

Strategies for Improving Students' Practical English Communicative Competence in Higher Vocational English Teaching

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Abstract: As a communication tool, English plays an important role in people's actual communication. The purpose of English Teaching in higher vocational colleges is to highlight the practicability of English and cultivate students' English communicative ability. Especially today, when we pay attention to the cultivation of compound and applied talents, how to follow the principles of oral English teaching, flexibly use modern teaching methods, effectively improve the oral English level of higher vocational students and make them have a certain oral communication ability is a major issue faced by English teachers in higher vocational colleges. Starting from the essence of language use, this paper analyzes the importance of Cultivating English communicative competence, and focuses on the basic ways and methods of Cultivating English communicative competence for English Majors in higher vocational colleges.

1. Introduction

With the advancement of global economic integration, exchanges and cooperation between countries are becoming more and more frequent, and cross-cultural exchanges have become an inevitable trend. As the main language of cross-cultural communication, English has also attracted the attention of all countries, and more and more people pay attention to the practicability of English. Nowadays, higher vocational college students' English communicative competence is generally poor. Although some students do well in the written test, they do not have the ability of daily English conversation and communication. A considerable number of students still can not express their ideas clearly in complete sentences. Its language expression does not conform to the social living habits of English-speaking countries, with chaotic grammatical structure and improper use of vocabulary, which makes it difficult for listeners to understand. Therefore, improving English communicative competence in higher vocational colleges has become more and more important.

2. The Significance of Practical English Communicative Competence in Higher Vocational English Teaching

2.1. Consistent with the training objectives of Higher Vocational Talents

In the development of higher vocational education, China has gradually constructed the school running concept with ability as the core, and its basic value orientation is mainly reflected in the following two aspects.

First, Employment as a goal, students' employability is reflected in the level of practical application ability to a great extent.

Second, ability as the core. At present, higher vocational education is in the transition period of thinking and exploration. Therefore, the talents trained should pay more attention to the application ability and practical ability of the learned knowledge, rather than the compound talents with a wide range of knowledge trained by undergraduate majors. From the perspective of the content of Higher Vocational English curriculum standards, the language application of special importance in the construction of Higher Vocational English curriculum objectives is to cultivate students' ability to communicate in English in real life in the future(*Ji Hairong,2019*). It can be seen that only by

strengthening the cultivation of Higher Vocational Students' English practical ability can we achieve the talent training goal of Higher Vocational Colleges in China.

2.2. Consistent with the actual development needs of society

Since entering the 21st century, English, as the world's common language, has gradually increased the demand for compound talents from all walks of life - comprehensive talents who understand professional knowledge and can skillfully use English as a communication tool. English is becoming more and more practical and instrumental. The whole society's demand for English ability shows a new trend of specialization and diversification. In order to meet social needs and enhance employment competitiveness, students have a strong purpose of English learning. ESP teaching can not only meet the needs of society for compound talents, but also meet the needs of students to learn English, which has attracted more and more attention in higher vocational colleges.

2.3. Consistent with the new vocational education concept

Practicality is the main goal of English teaching, which is closely combined with occupation. It emphasizes to explore the way of combining English and major from the perspective of professional needs. The teaching of English communicative competence takes the English required by the post as the basic goal, pays attention to cultivating students' communicative competence, and trains students to complete their tasks with the help of English in their future work. This is consistent with the goal that higher vocational English education pays attention to cultivating students' practical application ability. ESP plays a guarantee role in the realization of English teaching objectives in higher vocational colleges.

2.4. Internal requirements for improving employment rate

The teaching goal stipulated in the basic requirements for English Course Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges by the Ministry of education is to pay attention to cultivating students' English communicative competence. Demand analysis is the basis of constructing professional talent training mode and practical teaching system. With China's opening to the outside world and the rapid economic development, exchanges between China and the world are becoming more and more frequent. There are more and more enterprises and companies engaged in import and export trade. Therefore, having strong English communication skills has become a necessary condition for most employers to choose higher vocational graduates. According to the work performance of graduates in the employer and the evaluation opinions of the employer, the written word processing ability of graduates, such as writing letters and telegrams, reading English materials, foreign trade documentaries, etc., has been recognized by the employer. However, English listening and speaking ability generally reflects that it needs to be improved, especially oral ability. It can be seen that the current employers have higher requirements for students' English level and English practical ability.

3. Current Situation of Practical English Communicative Competence Teaching in Higher Vocational Colleges

3.1. Students' learning status

Vocational college students have weak English foundation, small vocabulary, low oral English level, unclear motivation for learning oral English, low interest in learning oral English, poor learning enthusiasm, and hold a negative attitude towards English learning. In English class, they are unwilling or afraid to speak English and have no interest and oral expression ability to answer the questions raised by the teacher.

3.2. Teachers' teaching status

Inappropriate oral English teaching methods and English teachers' teaching methods are the main reasons for the current weak oral English ability of higher vocational students, which seriously affects the effect of oral English teaching and the lack of communication between teachers and

students(Zhang Dalin.2021). Teachers do not understand the individual differences of students and can not adopt different teaching methods for different students. They can only cover teaching in traditional ways, which makes many students with poor oral English unable to accept this teaching method. In traditional classroom teaching, teachers play the role of inculcating knowledge, and classroom teaching is completely the performance of teachers. However, under the new curriculum concept, students are the main body and center of classroom teaching, and teachers are the lubricant and guide of classroom teaching. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of oral English teaching, teachers need to be student-centered and give full play to the effect of English Teaching under the current conditions, so as to fundamentally improve students' oral English communicative competence.

3.3. Current situation of language environment

In view of the limitations of class hours, teaching venues and other conditions, at present, there are few oral English courses in many higher vocational colleges in China, and most oral English courses are large classes. In this condition and environment, students have less opportunities for oral English training, and the training effect is poor. Although many higher vocational colleges organize students to carry out second classroom teaching to make up for the limitations of classroom teaching, most students lack learning initiative, and only a few students actively participate in English extracurricular activities. Therefore, the language environment inside and outside the classroom is disconnected, and students' learning motivation can not be effectively stimulated.

4. Strategies for Cultivating Practical English Communicative Competence in Higher Vocational English Teaching

4.1. Improving teaching methods and creating an English learning environment

In order to create a good English learning environment for students, schools should create a real language environment for students. In such an environment, students can communicate directly in English more naturally and fluently. For higher vocational colleges, English classroom is such an environment. Therefore, in the English classroom, on the one hand, teachers should use multimedia courseware to create a suitable English language environment, on the other hand, they should change their teaching ideas, pay attention to students' English communication, and give students opportunities and guidance for English communication through the classroom. In addition, students are encouraged to actively participate in English speech competitions or community activities, so that students can feel the fun of English communication in the process of autonomous learning, so as to realize teaching in fun.

4.2. Optimizing the structure of teaching materials and enriching teaching means

English Teaching in higher vocational colleges is based on teaching materials and organized by teachers, so the suitability of teaching materials is the most important. With the rapid development of today's society and the emergence of various new social hot spots and cultural phenomena, it is necessary for us to speed up the renewal of teaching materials, grasp the theme of teaching materials and balance the proportion of Chinese and Western cultures. In the specific teaching process, teachers should enrich teaching means and adopt the combination of multiple teaching methods. The first is to let students construct a real communicative scene, for example, in cross-cultural communicative teaching. The second is to adopt the method of group cooperation to improve the utilization of effective time in class and increase students' opportunities and time for practical application of English. Third, adopt multimedia teaching methods and modern information technology to combine sound, text, image and video to create a real and vivid English learning atmosphere. Of course, there is no clear teaching method(As shown in Figure 1 and 2). As long as it is a teaching method that can cultivate students' cross-cultural communicative competence, we can use it appropriately.



Figure 1 Multimedia teaching.



Figure 2 Multimedia teaching.

4.3. Using “micro class” or “flipped class”

Cultivating students’ language application ability is the teaching goal of practical English in higher vocational colleges. Language skills can not only be formed through classroom teaching, but also can be cultivated in a real or simulated environment. It is necessary for higher vocational students to adapt to the realistic vocational training environment and strengthen the cultivation of ESP teaching skills. In order to create a good professional environment, the school needs to build a training base to create conditions for students to further carry out language skills training. Higher vocational colleges can hire professionals with rich practical experience from enterprises to come to the school, open up a special training and teaching base on the campus, and let students complete virtual work tasks by simulating the working environment of enterprises, so as to achieve the purpose of skill training. Higher vocational colleges can also cooperate with enterprises in relevant industries, regularly send students to enterprises for internship, and take relevant enterprises as the training base for students, so that students can learn in a real working environment, stimulate their interest in learning, and successfully achieve their teaching objectives.

5. Conclusion

In short, cultivating students' English practical ability is a step-by-step process. College English teachers should actively respond to the challenges, start from the characteristics of students and the current situation of English learning, explore new methods to improve students' English practical ability, pay attention to cultivating students' interest in English learning, promote the improvement of students' English comprehensive quality, and truly realize the goal of Higher Vocational English education.

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