Research on English Teaching Modes of Economic Specialty Courses in China’s Universities

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Abstract. Combined with current economic development and graduates’ employment situation, this paper puts an emphasis on studying the improvement of English teaching modes of economic specialty courses in China’s universities, including bilingual teaching and all English teaching, based on data collection, investigation, comparison and analysis. Through the analysis and research, this paper puts forward the teaching mode of guided participation in view of the existing problems, in order to promote further reform in English teaching modes of economic specialty courses in China’s universities and profoundly improve the teaching quality.

1. Introduction

With the deepening development of economic globalization, the scope and extent of participation of countries in the international economy is deepening. English teaching, including bilingual teaching and all English teaching, has been widely promoted in economic undergraduate specialty courses by many colleges and universities in China, in order to adapt to the globalization of higher education and cultivate compound talents who are proficient in both professional knowledge and foreign languages. Its purpose is to facilitate students’ effectively mastering professional English through actual language atmosphere in class, and make them capable of studying, thinking and researching economic subjects both in Chinese and English and finally get a comprehensive and systematic application and innovation.

Taking English teaching modes of economic specialty courses in China’s universities as instance, this paper investigates and analyzes its current situation and attempts to explore the organization process of guided participation English teaching, hoping to offer some reference for English teaching of economic specialty courses in China’s universities.

2. Investigation and analysis of the current situation of English teaching of economic undergraduate specialty courses in China’s universities

At present, there is an explicit teaching goal for English teaching of economic specialty courses in China’s universities; that is, to cultivate compound talents who are proficient in both specialized knowledge and foreign languages. It is moving forward in exploration but is still in experimental stage. Different degrees of blindness and randomness are existed in English teaching operated by many economic undergraduate majors among all kinds of universities. No matter in quantity or quality, there is still some way to go compared with the requirements of the current market demand for these majors. Its teaching content, teaching methods, teaching modes, teaching organization and management, teaching evaluation system and other aspects are to be further standardized and need further theoretical guidance.

To further clarify this issue and find the solution as soon as possible, this paper took a series of research and investigation centering on English teaching courses’ structure and content setting, teaching effect, faculty and other issues in economic majors, based on the questionnaire surveys and interviews in Beijing college students job fair. This investigation involved three hundred students and several bilingual teachers. This paper tries to find out the current situation and existing
problems in the English teaching implementation of economic majors in China’s universities.

These survey and interviews covered teaching modes, offer time, teaching materials selection, quality of teachers and so on of English teaching in economic specialty courses. A total of 300 students were enrolled in the study. They were all from economics majors of colleges and universities, and 276 valid questionnaires were collected. 76.5% of the surveyed students have passed College English Test Band Four, and 92% among them have contacted English teaching of specialty courses. This questionnaire survey not only provided us with a large amount of useful data, but also offered a solid basis for rational analysis.

The survey results show that:

(1) In terms of offering ways and teaching modes of English teaching courses in economic majors, 73.2% of the students think it is acceptable to offer English teaching courses in colleges and universities. As for the methods of offering English teaching courses, nearly 43% of students reckoned that English teaching courses should be non-core courses and non-required courses. Therefore, students are acceptable for specialty courses taught in English, but meanwhile they worried that it is too difficult for them to understand the courses’ content due to their English is not good enough, which may influence their graduation or further study.

In the aspect of English teaching modes of economic specialty courses, almost all students expect that they can not only learn professional knowledge but also improve their English level. However, they have different opinions on the realization patterns: 22% of the students insist that only all English teaching can allow them to think in English, so that they could better adapt to future work environment. Another 78% of the students think that most Chinese students’ English reading comprehension ability is much stronger than their ability of listening and speaking. Moreover, considering that the English teaching level is different across the whole country, the mode of all English teaching will affect the acquisition of professional knowledge because of the language deviation, which will dramatically affect the teaching effect. In light of that, students’ command of professional knowledge must be taken into account while carrying out English teaching. Simultaneously, English teaching courses should be application-oriented ones, which will also help students accommodate to current employment situation.

(2) In terms of the best time to offer English teaching of economic specialty courses, 68% of the students think that they should be arranged in the first semester of the third year, which is the very semester after College English Test Band Four and Six. It is because that passing College English Test Band Four is still one of the graduation requirements for students in many universities at present. Some worried that specialty courses taught in English would take too much time, and specialized vocabulary rarely appears in College English Test Band Four and Six, so the arrangement of specialty courses taught in English should better not affect College English Test Band Four and Six. Besides, college English learning for economic undergraduates is mainly concentrated in the first two years. In order to have a persistent learning of English throughout college, specialty courses taught in English should begin in the first semester of the third year.

(3) In terms of choosing teaching materials in specialty courses taught in English, investigation indicates that 81% of the students prefer to use original English textbooks, because most of the original English textbooks are not only idiomatic, but also provide updated professional knowledge, and they are very practical. It would be better if the original textbooks were supported by exercises and translation textbooks. In this way, students could also do targeted exercise while reading original textbooks. If they encounter more complicated problems, they can also refer to the translation textbooks. Meanwhile, students whose English is not so good can read the original textbooks while consulting translation materials without being confused. What’s more, 75% of the students reckon that the difficulty of language and matching of economic instances should be carefully considered while choosing teaching materials. Because the moderate difficulty of the language and the supply of economic instances are beneficial for students to learn and understand professional knowledge, and they will dramatically improve college students’ motivation and enthusiasm of study.
3. The problems existing in the English teaching of economic specialty courses in China’s universities

In the aspect of the existing problems of English teaching in specialty courses, investigation and interviews generally indicate that:

3.1 The number of English teachers in specialty courses should be increased and the teaching level should be strengthened

Nowadays, the economic majors are becoming applied-oriented ones which is based on English and profession in the economic globalization. Therefore, it is necessary for college teachers majoring in economics to have both professional quality and English quality. Although many key teachers of economic majors in universities generally have doctor degrees at present, their English ability, especially their oral expression ability, cannot meet the requirements of English teaching. Besides, a lot of specialty courses in universities demand for bilingual teaching or all English teaching at present. But due to the number of teachers is not enough, only one teacher has to take too many different courses. Their limited energy is bound to affect the teaching level. Although some universities tried to introduce foreign teachers to solve the problems mentioned above, the effectiveness of the specialty courses teaching to Chinese students offered by foreign teachers does not seem to reach the ideal level. A few students just watch during the class, and have a general understanding of the content, which has caused damage to their English listening.

3.2 Students’ receptivity of professional knowledge needs to be improved

Students of economic majors generally have strong enthusiasm for English learning, but English teaching effect is still not so good. It is mainly because that many university students’ English background and language ability have not yet met the requirements of good absorption of specialty knowledge taught in English at the beginning of most English teaching in specialty courses. In such a situation, they cannot read the original textbooks and absorb poorly in class, let alone transfer, comprehensively understanding and mastering professional knowledge. The new knowledge learned in this way is often fragmented and unsystematic.

3.3 The use of specialized teaching materials is uneven

Although textbooks of the original English version are authoritative, readable and cutting-edge, there are not many textbooks with systematic knowledge available in market, and the price is too high that some students cannot afford it. Although some publishing houses published a large number of professional English teaching materials, but it is still difficult to meet the demand due to the quality is uneven, some good and some bad. What’s more, the introduction of the reference materials has not kept pace. Due to the lack of professionals in this area to replenish and compile the reference materials in China and the translation inaccuracy of some versions would also cause some negative influence on students, as a result, the use of English teaching materials for specialty courses in China is in confusion, the difficulty degree of teaching materials is different, and the construction of specialized English textbooks is still in a hysteretic state.

3.4 Appraisal system needs to be completed and perfected

The improvement and perfection of appraisal system can dramatically improve the enthusiasm of teachers and students. First of all, with increased difficulty and tasks in the students’ study, if they still get the same credit, their enthusiasm and learning effect will be influenced. Secondly, in the English teaching of specialty courses, teachers should be familiar with professional knowledge, thoroughly understand the original teaching materials, meet the requirements of the syllabus and to collect actual data and materials. Their workload and difficulty are much greater than non English teaching. In addition, teachers may confront with more difficulties in class because of the uneven levels of students. Therefore, it is necessary to establish and improve the relevant evaluation and salary incentive measures.
In view of the current situation of English teaching in economic undergraduate specialty courses in China’s universities and the problems mentioned above, this paper intends to learn and explore English teaching in specialty courses in order to promote its development and make students more suitable for the needs of nowadays society and markets.

4. The exploration of guided participation English teaching in economic specialty courses

Because of the unbalanced development of English teaching in China and the students' English level is uneven, there should be a gradual process for students to adapt themselves to English teaching of specialty courses, and economic majors in universities should formulate teaching plans according to actual situation. Combining the teaching practice of economic majors in China’s colleges and universities, we intend to carry out the following reform practice based on the investigation and analysis of this paper:

4.1 Paying attention to the preparation of students before class

Preview is a systematic preparation for the knowledge to be learned, which makes the process of learning no longer superficial and makes learning more efficient in class. English teaching in economic specialty courses is highly professional-oriented, and a lot of terminologies are involved in study. Therefore, preparation is beneficial for students to fully understand and absorb the content in class. The students’ self-confidence as well as initiative can be inspired by preparation, so that the teaching efficiency can be guaranteed.

Without preparation, the success rate of students to complete class tasks is often low, and they are hard to get improvement in language learning. Therefore, we should emphasize the important role of preview in English teaching of specialty courses. Teachers could make full use of all sorts of problems that students may encounter during the preparation process, and assign pre-class tasks, through which students could get the relevant information, expand the amount of vocabulary and knowledge accumulation, so as to better develop their potential.

4.2 Conducting a reasonable teaching initiation

At the beginning of the course, it is supposed to combine teaching materials and gradually introduce semi-terminologies and terminologies which used in the course to the students. Semi-terminologies usually refer to notional words which are used both in daily life and specialty courses, but they have different meanings in the daily life and professional fields. At the first time when teaching, teachers give their English interpretation, and consciously use these semi-terminologies in class. In addition to semi technical terms, there are also many unique specialized terminologies in many subjects, whose meaning should also be learned and understood by students through exercise. The proceed of guided participation teaching asks teachers to explain knowledge in correct and fluent English, without getting rid of occasionally and partially using Chinese in parts that prevent students from understanding. And the students’ thought disturbance caused by language lag should be avoided.

4.3 Starting from students' life experience and interests and the teaching content should be combined with skills

Students' life experience and interest determine their learning speed and the length of memory. It is more conducive to students' acquisition to start from students’ life experience and interest, from the shallower to the deeper, and gradually introduce practice scenarios.

In addition, economic professional English is highly specialized-skilled, so when determining teaching tasks, teachers should link them to specific requirements or skills related to the content of the course. In the process of teaching, multimedia technology can provide abundant images, videos, movies and text to combine vision and audition simultaneously. This kind of learning method that acquire information in multilevel is more vivid than that simply rely on language, which can reinforce memory, achieve better teaching effect and connect to the future work as soon as possible.
5. Summary

The teaching mode combining guidance with participation can promote the continuity of English teaching system, impart professional knowledge and cultivate students' flexibility in English. We should make efforts to build a guided participation atmosphere which are suitable for English teaching and learning of economic specialty courses in China’s universities, so that students could benefit from this language environment. Guided by teachers’ nurturing and leading and centered on students’ understanding and applying, this teaching mode could make students get all-round development in professional knowledge, language ability, internationalization and so on, and quickly adjust to market demand, as well as be more adaptable and competitive under the circumstances of economic globalization.

References

