Exploration and Research on Full English Teaching in Sino-American Internet Service Technology Program of SPU

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ABSTRACT

This article briefly introduces the current situation in the full English teaching of specialized courses in a Sino-American cooperation program in Shanghai Polytechnic University. Through the practice of full English teaching, some proposals to further improving the full English teaching quality in higher vocational college are prompted.

INTRODUCTION

In order to construct the modern vocational education system and cultivate more talented graduates with higher vocational skills, a firm professional credit and a strong ability of internationalization, Shanghai Polytechnic University (SPU in short) and Broward College (BC in short) in USA began a joint education program on Internet service technology (ITS in short) since 2015. It is a three-year associate degree and the personnel training plan is designed by SPU and BC together.

In the 2015th grade training plan, there are 98 credit hours. There are about 18 credit hours for EAP (English for Academic Purposes) courses and 45 credit hours for specialized courses. When the joint program is designed, all the specialized courses are taught in full English. Full English teaching means English is working language. The teaching materials, including course outline, syllabus, homework, quizzes and etc., are all written in English. And most importantly, the faculties have to lecture courses in English. Teaching in full English requires the responsible teacher to have good master in written and spoken English skills in addition to the competency in special fields. For various reasons, SPU has not hired any foreign faculties from English speaking nations to lecture the computer-related courses. This condition has put the English teaching competence of the faculties involved in this program to a rigorous test. This was
undoubtedly a great challenge to the majority of the college faculty for whom English is a second language.

The author is the course coordinator and has participated in the teaching and management of the program. This paper is engineered to share some practices and experience gained from teaching and administrating a Sino-American joint program at an associate degree level. Teaching in full English by non-native English speakers, involves some changes from USA teaching. The analytic work is aimed at rendering some thoughts on improving the teaching quality in higher education designed for Sino-foreign cooperative program’s students.

EXISTING CONDITION ANALYSIS

Soon after the 2015th students enrolled in SPU, they took a LOEP (the Levels of English Proficiency) test. LOEP is intended for students whose native language is not English. And it is used to place students in the appropriate program level for beginning their studies. There are three models, such as ESL listening, ESL reading skills and writing sample. As shown in Figure 1, there are the numbers of students of different bands in the three models. In ESL Reading skill model, 22 students of all 29 students reach the requirements of level 4. While in ESL listening model, only two students achieve the requirement of level 4. And all students are not so good at English writing.

![Figure 1. Statistics of LOEP test.](image1)

After 12 credit hours’ EAP (English for Academic Purpose) studying, all students took the CPT (the College Placement TEST) test. CPT is an entrance examination that is required admission process for many community colleges and technical institutes in the United States. There are three units, reading comprehension, sentence skill and college level math, and the cut-off scores of each unit are 88, 83 and 83. The numbers of students who pass the three units are 0, 4 and 19. And none of the students passes the three units together. As shown in Figure 2, the scores of reading skills in CPT are much less than those in LOEP. And in college level Math unit, some students failed because of poor math while not a few of students failed because of poor English.

![Figure 2. Statistics of CPT test.](image2)

When they finished the EAP courses, in the second semester students began to have specialized courses of ITS program in full English. The first three courses are Introduction to Computer Science, Introduction to C++ and College Algebra. All these courses are basic compulsory courses. These courses are not easy to higher vocational students even in Chinese, not to mention in full English. All faculties were trying their best to teach as the USA teachers do, using the same original English textbook, preparing the courseware in English, handing out all the teaching materials in English,
and lecturing in English in the class. For all our faculties are non-native English speakers, it is such a rigorous task for them to teach in full English. Though our faculties spend so much time to prepare for the full English teaching, students don’t think so. They complained a lot about the teaching in full English. They couldn’t catch up what the teacher said in the class and they were reluctant to read the textbook in original English and they even had problem to understand the assignments in English. It was really a great pressure for them and they said it was so hard to persist on studying. The difficulty of the course itself plus full English teaching, make quite a number of students unwilling to learn any more. Now we are in a dilemma of full English teaching.

We are not the first to have Sino-foreign cooperation program at a higher vocational level. I looked up a lot of documents and literatures about Sino-foreign cooperation and found an annoying condition in it [2]. The Chinese colleges paid too much attention to English while students are not only not good at English but also not good at professional knowledge. The cultivated students couldn’t go abroad for further study and couldn’t be engaged in professional jobs. The enrollment condition is getting worse and worse. Some of the programs are struggling to survive and some programs have already ceased to enroll students any more.

How to deal with the relationship between full English teaching and specialized course teaching is a key issue about the failure or success of Sino-foreign cooperation program, especially to a highly specialized program like ITS.

ANALYSIS ON FULL ENGLISH TEACHING DILEMMA

No Screening Students According Their English Competence

Students play an increasingly important role in full English teaching. Currently, the students are enrolled in this program solely according to their entrance score without taking their English proficiency into account. Some students may be good at English. And at the same time some are not so good at it. The mixed English skills of students have contributed to great hardship in full English teaching. It is difficult for instructors to give due attention to both well-founded and poor skilled students simultaneously. Though most of students are from economic prosperous regions like Jiangsu, Zhejiang area, they don’t have desire going abroad for further studying. Double degrees and credits mutual recognition between SPU and BC are the characteristic feature of this program. If the students themselves don’t want to study abroad, they won’t have the special interests on English learning.

Specialized Teachers Are Non-native English Speakers

In ITS program 2/3 of courses need to be instructed by SPU teachers. As we all known, to satisfy the benchmarks of full English teaching, the teacher must show, in addition to the good command of his/her own professional areas, the outstanding capacities in English applied skills, especially in regard to spoken and listening abilities. At present, there are growing number of young and middle-aged faculty members that, most of them are with Ph.D or at least master degrees, are adequately good at reading and comprehension, and some of them even can publish English-written papers. And in
ITS program, most of teachers are experienced key teachers who have been studied or visited oversea for at least one year. However, these instructors more often than not reveal their awkwardness when coming to lecturing and interacting in English language. In a strict sense, they are not qualified for full English teaching.

**In Short of Full English Teaching Materials**

It is a mandatory requirement that SPU’s faculties should follow the same rules as BC’s faculties. We use the same original English textbook like BC’s faculties do. While the other teaching materials we don’t have. All our SPU’s faculties have to rebuild all the necessary teaching materials, such as course wares, assignments, quizzes and test papers, etc., by themselves from scratch. Instructors need to spend a lot of time and energy to prepare all these materials.

**PRACTICE ON TEACHING REFORM TO SOLVE DILEMMA**

The quality of full English teaching depends on two main factors, one is qualified teachers and the other is students with enough language skills. We can’t isolate the full English teaching from the current situation of faculties and students’ language skills. Otherwise it is hard to fulfil the goal of personnel training requirements and it also goes against why we perform full English teaching.

**Step by Step Full English Teaching of Specialized Courses**

Given the weak teaching force in ITS program and students’ passable language skills, our full English teaching is a phased, step by step process. It is an undoubted fact that those teaching contents of specialized courses in ITS program would be rigorous enough for students to grasp even being taught in native language. Combined with the full English teaching communication disorders, it is such a challenge for students to understand and grasp the professional skills and knowledge.

In order to fulfil the personal training goal and really accomplish the full English teaching, we need to do some changes on our teaching process. The actual condition is not the same in BC’s campus. We can do bilingual teaching on some specialized courses and full English teaching on some specialized courses [3-5]. The decision is based on the importance, difficulty degree and the sequence in teaching plan.

As to bilingual teaching, it doesn’t mean using Chinese and English evenly in class. It also is a staged process. At the first stage Chinses may accounts more than half. Then it gradually transits to English teaching. And finally lays a basis for the full English teaching.

**Building High Quality Full English Teaching Teachers**

It is of great importance to build an elite teaching team that is constructively suitable to construction and reform of the Sino-America cooperation program. The present full
English teaching force in SPU is far short of supply. Therefore, as far as the author is concerned, some aspects should be put on the top of priority agenda.

TRAINING FACULTIES ENGLISH SKILLS FROM SEVERAL WAYS

Aiming at improving the English language handling techniques, especially the ability of practical communication, the young and middle-aged faculties may be considered being sent overseas for further advanced studies on English language. They will be placed in the teaching teams responsible for the ITS program teaching upon the training completion.

In our program, 1/3 of specialized courses will be taught by foreign teachers. It is also a good chance for training our teachers. Regularly holding full English public classes, let the excellent teachers demonstrate how to carry out full English teaching so as to promote the teaching effects of whole teaching team.

INTRODUCING MORE OVERSEAS COMPETENT FACULTIES

In recent years, more and more overseas graduates have returned to China for various reasons. Shanghai is an attractive place for these returners. Among this genre of people, those who are good at comprehensive English skills, having solid background in their special fields and devoting to teaching career with doctorate degree or master degree ought to be introduced to the college, facilitating to uplift the teaching force quality to a higher level.

TEMPORARILY TRANSFERRING FACULTIES FROM OTHER COLLEGES

To solve the issues with short-term shortage of faculties in ITS program teaching, the college may consider temporarily hiring some qualified faculties from external higher education institutes to tide over the current hardship.

Promoting the Integration of Teaching Resources Between SPU and BC

In order to promote the continuous and healthy development of IST program, we’d like to put our faculties training into BC’s responsibilities, just like the training of BC faculties do. For 1/3 of total credit hours of specialized courses will be taught by BC faculties, we will promote the communication and cooperation of faculties between SPU’s and BC’s. They will share their teaching methods, teaching materials, and etc. And when BC’s faculties are lecturing classes, at least one of SPU’s teachers should be the tutor. The development of Sino-foreign cooperation program needs the real cooperation of two parts. If the foreign party couldn’t assume its responsibilities, the program could not go further.
CONCLUSION

Full English teaching of specialized courses in higher vocational college is a great challenge not only to students but also to teachers. And the unrelenting endeavors need to be continuously dedicated to its efficiency and practicality. Combined with full English teaching experience, the author conducts a brief analysis on the status in a Sino-American cooperation program and makes some points for improving full English teaching quality in the end. This paper is expected to contribute some practical notes to full English teaching at higher vocational college level, and to attract more technical attention from the fellow faculties nationwide. Only enough attention is paid to this kind of teaching, it will progress steadily.

REFERENCES