

Strategies on Constructing College English Ecological Teaching Classroom from the Perspective of Eco-linguistics

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Abstract: Nowadays, in China, English is regarded as a foreign language and college English courses are offered in nearly all the colleges and universities. However, teaching English in colleges inevitably exists some problems. During the teaching process, teachers mainly occupies the dominant position and students are short of communication with teachers and among students themselves, and part of teaching content is out of date and exercises are stereotyped, which lead to the imbalance in foreign language classroom ecology. Therefore, based on the perspective of eco-linguistics, the paper aims to explore strategies in college English teaching in order to build the ecological and harmonious college English classroom.

Keywords: College English teaching, eco-linguistics, problems in college English teaching, teaching strategies, ecologicalization.

INTRODUCTION

The ecology today has been developed from natural ecology, social ecology to cultural ecology and spiritual ecology, and "ecology" is no longer confined to a particular field of specialization. The ecological world outlook, as a new paradigm of scientific research, provides a scientific understanding of other areas of new ways of thinking and research methods.

Linguistic and language teaching experts have also begun to explore the relationship between language, language teaching and ecological environment from the perspective of language ecology, and have gradually formed an ecological language teaching concept based on ecological theory, which has exerted a profound influence on foreign language teaching.

“In a globalization era, national foreign language capacity has become one of the significant criteria for a country’s core competency and soft power.” [1]. Therefore, as an essential part of improving language ability, college English teaching reform has already listed as one of the tasks in the Higher Education Quality Project by the Chinese Ministry of Education. At present, constructing harmonious college ecology of language teaching has been put forward in the new college English teaching reform.

LITERATURE REVIEW OF ECO-LINGUISTICS

The rising and development of education ecology and eco-linguistics gave us a new angle of

learning field. Thus, it had a big effect on language teaching, giving language researchers a new research path; making more people realize the connotation of language learning and the ecological perspective of language teaching.

Waller [2] first put forward the concept of ecology. He suggested that the classroom should be regarded as an ecosystem and the study on the factors among classroom should be conducted in a systematic way. And he also emphasized the interactive relationship between those factors.

Ashby [3] set forth the concept of ecology of higher education, marking the beginning of using ecological principles and methods to study higher education. In 1970s, the researchers on ecology of education which is related to the interaction between education and ecology were numerous in the western world.

Cremin [4] thought that the different educational factors are the same as the environmental

factors, which have a close relationship between each other and have a great influence on each other.

In 1980s, studies on using principles of ecology of education into college English teaching have begun. According to Fan Guorui [5], based on ecological principles, education ecology provides a way of analyzing complicated and dynamic relationship among various education participants. And education ecology also illustrates the rules and mechanism of the development in education to explore methods and approaches to optimize education ecology environment.

The terminology 'linguistic ecology' was put forward by Einar Haugen [6], who used the metaphor of an ecosystem to describe the relationships among the diverse forms of language found in the world, and the groups of people who speak them. And he made it clear that the so-called "environment" is not the language context or context that people usually speak of, but the society in which language is used and the environment (including the natural environment, the environment of various plants and animals), and language itself is part of the environment.

On the AILA conference in Thessaloniki, Halliday [7] delivered a significant speech in which he emphasized the connection between language and human beliefs such as classism and speciesism. He also admonished eco-linguists to attach their research objects to the growing environmental problems. According to his lecture, ecology should be interpreted with biological sense which inspired a great number of groups, organizations and instructions.

Huang and Shu [8] proposed many new ideas such as language species attribution, language holographic state, language ecological system and language evolution. Chen & Xiao [9] first overviewed the birth and development of eco-linguistics, and then made some comments on language varieties, the ecological and non-ecological elements in language system, the justification of language environment and linguistic imperialism, endangered language, language concentric circle, etc.

PROBLEMS IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

The theory of eco-linguistics puts language into ecosystem, and learning language into learning ecology. Although, it offers us learning theories and frameworks on second language learning and teaching, it does not offer some basic language teaching practice for us to learn. Therefore, we must fully understand the second language ecological classroom system and make clear the problems in college English classroom. In the author's opinion, the problems of ecological imbalance in English classroom are mainly between teachers and students, among students, between students and teaching content.

Lack of interaction between teachers and students

As the ecological subject of classroom, teachers and students' interaction is very important. In the present foreign language teaching classroom in China, there is clear lack of interaction between teachers and students. During the teaching process, teachers mainly occupy the dominant position and students are short of communication with teachers or have no interests to interact with teachers. The causes of such problems may be: (1) Teachers pay too much attention to the content of the text and explanation of grammatical knowledge, ignoring the cultural input; (2) The teaching content and difficulty of the teacher's teaching is beyond the comprehension of students; (3) The teacher's lecture arrangement is too boring to attract the students' interest; (4) Students are afraid of poor performance in the classroom, lack of self-confidence, so they do not interact with the teacher, and even the questions teacher asked are not actively answered; (5) Students' own learning attitude is not serious;

Lack of interaction among students

Besides the interaction between teachers and students, the interaction among students is completely necessary in the classroom. The modern college English classroom needs to pay more attention to the heuristic education and reasonable student activity may exercise student's thought ability, communication expression ability and team cooperation spirit, such as two people activity, group discussion, brainstorming and so on. Classroom activities can effectively mobilize students to get involved in the classroom. However, in fact, there is not enough interaction among students and all kinds of activities did not get good results. The lack of interaction among students also affects the diversity and dynamics of classroom ecosystem to a certain extent.

Lack of interaction between students and teaching content

"Gibson, founder of eco-psychology, argues that environmental factors can directly provide cognitive sustenance to people's perceptions and actions" [10]. Therefore, as the very important teaching environment, the teaching content plays a crucial part in students' learning process. However, part of teaching content and the contents of students' textbooks are so out of date and the exercises are really stereotyped, which cannot adapt to the social development, students' real demand for knowledge and cannot arouse students' interest in learning, leading to the lack of interaction between students and teaching content in the ecological classroom. If the teaching material is divorced from reality, student's actual study and life, students cannot produce resonance, lacking passion of study and practice impetus.

DISCUSSION ON CONSTRUCTING COLLEGE ENGLISH ECOLOGICAL TEACHING CLASSROOM

Under the guidance of the theory of Eco-linguistics, we should try to construct college English Ecological teaching classroom, which is not only the process of mastering foreign language knowledge and developing intelligence, but also the process of cultivate students' individual potential. In order to balance the development of the foreign language classroom ecology and optimize teaching process, the author attempts to give some constructive enlightenment to college English teaching from three aspects: teaching content, teaching method and classroom organization.

Ecologicalization of teaching content

For college English teaching, teaching content not only involves knowledge structure, but also foreign cultures and values. Therefore, the college English teachers have to pay much attention to the study, understanding and the inheritance of target language culture. Chinese traditional culture often conflicts with Western culture, and student's values, life attitude, interpersonal relationship and thinking patterns are easy to be influenced by the foreign culture, which requires us to strengthen the imparting of cultural knowledge in the process of foreign language teaching, making students more sensitive and open in dealing with cultural difference and develop students' flexibility when they are faced with cultural differences. While teaching and learning foreign languages to enrich our national knowledge, it is equally important to respect and maintain the richness and diversity of the language and culture ecology. We should endeavour ourselves to absorb the fruits of civilizations of other peoples into our own language, to practise the interaction between language and culture, and to adopt a positive and scientific attitude in respecting the natural status of language.

In addition, except the in-class teaching, teachers can also increase the amount of written or recorded materials selected from foreign language publications or radio stations, so that college English teaching is much closer to real world. At the same time, encouraging students to read original English works and newspaper periodical magazines, watch English movies and TV shows according to their own interest also does great benefit in achieving personalized and diversified learning.

Ecologicalization of teaching ways

The ecologicalization of teaching ways refers that the teaching method is developed from teachers' one-way transfer to teacher-student cooperation. The teaching of foreign language in our country is the rigid textbook-classroom-practice mode for many years, only focusing on the learning of concept in order to understand the meaning of words to meet or to improve academic performance in the face of examination-

oriented education, thus gives less attention to the cultivation of students pragmatic ability. The main reason is that students lack the real environment and opportunities to use foreign language directly, therefore learning a foreign language requires a deliberate creation of a natural and authentic foreign language environment--quasi natural environment. Only by putting the learning of language into various environments, can we acquire language better and exert the communicative function of language. Foreign language educators should strive to create a good "quasi natural" language environment for students, for example, foreign language signs in public places, television programs and so on, the campus can also set up English radio, English TV, English corner, English blackboard show, etc. By building a teacher-led, students-oriented relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, a positive humanistic psychological environment, the students would be more positive under the establishment of equal and healthy relationship between teachers and students.

Ecologicalization of classroom activities

From the perspective of eco-linguistics, foreign language classroom is a unified, dynamic and variable system, teachers and students are regarded as developing individual, and classroom activities are the conscious interaction between these relationships. The college English teachers should make efforts to diversify the forms of interaction to fully exert the students' initiative spirit and enable students to achieve the goal of self-development in the interactive activities. Teachers can design a variety of classroom activities to promote classroom ecology between teachers and students, among students and between teaching content and students, such as peer cooperation, consultation activities, group discussions. Besides, teachers and students should participate in the question and answer questions together, the consultation and communication between teachers and students helps to the completion of various teaching tasks in a variety of teaching activities (pair work, group activities, collective activities, etc.). In the course of this movement, students' knowledge and ability have been enriched and developed and teachers' teaching ability has been improved and therefore teaching quality has been enhanced. The colorful classroom activities are beneficial to the interaction between teachers and students and the construction of a harmonious and healthy ecological classroom.

Furthermore, according to Widdowson, authentic teaching resource refers to the language material which originates from the real life or natural language use environment, [11] and it usually exists in the form of paper material, audio-visual carrier (TV, CD, etc.) and network multimedia. Teachers should make full use of multimedia technology, such as computer, projector, DVD player and so on to make good use of multimedia digital classroom and modern

English learning software. By using the online radio apps to listen to English news, talk shows and other listening materials to practise English pronunciation and intonation.

CONCLUSION

The college English classroom teaching is an ecosystem. First of all, students' study is an ecosystem. Because students' psychological adaptation, cognitive regularity, emotion and social factors play a vital role in the process of language learning; Secondly, teachers' teaching is an ecological system. The use of teaching methods, the choice of teaching contents and the use of teaching techniques, which are closely related to the knowledge structure, emotional attitude and value system of teachers; Moreover, the classroom environment, as an important place for classroom teaching, is also an ecological system with multiple interactions. Students' efforts, teachers' contribution and the interaction between teachers and students, among students themselves in the course of using teaching materials all embody the ecological characteristics of classroom teaching. Teachers and students are the interactive factors when we research the college English teaching classroom from the perspective of eco-linguistics, thus, teachers had better consider all factors synthetically, making the classroom tend to be natural, reasonable and ecological.

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