

The Positive Play of English Competitions to English Teaching, Students and Teachers in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: In response to the call of College English Curriculum Requirements in 2007, English competitions have, in the long run, been an increasing concern of the English teaching in Chinese universities and colleges. It is obvious that English competitions have brought positive play in the following aspects, such as stimulate students' learning initiative, incentivise them to study English well, improve their autonomous learning ability, and enhance their English comprehensive application ability. In this paper, the author tries to list the positive play brought by English competitions from the following three aspects, English teaching, students and teachers in universities and colleges.

1. Introduction

In the long run, English competitions have always been an increasing concern of the English teaching in universities and colleges in response to the call of College English Curriculum Requirements in 2007 --- To cultivate students' comprehensive English application ability, especially their listening and speaking ability, so that they can effectively communicate in English in their future study, work and social interaction, and at the same time enhance their autonomous learning ability and improve their comprehensive cultural literacy, so as to meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges. With many successful cases ahead, many more universities and colleges motivate students to participate in English competitions.

2. The significance of English competitions to English teaching, students and teachers in universities and colleges

For a long time, the English teaching of many universities and colleges have been focusing on language knowledge and grammar teaching so that many students feel very bored in the English class. Most students' interest in English only confines themselves to passing English test, esp. CET-4. Although many English teachers make an attempt to change this situation, such as adopting new teaching strategies and means, it is impossible to cultivate students' English comprehensive application ability only by the limited classroom teaching. Nevertheless, a wide variety of extracurricular activities can create a good English learning atmosphere and provide a wonderful stage for students to present their English talents. The rich and colorful second class activities include taking part in English competitions, joining in English Salons, English clubs, English associations etc. English competitions, as a relatively formal activity, have become an increasingly popular and important option to English teaching, which inevitably bring positive play to them. The paper tries to list the positive play brought by English competitions from the following three aspects, English teaching, students and teachers in universities and colleges.

3. The positive play of English competitions to English teaching, students and teachers in universities and colleges

3.1 To English teaching

English competition is an external extension of English classes, which can make up for the defects of single English classroom teaching and is an effective supplement to English classes.

(1) By holding or taking part in different kinds of meaningful English competitions, we can create a good English learning atmosphere for students, optimize the English learning situation, and exercise students' comprehensive English application ability. So it can help promote students' learning and teachers' teaching, play a better role of stimulation in English teaching and become the new impetus of foreign language teaching reform.

(2) English teachers' teaching can also transfer gradually from the knowledge-oriented education or the test-oriented education to the ability-oriented one, which leads to the quality-oriented education.

(3) Taking part in English competitions can motivate students to learn English, develop their autonomous learning ability, encourage them to become the active participants in class, and enhance their ability to digest and absorb knowledge in class, which can help to improve teaching quality and enhance teaching effect.

3.2 To students

There is no doubt that students are the biggest beneficiary in the English competitions. Since the students' English foundation is quite different, teachers can only choose the way and method suitable for most average students in the traditional teaching model. The English classroom teaching can not meet the demands of top students and poor students, which seriously affects the students' learning enthusiasm and makes it difficult to improve the teaching quality. In order to better tap top students' potential and improve poor students' interest and motivation in English study, we can train students to participate in various English competitions. And the positive play of English competitions to students are as follows:

(1) Through participation in English competitions, it can make the advanced students more motivated, make the less advanced strive to catch up with the more advanced, so as to create a good atmosphere on campus to motivate students to study English well. So it can meet different demands of different levels of students. As to the more advanced students, it can meet their higher demands of English study, enlarge their extracurricular knowledge, broaden their vision, and strive for higher goal. For the less advanced ones, it can encourage them to break through themselves and meet challenges in English study. Take Competition of the King of English Words as an example, many advanced students keep challenging themselves by setting higher goals while the less advanced ones by breaking through themselves.

(2) Through taking part in different kinds of English competitions, such as nationwide NECCS (National English Competition for College Students) or 21st Century Cup NESC (National English Speaking Competition), or other campus-sized English competitions (English Speaking Competition, English Song Competition, English Hand-written Paper Competition, Competition of the King of English Words, English Drama Competition, etc.), it can broaden their vision, cultivate their taste, and enhance their aesthetic taste. Besides, it can also provide students with a wonderful stage to present their talents, enrich their extracurricular life, and strengthen their self-confidence, even sense of honor and sense of pride.

(3) Participating in English competitions is helpful for them to build a correct attitude towards study and life, and do something meaningful in universities and colleges. It can help them establish short-term or long-term goals for their English study, explore their potential for studying English, and strengthen their autonomous learning ability, so it is a powerful means to enhance their interest and motivation in English study. There are some successful cases in my class in which it helps them stay away from endless computer or mobile games and focus on normal study and life.

(4) The forms of some English competitions, different from other general English tests, are comparatively open, which require participants read extensively, learn to collect, sort, even extract information themselves from vast and abundant information resources. So it is very helpful for them to improve their autonomous learning ability, practise their ability of information screening and acquiring, cultivate their critical thinking skills and analytical ability. They learn to cultivate or explore new things which greatly arouses their interest in learning English, improve their enthusiasm and initiative of learning English.

(5) Taking part in English competitions can not only encourage students' interest in English study and improve their learning initiative but also improve their English comprehensive application ability and English overall quality, and strengthen their ability of applying theory to practice. Participating in English speech competitions can help them escape from dummy English learners, help them improve their English communicative skill and learn to express themselves fluently and skillfully.

(6) Students' analytical ability, critical thinking skills and innovative thinking ability can be highly improved through participation in English competitions. They learn to make full use of existing knowledge to solve problems creatively which is the most influential effect brought by English competitions.

(7) During the preparation and competition period, students' sense of competition and spirit of cooperation can be strengthened alongside. They may work together to face the difficulties and challenges although they may be competitors in the competitions, which is good for the shape of better characteristics.

(8) The winners of English competitions can set a good example for other students. It can greatly enhance students' confidence in learning English and strengthen their motivation to learn English. Li Zhi, a prep student graduated from our Ethnic Education School, is a good example. He, as an English language and literature major of College of English, Shanghai International Studies University, won the first prize in the 20th "21st century ·Coca-Cola cup" National English Speech Competition in 2013 with his solid knowledge of the English language and steady performance. The English Speech Competition during his preparatory study period provided a good platform for him to show himself, and the experience of winning at that time laid the good foundation for his future success. The good news quickly spread through our campus, and students' interest in English was greatly aroused. Therefore the campus English competitions in the following years have been very popular among students, in which many excellent competitors come out and their wonderful performance motivate other students.

3.3 To teachers

What is concerned about most in almost all articles regarding English competitions is its positive play to English teaching and students. From my point of view, teachers are also the beneficiary of the activity.

(1) Organizing English competitions can not only improve teachers' organizing ability and flexibility but also enrich their spare time.

(2) By guiding students through English competitions or acting as the judges of the competitions, teachers can improve the level of their teaching, broaden their vision, innovate teaching ideas and methods, and make up for their own defects.

(3) Being an indispensable part of the competitions, teachers' passion for English teaching is also motivated so that it can be injected new vitality. And teachers can be stimulated to promote their teaching quality, and enhance their comprehensive application ability.

4. Conclusion

From the above-listed aspects, the positive play of English competitions to English teaching, students and teachers in universities and colleges should not be ignored. It is an important and necessary supplement to English teaching, an effective way to give full play to students' strengths in English and achieve students' full potential combining their own personality and characteristics, and a feasible approach to improve teachers' teaching quality and comprehensive ability.

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