

Study on the Effectiveness of CBI Teaching Concept in College English Teaching

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Abstract

The full name for CBI is Content-Based Instruction, referring to the foreign language teaching concept in which language and contents are integrated with each other. The CBI teaching concept is the content-based teaching in modern social education. In general, it is the concept to achieve teaching objectives by teachers taking topics that students are interested in as the starting points and explaining the theme as teaching methods. In this paper, the author mainly dialectically analyzes the construction of CBI teaching concept based on instance and then further explores the feasibility of applying CBI into college English teaching.

Keywords

CBI teaching concept; college English education; English language proficiency; research

1. Introduction

Content-based teaching concept, namely CBI, transforms traditional language education into teaching with the help of specialized knowledge related to the content of learning, so as to enhance students' ability to express themselves and improve English teaching. The education under the guidance of CBI does not focus on the teaching of the vocabulary, grammar and sentence, or related training of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It maximizes the integration of speech into all mastered subjects and builds a complete teaching system that integrates English language with scientific knowledge to improve students' professional proficiency of English.

With the implementation of China's foreign policy of reform and opening up, the demand for English talents in China is also gradually increasing, and English teaching also faces enormous challenges in this context. The traditional English education can no longer meet the needs of inter-disciplinary talents in the society today. It wasn't until the 1980s that CBI which takes the content as the teaching tool was introduced in various education systems and trained foreign language talents with comprehensive ability for the country. At that time, CBI was identified as the most effective mode of English teaching and adopted by many colleges and universities in their English teaching system. In the meantime, many foreign researchers started to study this new teaching mode, which also proved its effect on the second language teaching. The effectiveness of CBI teaching concept in the college English teaching will be explored in the following part.

2. The meaning of CBI

CBI, a content-based language teaching, is also known as Content-Based Instruction. Its main purpose is to use speech as a tool to study subject-related majors. The core of this teaching method is to establish the language teaching based certain contents or subject, and then combine the language learning with the professional knowledge to improve students' cognition of language proficiency and professionalism, so as to further improve the students' ability of speech control.

3. The research status of CBI at home and abroad

In the 1960s, Canada tried to include language teaching in the teaching system from kindergarten to junior high school. And in the 1980s, Canada introduced this model of education into the foreign language education of the university, arousing the interest of scholars. Subsequently, this educational mode was piloted into the language education in primary and secondary school by western countries

such as Britain, France and the United States. After a long evolution, this traditional teaching mode evolved into a content-based teaching, that is, the current CBI Teaching concept.

In China, many scholars such as Wang Shixian, Cao Xianwen, Chang Junyue have studied and analyzed the teaching ideas and teaching effectiveness of CBI. They generally verified its effectiveness in college English education through theories at the beginning and then did research on it with empirical evidence. All of these studies explain the development of CBI. At the National Forum on College English Education in 2010, many scholars put forward their opinions on reform and innovation in response to the CBI education system. Until now, there is still controversy over CBI which is based on the education content. In response to this situation, the author will analyze the implementation of the CBI-based teaching theory in college English teaching to prove the feasibility and effectiveness of this teaching method. The ultimate goal is to change the status quo that college students learn English in a difficult and slow way and stimulate their interest in learning foreign language, so as to further enhance their ability of speaking and overall English proficiency, strengthen their overall quality and ability for the community. This is expected to contribute to the cultivation of talents with strong comprehensive inter-disciplinary ability for the society.

4. Empirical study of integrating CBI teaching concept into the college English teaching

This empirical study lasted 4 months, from February to June 2017.

First of all, it was needed to select two compulsory English courses in the school for sampling, and students of two classes, Biotechnology and Polymer Materials, were selected as research subjects. The relevant pre-test was also necessary before the teaching experiment. Questionnaire and oral test were adopted to test students' English proficiency, aiming at ensuring basically same English level of the two classes to reduce other variables in the experimental teaching process.

In the process of experiment, the class of Biotechnology was determined to continue using the traditional English teaching mode for language learning, while the other class, namely Polymer Materials, adopted the new teaching mode which combined the traditional teaching content with CBI teaching concept. After completion of the pre-test and distribution work, specific empirical inquiry was carried out as followed.

The class of Biotechnology used the same teaching mode as before -- develop students' English proficiency through theoretical knowledge teaching. In the class of Polymer Materials, the teacher designed and arranged teaching content according to the order of titles and implement the teaching contents; a series of reading materials, audio-visual recording materials and materials related to oral English exercises were added based on the text; topics were taken as the means for deep learning of English contents; the teacher also drove college English learning in the form of tasks in order to consolidate the contents that students had learned. In this round of teaching process, the teaching with professional terms can gradually transform teaching contents into language teaching, helping students transform the professional knowledge they often contact with into English expressions they can understanding and master. If the teachers can well make use of this teaching method, the ability of students to master the language form can be greatly enhanced.

The following is the actual performance of integrating the CBI concept into the teaching content of college English teaching. Here takes the unit centered on fruit as an example. In this unit, the teacher need to go through teaching of the entire unit in the form of "title" and use "tasks" as a driving force to consolidate the teaching contents. All aspects of teaching, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, should be designed around "fruit", so that students can feel the pleasure of English learning from the contents when completing this themed teaching. The teachers can also arrange relevant topics for students before the class, so that they can do related preview. For example, the teacher can assign pre-class task like the reading text *Test 1: The boss of the fruit shop sells fruit*. This topic tells the event that the owner of a fruit shop makes a lot of money by selling fruit, and then students can talk about something on this topic. The teacher can ask students to collect relevant information, news

or pictures and then discuss the relevant content in English, which is conducive to improving their oral English.

In the process of text teaching, the teacher can use clues or transitions to achieve a conversion of the learning content and language content, so as to make students understand that English is not a learning difficulty but a language tool that can achieve the purpose of communication between people by receiving language information, processing language information, expressing language information and feeding back language information. When students come into contact with a large number of professional vocabularies in the process of learning, they can also master the ability of using language as their own assimilation of environment, thereby enhancing their comprehensive English ability. At the same time, students can spend their free time exploring topics they are interested in rather than interpreting them in boring words. In the process of content-driven language learning, students can explore and discuss related topics on certain contents.

After 4 months of English learning, the two classes were evaluated respectively on the content they had learnt and some students were interviewed about their feelings of studying process.

5. Results and analysis

5.1 The test results of the two classes

After the English study in the past semester, the English teaching quality of the two classes were assessed in the form of questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four parts (listening, reading, writing and translating) and students accepted oral English test after the written test. The test scores of the two classes are shown in the following table (Class A for the class of Biotechnology and Class B for the class of Polymer Materials).

Table 1: Test results of Class A and Class B

Test	Class	Average score	Standard sore difference
Written test	Class A	85.23	4.5
	Class B	80.68	5.6
Oral English Test	Class A	87.28	4.0
	Class B	81.97	5.7

According to the data in Table 1, the comprehensive English level of Polymer Materials is obviously higher than that of Biotechnology. This shows that the CBI teaching concept has played a significant role in the education of college English. It enables students to learn contents while thoroughly mastering the language they are learning, improving their ability to learn English comprehensively. Seen from the standard deviation of cores, the level of students in the class of Polymer Materials have maintained a relative level, which indicates that the learning difference is relatively small compared with the other class. In this sense, the integration of CBI into the college English teaching system can mobilize the enthusiasm of individuals for learning and enable students to learn the English language with the learning atmosphere in the English classroom, thereby arousing learning initiative of the whole group.

5.2 The interview results of students in the two classes

In the written test mentioned above, the effect of CBI on college English education is better than that of traditional English education, which shows that teaching method based on teaching content can better reflect the practicality and interest of English teaching. Besides, the interview with students in the two classes also showed the obvious difference in learning attitudes between the two classes. According the feedback from students of the class which adopted the CBI concept in the English teaching mode, they were more relaxed in the learning process because the effective combination of English content and English inspired their interest in learning. The associative application guided by the teacher in all aspects also further proved the effect of “teacher-led” and “student-centered” teaching method and enhanced the interactive learning in the classroom. It helped students to further think of language, combining language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, with each other.

Students of the class of Biotechnology also did well. They could master new English knowledge to a certain degree in the classroom teaching. However, the teacher relied too much on the contents of the textbook for traditional explanations. Students with poor self-control ability may experience negative learning emotions such as boredom, thus affecting the quality of students' learning in English class and ultimately affecting their performance in exams.

6. Conclusion

The validity of CBI concept in the teaching of college English has been studied for four months, which helps to obtain an overall understanding of the effectiveness of the CBI teaching concept in college English. This study also proves that the effectiveness of the combination of public English education with the CBI teaching concept in the college English system. In this teaching mode, undergraduates cannot only acquire related skills, but can also display their own advantages in English skills compared with traditional English teaching. They can have an all-round promotion especially in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Because of the integration of professional contents, students can also have some knowledge of western culture, master the relevant professional language and be familiar with the structure and writing style of English passage articles, which lays a solid foundation for the comprehensive ability and professionalism in English in the future.

However, there are still some shortcomings in this research on the effective combination of CBI and college English. For example, the objects of this investigation of college English teaching are two classes, ignoring the individual differences in English learning. Therefore, the study of its effectiveness is not systematic and comprehensive enough, and some students with poor learning ability may not be able to adapt to the teaching effectiveness brought by CBI teaching concept. In addition, the English proficiency of college English teachers in China needs to be improved. Their professional quality and professional knowledge of related courses need to be further strengthened, so that the practical teaching of CBI teaching concept can play its maximum role.

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