

## Analysis of Some Problems in the Course of College English Teaching Reform

Fuhua Liu

School of Foreign Languages, Dalian Jiaotong University, Dalian, Liaoning 116028, China.

### Abstract

**The present paper is an analysis of some problems arising in the course of college English teaching reform. The problems of college English graded teaching, college English formative assessment, online modes integrated into college English teaching are analyzed in detail.**

### Keywords

**Problems, College English teaching reform, Graded teaching, Formative assessment, Online modes**

### 1. Introduction

With the development of the society, college English teachers have to keep reforming their courses. While both teachers and students have benefited a lot from such reforms, there arises a series of problems along the way. College English teachers as a whole should attach great importance to these problems and analyze them in detail, otherwise college English teaching reform will get nowhere. Every college or university has their specific problems, so the analysis of these problems should be based on the specific situations of a certain school. The present paper tries to analyze the mutual problems of five province-level universities in a bid to come up with specific solutions to the problems that may be common occurrences across the country.

### 2. Body

#### 2.1 Problems of College English Graded Teaching

Graded teaching may be originally a good idea, as students of a feather flocking together may have identical language basis. However, this teaching concept can easily lend itself to abuse in reality. Some schools classify their non-English majors taking the same college English courses into three groups: students of level A, B and C. because of this man-made classification, lower-level students are likely to suffer from inferiority complex which definitely weakens their confidence as language learners.[1-3] In a traditional class, “good”, “average” and “poor” students complement one another and can cooperate well. For example, academically superior students can help students with poor language abilities, while technically superior students can help students with poor technical skills. All students excel in their respective fields. Therefore, students of all levels should be offered opportunities to work together so that they can learn from each other. In this sense, college English classes should be “tolerant” and “open-minded”.

One of the problems of college English graded teaching is that despite the man-made classification, students of all levels in some schools adopt textbooks of almost the same difficulty. That is, the textbooks adopted by different groups do not make a difference. In some schools, the textbooks used by level-A students are even easier than those used by level-B students.

Most importantly, teachers appointed to classes of different levels make no obvious difference. That is, classes of level-A students should be appointed English teachers from English-speaking countries and college English teachers as assistants. But the reality is that some schools appoint college English teachers, which makes the classes less stimulating and appealing. That may explain why a few students choose to transfer from A-level classes to B-level ones in which the majority of the students have registered for.

## 2.2 Problems of College English Formative Assessment

Formative assessment stresses students' everyday performance, which fits into the characteristics of language learning. If used in a proper way, this teaching concept can greatly stimulate students' passion in learning and greatly improve students' efficiency and effectiveness in language learning. However, in the teaching practice, this teaching concept tends to be equally abused by some college English teachers. Admittedly, college English formative assessment involves a great deal of work on the part of college English teachers. But the reality is that in many schools a typical college English teacher has to be in charge of over one hundred students all at once, which makes it practically impossible for most college English teachers to ideally implement the formative assessment teaching concept. Under these circumstances, some college English teachers become unqualified administrators. The result is that the majority of the students get very high scores for their formative courses, and the failing rate for these courses is almost zero. Therefore, we can see that college English formative assessment, if used improperly, can ironically weaken students' eagerness to learn and their willingness to challenge themselves.

Let me give you an example to illustrate the point. School A is implementing formative assessment in its college English teaching for the listening and speaking course. Under this evaluation system, students will be graded based on the following parts: daily performance (20 points), oral presentation (20 points), autonomous learning (20 points), mid-term (20 points) and final (20 points). For the daily performance and oral presentation, many college English teachers are not strict enough concerning grading students, so the points gained by most of the students for either part range from 16 to 20, which can hardly distinguish students' varied performances. For the autonomous learning part, as the requirements are generally loose, most students can get practically all the points for this part. As for the mid-term, most of the questions in this school are offered in advance, so students have no difficulty getting high scores. Besides, there is a great chance of the leaking out of test content, in which case results in unfairness. The final which accounts for 20% can make a slight difference, but the small proportion of points just cannot change the overall situation. To summarize, when implementing formative assessment policy, college English teachers are given too much power that they cannot make good use of, which leads to the failure of such a program in some schools. The solution to the problem is to make guidelines that can well supervise teachers' implementation of their power.

## 2.3 Problems of Online Modes

In the course of reforming college English courses, college English teachers have to face and handle the problems brought about by the rapid development of high technology. Some college English teachers may abuse the online resources, or at least they are confused by the wealth of online materials available. Some teachers just download the PowerPoint courseware from the Internet and directly use it in class without even changing a bit of it. In this case, their classes have turned into presenting information and language points and the teachers have become uncreative voice machines. In addition, the availability of so many language learning materials online poses threats to college English teachers' language teaching in that many college students can learn easily all by themselves via the Internet. Therefore, college English teachers should develop a sense of crisis and constantly think out ways to fit students' real needs in an ever-changing and technology-dominated society.

Another problem of the online modes integrated into college English teaching is that online technologies are still immature. Most schools require students to do self-study through certain online platforms or apps. But most of the online platforms or apps are still not intelligent enough to maximize students' passion for learning. And all kinds of tests that are given through the Internet have not been promoted on a large scale across the country. Because of the immaturity of related technology, some schools still make test papers, analyze students' scores and so on manually. Therefore, it is expected that in the future most of the administrative work will be done by computers, and college English teachers will focus on how to teach only.

In the face of the rapid development of technology during the course of educational reform in college English courses, college English teachers have to keep up with the times by constantly learning technical skills on the one hand and by continuing to enhance their language abilities on the other. For example, college English teachers are often offered the opportunities to communicate with one another through high-tech means. In this case, an English teacher from a famous university will try to share his teaching experience with other college English teachers across China in a WeChat group. The teacher usually uses Chinese language to explain how to teach an English lesson. As the teachers taking part are all Chinese, they actually have no trouble understanding the ideas or teaching schedules that the teacher has presented. What they really lack is still their abilities to express all ideas freely in a foreign language. Therefore, I highly suggest that the teacher use Chinese as well as English when giving his or her lecture. To summarize, in the information age, teachers must improve their teaching abilities which include not only their technical skills but also their language abilities.

### 3. Conclusion

In the course of our college English teaching reform, there are several problems that deserve our special attention, because the resolution of them can benefit students as well as college English teachers. The first problem is about college English graded teaching. Graded teaching in some schools are meaningless in that the classes of students of different levels in these schools use practically identical textbooks and appoint identical teachers. In addition, level-B and level-C students may suffer from inferiority complex because of graded teaching. The second problem is about college English formative assessment. This teaching method can easily lend itself to abuse as is shown in the high scores that most students can get. The misuse of formative assessment in college English teaching can make college English teachers become mere administrators and college students uninspired language learners. The third problem is about online modes integrated into college English teaching. The availability of online resources poses threats to college English teachers' teaching. And the technology needs to be further developed. College English teachers must cultivate their creativity in the face of online threats and develop their technical skills as well as language abilities to keep pace with the development of technology. All in all, college English teachers should raise their awareness of these existing or potential problems and think out ways to solve them if there are any based on the specific situations of their schools.

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