

An Analysis of the Problems in the English Application Ability Examinations and Teaching Strategies in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: In recent years, with the continuous development and advancement of the new curriculum reform, all walks of life have put forward higher requirements for the teaching quality of higher vocational English. Nowadays, the requirement of society for English talents is not only on examination-taking ability, but also on students' English application ability. Only by mastering good English application ability can students achieve guarantee for their future employment and life. However, nowadays, many vocational college students still stay on the surface of English learning, with the English application ability of low level. Based on this, this paper makes an analysis of the problems in the English application ability examinations in higher vocational colleges, and puts forward some teaching strategies.

1. Introduction

In view of the current trend of teaching reform in China, the educational requirement of higher vocational colleges is to train applied talents, which requires that higher vocational teachers should not only pay attention to the cultivation of students' ability to take exams, but also to the ability of students' practical application of knowledge. If they only learn theoretical knowledge but can not owe, to a certain extent, the ability to apply theoretical knowledge, it is just "empty phrases on a scrap of paper", and students' learning fails to have a substantial effect. This is just a waste of time for students. It can not improve students' enthusiasm for learning, nor can it help teachers improve teaching efficiency and quality. Therefore, under the current educational background, higher vocational teachers must face up to the relevant problems in the students' English application ability examinations, and innovate teaching strategies to solve these problems, so as to create a relaxed and harmonious learning environment for students and improve their learning quality.

2. An Overview of the Current Situation of English Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

Higher vocational colleges are required to focus on cultivating students' comprehensive ability of English and improving students' practical application of English. Since they are about to enter society and take part in work, they are facing a series of employment and life problems. Therefore, compared with the explanations of cultural knowledge, teachers are expected to pay more attention to the teaching of ability to work and to live, that is to say, to help students develop the ability of social survival. However, in view of the present situation of English teaching in higher vocational colleges, many teachers still are unable to completely get out of the influence of traditional teaching mode. They only stress the examination results, but do not care about students' practical abilities such as oral English communication, reading and writing, which will have a certain degree of adverse effects on students. In this way, students may not grasp good English application ability, leading to their weak social survival ability and failure to get help in their future work and life with the assistance of English knowledge. This is contrary to the original intention of higher vocational English teaching and does not meet the educational requirements of the new curriculum reform.

3. Characteristics of the English Application Ability Examinations in Higher Vocational Colleges

At present, the English application ability examinations in higher vocational colleges is basically divided into two levels: A and B. A is the level and standard that students should reach, while B is a little lower requirement for students. That is to say, B gives students a transitional stage, so that students are capable of reaching the standard of A through one-stage learning and efforts. The current content of English application ability examinations in higher vocational colleges mainly examines students' oral communication ability, listening ability, reading comprehension ability, emotional expression ability, English comprehensive translation ability and so on. Simply speaking, it is to increase students' ability to use English to live and work. Moreover, from the content of examinations, it is found that many are not limited to the content of textbooks, but involve many fields, which makes the examinations more difficult, including science and technology, current affairs, politics, sports and humanities, and so on. It can be seen that more and more attention has been paid to the level of students' English application ability in all walks of life, which reflects the requirements of the society for the training of English talents in the future. Therefore, higher vocational English teachers must conform to the development of the times and gradually improve students' comprehensive English application ability.

4. English Application Ability Examinations in Higher Vocational Colleges

4.1 Listening

Globally looking at the listening part of the English application ability examinations in higher vocational colleges in recent years, the way of setting questions is more in line with the new curriculum reform and the teaching objectives. It does not go beyond a large range and the type of questions is not very difficult. However, students are prone to some problems in the examination process. First, the ability of listening and distinguishing sound is poor. Many students are unable to understand and master similar English vocabulary very well. They often confuse vocabulary in listening examinations. Second, although students can hear the correct vocabulary in listening tests, they lose marks because of the incorrect basic knowledge of vocabulary spelling. Third, many students confuse in English listening examinations. After listening dialogue is played, they can not understand any sentences, and do not understand the content of the dialogue, so they scribble or keep blank. For example, many students tend to listen to products as purpose, resulting in the loss of marks.

4.2 Grammar

Grammar is the guarantee for students to learn English. Only by mastering the relevant knowledge of grammar perfectly, can students understand the changes of English state, vocabulary and voice and let students understand what kind of voice to use in what situation, so as to avoid confusion of English voice in different situations. In the aspect of grammatical problems of English application ability examinations, students often show the following problems. First, students' mastery of English vocabulary is not reliable enough. Since there may be many ways of explaining an English vocabulary, if students only understand one of the meanings, the scope of vocabulary application will become narrow. Second, students do not fully understand the fixed usage of some English. If students can master the fixed collocation of English, it will be very helpful for them on their way to English learning as well as make their using of English easier. Therefore, it is of extreme importance for teachers to help students develop good English language habits. Third, students do not have a solid grasp of English grammar. Most are in a state of half-understanding of English grammar. They are not capable of using grammar perfectly in various English situations, mainly including the use of tense, voice, subjunctive mood and so on.

4.3 Reading

Generally speaking, the reading content of English application ability examinations in higher vocational colleges examines students' ability of examining questions, understanding and analyzing problems, and text comprehension. Students have several following basic problems in reading. First, students' vocabulary accumulation is insufficient, which leads to students' inability to understand the meaning of the article and extract the central idea in the process of reading, thus greatly reducing the accuracy and speed of their reading comprehension. If students encounter problems in reading, they can not find the answers to the questions in the articles. Although some can understand the meaning of a single word, they can't substitute the different meanings of words into the article. They fail to flexibly apply the different meanings of English vocabulary. As a result, many students' understanding of an article is biased, and they can't grasp the whole idea of the article, which will lead to some understanding obstacles.

4.4 Writing

Nowadays, the problems in writing are particularly prominent in the English application ability examinations of vocational college students. Because of the lack of language environment for English learning, students grasp English vocabulary insufficiently, and their grammatical basis is not reliable. This series of reasons lead to many problems in students' English writing. Firstly, students often make mistakes in spelling vocabulary and the content of their writing can not express their inner thoughts. Secondly, the whole article lacks coherence and is composed with simple words that they know, lacking logic and reading value. Thirdly, due to the influence of Chinese grammar, it appears in English writing, there are many grammatical errors in English writing as well as many sick sentences. Fourthly, in the expression of some meanings, English sentence patterns and fixed collocations can not be used correctly, and only separate sentences can be used for stitching, which greatly reduces the quality of English composition writing.

5. Teaching Strategies to Solve the Problems in the English Application Ability Examinations in Higher Vocational Colleges

5.1 Use Games to Strengthen Vocabulary Teaching and Help Students Accumulate Vocabulary

Teachers in higher vocational English teaching must give full play to the advantages of game teaching and apply lexical chunk teaching method in game teaching, which not only conforms to the learning situation of higher vocational students, but also achieves a pleasant classroom teaching effect. Teachers are suggested to organize fast games of vocabulary groups, attract students' attention through diversified games, cultivate students' interest in learning, and guide students to actively strengthen the accumulation of vocabulary. For example, teachers can divide students into two groups, and each group contains certain English vocabulary. It should be noted that the vocabulary of the two groups can be grouped separately. In the prescribed time, two groups of students can find their partners through correct vocabulary blocks. The students with the highest accuracy and faster speed can be rewarded to a certain extent while those who perform poorly should also be encouraged, which can not only stimulate students' enthusiasm for participation, but also encourage students to learn English vocabulary.

5.2 Carefully Study Discourse Types and Improve Teaching Methods

Under the requirements of the new curriculum standard, modules of theme context and text type have been added. Moreover, some new teaching contents have been added and new teaching objectives have been formulated, which are more in line with the training requirements of socialist talents, enhancing the education of socialist core values and strengthening the links between English teaching and other disciplines. This requires teachers to be more cautious in choosing teaching content, pay attention to the length of materials in the choice of discourse types which should go from shallow difficulty to deep difficulty step by step, and strengthen the authenticity and value of teaching content. It is necessary for students to learn English in depth through the discourse types

chosen by teachers and find the value and fun of learning English. Meanwhile, teachers are required to pay attention to strengthening the overall teaching of discourse, guide students to read and find out the correct meaning of vocabulary according to the context. Teachers are suggested to not repeat the explanation of vocabulary in all articles, so as to avoid students' reading comprehension phenomenon of taking out meanings out of context.

5.3 Develop Students' Listening Ability by Using Flipped Classroom

Teachers should first set teaching objectives, and then begin to study teaching methods. They must know that the traditional teaching methods are no longer suitable for modern students, nor meet the requirements of talent training in today's society. Teachers are required to arrange teaching time reasonably and enrich teaching methods. They can explain the class contents in the first 10-15 minutes, assign learning tasks in the classroom, leave the remaining time for students to study independently or cooperatively, summarize the class in the last 5-10 minutes, and arrange the learning content of the next lesson to help students answer the key and difficult points of knowledge. In the process of students' classroom discussion, teachers must give full play to their correct guiding role and use diversified teaching methods to stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning, such as situational teaching method and open discussion method, so that every student participates in teaching activities and improves their listening ability in the process of participation. For example, teachers can arrange a simple English debating contest scene in class, divide students into two debating groups, and expound the same point of view on the positive and negative side. The rest of the students, as the audience, are allowed to express their own views, so that students are able to improve their listening ability and expression ability in debates.

5.4 Set up an English Online Learning Platform to Promote Students' Autonomous Learning

Nowadays, with the rapid development of information technology, teachers are required to make full use of the power of information technology to promote students' English application ability. Teachers can build a class network learning platform and upload some learning resources, so that students are able to choose to learn according to their weaknesses in English learning, which can not only save students' learning time, but also improve students' learning efficiency. In addition, teachers also need to encourage students to send their own articles to the platform for everyone to appreciate and make progress together.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, due to the influence of exam-oriented education in English teaching in higher vocational colleges, many students encounter more or less problems in the English application ability examinations. Therefore, teachers should face up precisely these problems, find out the causes of the problems through analysis, innovate teaching strategies according to the problems, and help students solve difficulties in the process of English learning and create a relaxed and harmonious learning environment. Moreover, teachers need to play a correct role in guiding students on the way of learning, help students solve practical problems, promote the improvement of students' comprehensive English ability, and enhance the healthy development of students' physical and mental health.

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