analyze and propose countermeasures.

2. Features of Students Source

Doctoral students and students of other levels compared with two notable features: the age structure is too large and a high proportion of incumbents.

2.1 Unbalanced Age structure

Doctoral students' age is usually between 25-40 years, mostly in the 30s. Survey shows among the admitted 600 doctoral students in nearly five years, over 40 years (including 40 years) on average account for about 8% of the total number of admissions that year; 24 to 30 years (including 30 years) accounted for 53%; the average age is 32 years old. From the physical point of view, this age group has a good ability to understand, but memory is declining. Language learning should be based on understanding, i.e. memory in comprehension. In addition, doctoral students have big age gap the same grade, the oldest and smallest age gap nearly doubled. Learning English in different periods have different requirements; the age gap has led to significant differences in Doctoral English learning ability.

2.2 A high proportion of incumbents

In recent years, the number of working staff applying to doctoral diploma increase dramatically, accounting for about 50% of the total number of admission per year. Because of research and other

heavy tasks, doctoral students often do not have enough time on foreign language learning, but many of them are teaching faculty, research backbone or technical leadership of each unit, often have the opportunity to participate in international academic exchange or international cooperative research, so the demand for practical English ability is more intense.

3. Survey of Doctoral Postgraduates English Learning

3.1 Formation of Questionnaire

By soliciting many experienced doctoral English teachers and PhD students of varied grades, presented doctoral English proficiency indicator system (see Table 1), and further refinement of the three indicators to form a "Doctoral students English ability self-test "questionnaire.

Table 1 Doctoral Postgraduates' English Proficiency Analytical Index System

The 1 st -level Indicator	The 2 nd -level Indicator	The 3 rd -level Indicator
Speaking Ability	Listening	Social English listening
		Professional English listening
		Listening skills
	Speaking	Professional interpretation
		Greeting and dialogue
		Explaining complicate issues
		Expressing personal ideas
		Accounting whole events
		Relating personal experience
		Expressing thesis theme
Writing Ability	Reading	Reading scientific journals
		Scanning and skipping ability
		Reading professional books
		Consulting skill manuals
	Writing	Abstract writing
		Data collection and Abstract writing
		Applied essay writing
		Professional Report
		Limited-time essay writing
		Paper writing
	Translating	Newspaper Translation
		Common theme English Translation
		Literature Excerpt Translation
Translation Tips		

3.2 Statistical Analysis on Questionnaire

The survey was conducted in 2007 on all grades of doctoral students. Doctoral students participating in the survey accounted for 60 percent of the total number of the same grades, the questionnaire response rate was 94%, and statistical analysis of the results is as follows.

Listening ability. English listening questions explore professional ability and daily communication. Survey shows that doctoral students' proficiency degree of professional English association is better than social English. In Specialized listening, the choice "to meet the requirements" and "can basically

meet the requirements," accounted for 50 percent; and in terms of social listening, selecting "meet requirements" and "basically meet the requirements," only occupy 33.3%. Doctoral English listening teaching should focus on social and skill training (see Table 2).

Speaking ability. The oral part surveyed doctoral English expression ability, especially the ability to communicate in English. Survey shows that in regards to greeting and conversation, explaining complex issues and expressing their own feelings and opinions, describing the event, expressing academic themes, choose "meet the requirements" and "can basically meet the requirements," accounted for 39.4 %, 39.4%, 36.4% and 39.4 %, respectively, which did not reach 40% of the total. Especially in regards to greeting and conversation, as many as 22.7% of doctoral students chose "can not meet the requirements", which fully shows that daily oral English needs to be improved (see Table 3)?

Table 2 Statistical evaluation of Listening ability

Items	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Social Listening	4.7	27.6	44.6	22.6
Professional English listening	8.9	40.5	41.3	8.6
Listening skills	7.2	35.6	46.4	11.1
Professional interpretation	9.3	30.2	41.1	18.8

NOTE: A means "proportion of meeting the requirements ", B represents "proportion of basically meeting the requirements ", C means "proportion of barely reaching the requirement ", D said, "proportion of unable to meet the requirements ", following the same.

Table 3 Statistical evaluation on Spoken English

Items	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Greetings and dialogue	5.9	33.1	36.8	22.5
Interpreting complicate problems	12.3	32.4	35.7	18.9
Expressing personal feelings and opinions	13.8	25.6	43.4	17.6
Making complete description of the event	9.4	26.9	47.6	15.4
Telling personal experience	15.4	33.1	42.3	10.5
Advancing academic topics	7.3	32.4	38.5	22.1

3. Reading ability. Reading ability is the foundation of scientific research for doctoral students. Survey shows, in magazines reading, academic literature reading, consulting technical manuals and other aspects, the number of students choosing "to meet the requirements" and "can basically meet the requirements," accounted for 78.8%, 66.7%, 62.2%, respectively, exceeding 60% of the total number . Data shows that doctoral students already have a considerable reading ability after learning English for more than ten years or even 20 years, what needs to be improved is the lengthy article skipping and scanning capability (see Table 4).

Table 4 Statistical evaluation on Reading

Items	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Reading Journal	16.5	61.4	16.3	6.3
Skipping and scanning long articles	11.3	34.5	32.5	23.4
Professional academic literature reading	15.7	51.1	26.4	6.3
Consulting technical manual	14.8	47.6	26.7	9.5

(5) Translation capabilities. Survey shows that doctoral students are weak in translation skills. . In the aspects of translation skills, selecting "to meet the requirements" and "basically meet the requirements," only occupy 40.9%, and choosing "can not meet the requirements" account for 9.1% (see Table 6).

Table 5 Statistical evaluation on Writing

Items	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Abstract and summary writing	14.5	47.5	30.1	6.3
Information sorting and outline writing	13.4	52.3	32.4	4.6
Applied writing	14.1	51.1	34.4	3.1
Writing reports	7.5	35.2	43.5	15.6
Timed thesis writing	12.3	52.1	32.4	4.8
Professional academic writing	6.5	26.4	44.8	25.3

Table 6 Statistical evaluation on Translation

Items	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Newspaper articles interpretation	10.4	43.8	43.6	1.6
Common themes English Translation	13.5	42.4	36.8	7.4
Professional literature Excerpt Translation	7.4	46.4	44.5	3.2
Translation Techniques	7.4	33.5	50.3	9.4

4. Reflection and Suggestion

In all groups in education, doctoral students possess the largest individual differences. Most of doctoral students' working, learning experiences are different, so they also have differences in English proficiency. In addition, more than 50% of doctoral students have work experience, they are very clear about the purpose of learning English in doctoral period, no longer satisfied with conventional the traditional teaching of basic English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation . Based on the above analysis of the survey, Doctoral English teaching can be improved in the following aspects.

4.1 Adopt Hierarchical Teaching Methods

Since significant differences exist in doctoral students' English ability, it is necessary to implement English stratified teaching through the comprehensive English test. English stratified teaching ,is based on students' English proficiency and the actual potential of receiving English knowledge, divide students into different levels, and determine different training objectives, develop different teaching programs, different student management system and adopt different teaching method and teaching activities; of which purpose is student-centered, so that students make progress in their different starting points,.

This way of teaching have been tried at the undergraduate and postgraduate level . Due to the strengthened teaching purpose and target, it can meet the different levels of students English learning needs, achieved good effect, doctoral students can learn from. Doctoral English courses can be divided into A, B, C three levels, according to doctoral achievements, listening and speaking, reading and writing two classes could be started for each level . A layer focus on improving students' academic communication skills, focusing on the professional aspect, professional teachers with good English ability can give lecture on parts of the content; B layer is aimed at improving students 'ability to communicate in their routine work; C layer stress on improving students' communication skills in daily life.

4.2 Teaching content should be focused on improving application ability

Learning a language is aimed at the use of this language to communicate, and to obtain the necessary information. PhD students have been learning English for a long time, with a considerable foundation in English, especially in reading, but still relatively weak in the actual use of language, especially in the ability to express , and this is the precise point their work and professional development required. To this end, doctoral English teaching content can not be limited to the basic, but also supplement

language application techniques. For example, in the teaching process, appropriately add the latest news reports, conversations, speeches, lectures and other soundtrack information, and use detailed explanations on the application of language skills, and enable students to understand and master how to use various techniques in specific instances. Teaching content materials are the important guarantee to good teaching effect.

4.3 Teaching methods should be flexible and diverse

To improve teaching methods, actively simulate all kinds of language locales. On the level of doctoral English teaching, the "exchange" is not only limited in everyday communication, but mainly comprising participating in various academic conferences, writing, familiar and publish a variety of professional papers, engage in cooperative research and joint development of expertise organize lectures, visit and other high level communication, and therefore the traditional "one-way traffic" teaching shift to "guide and application type". As "international academic exchanges Practical English" and scenario simulation courses should be started in doctoral English courses, take major exchange activities on international academic conference as clues, integrate meetings information, writing, reading, defense and talking and the other different forms; comprehensive utilize the English reading, writing, translation, listening, speaking and many other language skills; make listening and speaking skills are effective input and output. Only making a lot of exposure to English, their language skills could be quickly improved.

Acknowledgment

This thesis is supported by Jilin Education Science and planning Key Project "Non-English Technical Academy Doctoral Graduate English Training Model Research" No. GH150124

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