On Interrelations between Language Teaching and Speech Teaching

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Abstract—There exists a universal problem in college English teaching among most colleges in China: most teachers have laid too much emphasis on language teaching, but awfully neglected speech teaching. Thus the competence of language application and intercultural communication students urgently needed cannot be developed and the phenomenon of "deaf English" appeared. The amount of language teaching and speech teaching are out of rate. In order to change the situation, the current college English teaching system should be changed in time mainly from the two aspects of the teaching mode and syllabus design to strengthen the amount of speech teaching. At the same time teachers should also pay attention to the role students play to mobilize their activity to develop their intercultural communicative competence. This thesis attempts to explore an effective way to balance language teaching and speech teaching to improve the quality of college English teaching, and to pursue its guiding and operational significance to college English teaching.

Index Terms—language teaching, speech teaching, communicative competence, syllabus design

I. INTRODUCTION

As we all know that English today is becoming an international language. With the fast progressing of modernization at home and abroad, international communication occurs more and more frequently. College students are playing an important role during this process. So the quality of college English teaching has been put on a higher level. In order to improve the communicative competence of college students, many efforts have been made and the most straightfoward way is to pay more attention to speech teaching while making sure that students can master a good command of knowledge from language teaching.

II. THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND SPEECH TEACHING

A. Saussure's Distinction between Langue and Parole

The distinction between langue and parole was made by the Swiss linguist F.de Saussure in the early 20th century. Langue and parole are French words, In English they refer to language and speech respectively. Langue refers to the abstract linguistic system shared by all the members of a speech community; and parole refers to the realization of langue in actual use. Langue is the set of conventions and rules which language users all have to abide by, and parole is the concrete use of the conventions and the application of the rules. Langue is abstract; it is not the language people actually use. Parole is concrete; it refers to the naturally occurring language events.

Since Saussure (1989) proposed the theory of binary division of langue and parole, people have gradually sensed that foreign language teaching should include both language teaching and speech teaching. However, we have not paid enough attention to it .Until now there are still so many people who do not pay much attention to the essential differences between the definitions of langue and parole. The binary division of langue and parole states that neither langue nor parole can be dispensed with in the performance of language communicative function." Langue is the tool of parole", "Parole is the actual use of langue", and human beings carry out communication through applying langue and parole activity. Therefore, in order to be able to communicate with others by using a foreign language, first of all we must master the rule of the language system to carry out communication. Thus it can be seen that if foreign language teaching aims to reach the goal of training students to communicate freely, it must include not only language teaching but also speech teaching.

B. Chomsky's Theory of Competence and Performance

Similar to Saussure's distinction between langue and parole is the distinction between competence and performance, which was proposed by the American linguist N. Chomsky in the late 1950's.Chomsky defines competence as the ideal user's knowledge of the rules of his language; and performance the actual realization of this knowledge in linguistic communication. Only having possessed competence, people are able to produce and understand an infinitely large number of sentences to reach the goal of communicating. In fact, this kind of binary theory provide unanimous theoretical basis for the study and research of foreign language teaching from different aspects (Dai Weidong, He Zhaoxiong,2002).

C.   Inspiration to College English Teaching

Learning a language as a natural human accomplishment involves getting to know something, and being able to do something with that knowledge. Language learning has two sides to it: knowing and doing (competence and performance), the first associated with a medium and the second with a mediation perspective on meaning. Different approaches to language teaching have tended to emphasize one rather than, and often at the expense of, the other. Most of current college English teaching focus their attention on getting students to know something but neglect the aspect of doing something. In foreign language teaching i.e. college English teaching, language teaching enables students to acquire language competence while speech teaching makes the language competence students acquired be applied and developed, and also develop a kind of ability to communicate by using a foreign language. Obviously, foreign language teaching just relies on the unity of these two kinds of teaching to accomplish its duty.

III.   PROBLEMS EXISTING IN ENGLISH TEACHING

At present, there exists a universal problem in college English teaching among most colleges in our country, i.e. most teachers have laid too much emphasis on language teaching but awfully neglected speech teaching. The language teaching and speech teaching are out of rate.

In language teaching, the emphasis is laid on correctness, literary excellence, and the priority of the written language. Textbooks based on traditional grammars take prominent writers of the previous centuries as language models. They favor the past "purest" language form rather than the present "degenerated" form; they prefer the written language to spoken language; they concentrate on detailed points instead of the construction of the whole text. Under traditional language teaching, students learn to know many taboos, for example, in English one cannot use "split infinitives" or end sentences with prepositions, because they are not allowed in Latin grammar. Language teaching involves the presentation of numerous definitions, rules and explanations, and it adopts a teacher-centered grammar-translation method, i.e. the main teaching and learning activities are grammar and translation study. In order to pursue the high examination-passing ratio, so many teachers pay almost all the attention to students' language proficiency. Thus the capacity of speech application and intercultural communication urgently needed cannot be developed. Learning is divorced from use and the phenomenon of "dumb English "and "deaf English" appeared.

As we all know that English is a tool, we learn it to communicate with others and express ourselves. But if we just learn the dumb or deaf English, what is the aim we learn a foreign language? Under this kind of teaching structure, classroom teaching is still teacher-centered which makes that students' learning modes and methods are not scientific and the effects and enthusiasm are also badly influenced. Such an approach to language teaching is damage to language learning. In communication, one should learn first to "speak" the language; not to "read" the language. In D.H.Hymes' view, the learner acquires knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical but also as appropriate. The aim of language learning is the ability to perform a repertoire speech acts so as to take part in speech events. This is another way of saying that learning language is learning to perform certain functions.

In college English teaching most teachers are still adopting an structural approach which pays almost all attention to language. The emphasis on structures was associated with the process of learning, as the means towards an end, and this was not at all intended to preclude a communicative purpose. It has been pointed out often enough in recent years that the disadvantage of structural approach is that it does not allow the learners to use language in a natural way. They tend to fixate on form for its own sake, internalize the language system as a separate body of knowledge and fail to learn for themselves how to use it. Having been trained to direct what they do in the service of knowing; they have difficulty in reversing the dependency and so to direct what they know in the service of doing. This is not surprising .For the structural approach requires the learners to conceive of the foreign language as something very different form their mother tongue, something designed as a subject with its own rules for learning which seem to have very little in common with the learner's own experience of language. So that in effect learners do not learn how to do communicative things with what they have acquired as knowledge, but simply learn how to display their knowledge according to conventions established by teaching and to meet the requirements of the examinations based on the same conventions.

IV.   SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS

Then how to change the situation? i.e. how can we put much more attention to speech teaching? Of course, this is not an easy question to answer. But we can try to find a solution from the following aspects.

A.   Change the Current Teaching Mode

In view of the above-mentioned disadvantages of the structural approach to college English teaching, to make the means of teaching conform to the communicative ends of learning, we adopt a communicative approach to foreign language teaching which will pay much more attention to speech teaching. More recent revisions of foreign language learning experience can be best described as communicative approaches. They are partially a reaction against the artificiality of "pattern-practice" and against the belief that consciously learning the grammar of a language will necessarily result in an ability to use the language. Although there are different versions of how to create "communicative" experiences in foreign language classroom, they are all based on a view that the functions of language

(i.e. correct grammatical or phonological structure). Lessons are likely to be organized around concepts such as "asking for things" in different social contexts, rather than "the form of the past tense" in different sentences.

Speech teaching focuses attention on students' communicative competence which can be defined, in terms of three components, as the ability to use foreign language accurately, appropriately, and flexibly. The first component is grammatical competence which involves the accurate use of words and structures in foreign language. Concentration on grammatical competence only, however, will not provide the learner with the ability to interpret or produce language appropriately. The learner will know when to say "Can I have some water?" versus "Give me some water!" according to the social context. Much of what was discussed in terms of pragmatics has to become familiar in foreign language if the learner is to develop sociolinguistic competence. The third component is called strategic competence. This is the ability to organize a message effectively and to compensate, via strategies, for any difficulties. In foreign language use, learners will inevitably experience moments when there is a gap between communicative intent and their ability to express that intent. Some learners may just stop talking (bad idea), others will try to express themselves via a communicative strategy (good idea). For example, a Dutch first language speaker wanted to refer to "een hoefijzer" in English, but did not know the English word, so she used a communication strategy. She referred to the things that horses wear under their feet, the iron things and the listener understood what she meant (horseshoes). This flexibility in second language use is a key element in communicative success. In essence, strategic competence is the ability to overcome potential communication problems in interaction.

B.   To Make an Appropriate Syllabus Design

Having seen the teaching mode, then we come to the syllabus design

a. What is Syllabus?

Syllabus is the planning of a course of instruction. It is a description of the course content, teaching procedures and learning experiences(Liu Runqing1999). The task for teacher is to realize the syllabus as a course of action by whatever methodological means seem most appropriate for the activiation of learning. The syllabus itself is an innert abstract object. It has much the same relationship to learner activities as does any abstract model of knowledge to the actuality of behavior. Its function is not to provide a prospectus of everything that the learner has to do. It is, so to speak, a set of bearings for teacher action and not a set of instructions for learner activity. What learners do is not directly determined by the syllabus but is a consequence of how the syllabus is methodologically mediated by the teacher in the pursuit of his own course of instruction.

b. The Effects of a Structural Syllabus to College English Teaching

So whether we put much more emphasis on language teaching or speech teaching to a great extent depends on what kind of syllabus we adopt. Language teaching mainly adopts a structural syllabus which is a grammatical oriented syllabus based on a selection of language items and structures. The vocabulary and grammatical rules included in the teaching materials are carefully ordered according to factors such as frequency, complexity and usefulness. The linguistic units in a sentence may appear in slots:

eg.   My friend | sent | me | a birthday card | last week.

This pattern is probably followed by group of substitutional words, also put into slots:

eg.   My sister | bought   him | a new hat | yesterday.
John | gave   her | a bundle of flowers | that evening.
The mother | lent | the little girl | a dictionary | on Sunday.

Thus by substituting new elements in one or other of the slots, learners practice the same sentence pattern repeatedly until they can produce it automatically. They are expected to accumulate pieces of vocabulary and grammatical rules, combine them into natural sentences, and thus acquire some linguistic perfection. The major drawback of such a syllabus is that it concentrates only on the grammatical formsand the meaning of individual words, whereas the meaning of the whole sentence is thought to be self-evident, whatever its context may be. Students are not taught how to use these sentences appropriately in real situations. As a result, students trained by a structural syllabus often prove to be communicatively incompetent.

c. Syllabuses Paid Much More Attention to Speech Teaching

The following two syllabuses both focus their attention on speech teaching. First of all let's see the notional-functional syllabus. It was first proposed by D.Wilkins & J.A.van Ek, and it has a strong theoretical basis — it is directly influenced by Halliday's functional grammar and Hymes' theory of communicative competence. The concept of NOTION refers to the meaning of one wants to convey, while that of FUNCTION refers to what one can do with the language. For example, while saying "Would you please tell me how to get to the library?" the speaker expresses the notion of inquiry and performs the function of asking the way. This kind of syllabus is initially concerned with what the learner communicates through the language not with what the grammatical structure is, or when or where he uses the language. This approach to language teaching views all course components as a systematic whole and classroom activities should be learner-centered. The functional-notional syllabus relates the abstract language form to its use in real situations. Since the relation between notions /functions and language forms are culture specific, the learner's attention is drawn to the special way a native speaker expresses himself. For example, the Chinese way of responding to others' compliment may not be permissible in the English culture, so the Chinese learner has to learn the special language forms in English to perform this function. Another advantage of this function is that the learner's motivation is

highly stimulated, because there exists a close link between the learning objective and the learner's personal needs. Through the whole learning process this motivation is reinforced by his own success. The learner is constantly aware of what he is doing and every progress he has achieved leads him a step forward towards his learning objective.

Next one is communicative syllabus which aims at the learner's communicative competence. It teaches the language needed to express and understand different kinds of functions, and emphasizes the process of communication. The syllabuses mentioned above put much more emphasis on speech teaching but not on language teaching. Their aim is to train the students to communicate freely with others by using a foreign language not just study the form and structure of that language. Of course, in the course of teaching, college English teachers can choose the one which is best appropriate or they can also combine the two to find a more appropriate way to develop students' speech competence.

C. The Role Students should Play in Solving the Problem

What kind of role students should play in changing the situation? Students should mobilize the enthusiasm of learning, and take part in the classroom activity actively. On the basis of mastering a sound knowledge of English, i.e. its correct form and grammar, students should also develop their communicative competence. Thus students cannot only acquire more language knowledge but also express their ideas freely. There will be more feedback between teacher and student. In this way students can know about the effect of learning while teachers can find the drawbacks of current teaching method and then change it in time. The phenomenon of time-consuming and effectiveless college English teaching will be changed.

Obviously, we emphasize speech teaching does not mean that there is no need of paying any attention to language teaching. The major premise is that language teaching and speech teaching have been in a state of imbalance among most college English teaching. From Saussure's view we also know that langue(language)and parole(speech)are indispensible. During college English teaching, teachers should make out a rational division of language teaching and speech teaching. Thus makes the students competent in communication with English based on a solid foundation of its structures.

V. CONCLUSION

It can be seen that in order to remedy the harmful state of college English teaching, the key point is that we must grasp the rational structure and change the amount of language teaching and speech teaching during the general course of college English teaching.

In the language of teaching we must make a well overall arrangement, such as the use of syllabus, curriculum, choices of textbooks and teaching method should come along with the dealing with the relationship between language and speech so as to generate the integrity of the course of the teaching system. At the same time we also have to set about the concrete teaching and research from the two sides to meet the purpose of developing students' language competence and speech competence effectively in the end.

With the fast progressing of modernization at home and abroad, intercultural communication occurs more and more frequently. The times call for the personnel who have professional knowledge and are able to communicate with native as well as non-native speakers of English successfully. In accordance with the need of the world, it is commonly accepted that the ultimate goal of English teaching is to develop students' communicative competence. The quality of college English teaching is put on a higher level to meet the needs of the new era. In handling the contradiction between language teaching and speech teaching more efforts should be made not only by the teachers but also by the students themselves.

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