

EFFICIENCY FOR TEACHING VOCATIONAL STUDENTS ABOUT ENGLISH
COMPETENCY

Approved by Dr. Kimberly Tuescher on April 12, 2012

EFFICIENCY FOR TEACHING VOCATIONAL STUDENTS ABOUT ENGLISH
COMPETENCY

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Masters of Science

in

Education

by

Liu Jingzhu (Sherry)

2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to give my special thanks to my supervisor Professor Kimberly Tuescher. I thank her for her wonderful guidance, encouragement, as I continued researching this topic. Her questions and suggestions have pushed me to do a critical thinking and more logical writing. Her attention to editing the draft of my proposal has been appreciated.

I also want to thank my partners in my group during the learning period for their precious help with my writing. They provided me with many suggestions about how to avoid “Chinglish” during my PPT presentation of the proposal.

At last, I want to thank my parents, my aunt, a vocational English teacher who shared their teaching experience in general and vocational schools.

Abstract

EFFICIENCY FOR TEACHING VOCATIONAL STUDENTS ABOUT ENGLISH

COMPETENCY

Under the Supervision of Kimberly Tuescher, Ph.D.

With the rapid economic development of China since the 1980s, productivity has greatly increased in China. In order to adjust to the demand of labor forces in practical application fields, some measures should be taken regarding vocational education.

The world had entered Globalization in the 21st century. Today the earth is like a village. English proficiency is needed among the students in China's vocational and technical schools. Students who are skillful at using English in speaking and writing have a competitive edge among their fellow students in vocational school.

Nevertheless, in China, fewer better performing students choose not to go to vocational school but attend general school instead. Students who choose to go to vocational and technological college are those who often labeled "congenital malnutrition" and "acquired development deficiency" and who do not perform well in academic subjects, including English. This becomes a bottleneck of vocational English teaching.

Vocational English teaching development involves two parties: the teacher and the students. Regarding teaching, a new evaluation system is needed. It is

suggested that several models may be helpful ways of learning. These include: Web assisted language learning, Student-Centered Teaching Model, Induction-Interaction Learning Community and Layered Motivation Model.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE.....	i
TITLE PAGE.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction	
Statement of the Problem	
Definitions of Terms	
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	3
Web assisted language learning	
Student-Centered Teaching Model	
Induction-Interaction Learning Community	
Layered Motivation Model	
CHAPTER III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	8
REFERENCES.....	10

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Vocational education has become a very important part of the education system of China. In China, the students learn at vocational school about their technique and skills of their future work. They go into society to contribute to “every walk of life”, as soon as they graduate from college with their course experiences related to agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, breeding, medicine and transportation and other practical application fields. Many have weak English competency. Too many are weak in spoken English and written English, thus not fully utilizing the national expectations for global business skills. It is clear that development of greater competency is necessary for international business. English, to these type of students, is a great challenge but is also a worthy challenge. English is a necessary tool, which under this globalized circumstance is an advantage for their vocation among their competitors and is a convenience for their companies’ international business.

There are factors influencing acquisitions of English. A primary difficulty is learning a language that has little in common with the Chinese language. For example, Chinese is a tonal language and English is phonetic. As the second language, function of learning English means the language should be useful for their future work. The language learning objective is to gain English competency rather than knowledge. Another factor is gaining an understanding of why learning English is important. Of course, the other factor is the challenge of being an effective teacher to vocational students. In order to know the coping strategies for the third factor

clearly, the literature review includes attention to three parts: appropriate teaching methods for vocational students, thinking of the role for teacher and students and usage of classroom techniques. The final purpose is to help the development of vocational education and the study of vocational students.

Statement of the Problem

1. What kind of method can be used for China's English teaching of vocational students?
2. What can be learned from experience of other countries' or related to first-time Chinese speaker's learning?
3. In China's vocational English teaching and learning, what are the roles of teachers and students in order to achieve effective teaching and learning?
4. What is the situation for China's vocational education compared to the world's?
5. What are vocational college students' English competency levels?
6. What are the characteristics of the Chinese and the English language?

Definition of Terms

Vocational college students in China is very specific for China it is a characterized concept based on practical applied subjects (e.g. automobile electronics)

Non-English major. In the Chinese higher education systems students are required to pass tests required by the Ministry of Education. Majors in fields other than English as a second language are called "non-English majors". These students are required to pass College English Test (CET) 4 and 6.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Reviewing recent research on vocational English teaching suggests several ways to help teachers and students improve English teaching activities together (Liu & Chen, 2010; Yonglong, Zhang, 2008; Huiming, Dou, 2007; Wei, Wang, 2004). The principle throughout the whole teaching period is to adopt the Student-Centered Teaching Model. Induction-Interaction Learning Community applied in each teaching period and using multimedia to form a Web Assisted Language Learning mode. Layered Motivation Mode can be carried out in implementing teaching syllabus and applying class division.

Student-Centered Teaching Model

A teacher's role should be no longer the role of knowledge authority but a partner with students. Those two should complete teaching tasks together (Liu & Chen, 2010). Teachers become more like facilitators, guides, helpers, advisers and researchers than controllers, assessors, organizers, prompters, participants and resource-providers.

Induction-Interaction Learning Community

Induction-Interaction Learning Community (IILC) is an open system combining individual's attention and effort into a group by some interesting and effective activities focused on one subject (Yonglong, Zhang, 2008). It is a system for teachers which is carried out by using assembled material, systematical teaching activities and interactive activities under practical situations and with a certain objective or theme.

Students feel free to move, discuss and ask questions. The aim of IILC is low but practical and clear. It is focused on what the students actually achieve not how much is learned.

Web Assisted Language Learning

Web assisted language learning is a kind of classroom technique used during the course of English teaching. It is a kind of “double-subject” mode with the student as the center and the teacher is the lead of their learning. In such a teaching and learning style, the teacher chooses the website for the sources of student’s learning in advance, and the student’s task is to choose, recombine, digest and transform the sources by using their imagination and creativity (Huiming, Dou, 2007).

Layered Motivation Model

This model is derived from American psychologist Maslow’s theory. He has an idea that humans’ behaviors are caused by their needs. In his research, the need can be divided into several degrees: biological need as the lowest, needs for safety, belonging, love and respect in between, and need for self-fulfillment is the highest need. The degrees that Maslow presented to people reveal the close relations between human need’s formation and individual development. Motivations and reasons for human behavior are the vital needs for them (Wei, Wang, 2004). Maslow’s theory supplies theoretical principle to the application of Layered Motivation Model. During vocational English teaching, it is easy to find that vocational students have different English faculties and foundations. Layered motivation model is practical for

vocational English teaching.

From the review of recent research on vocational English education from researchers in different part of China including Dou Huiming from Advanced Technology College in Liu Zhou, Guangxi province, Liu Li and Chen Wenbai from Beijing Vocational College of Financial and Commerce and Beijing Information Science and Technology University, Wang Wei from Li Shui Health School, Zhe Jiang province, Zhang Yonglong from Southwest University, Chongqing municipality, Zhao Wen and David Coniam from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Min-hsun Maggie Su from Northern Taiwan Institute of Science and Technology, it is clear that improving the vocational English education in China is a heavy but worthy responsibility.

Though the economic development of reform has lasted for more than 30 years, the modern concept of vocational and technological education has only been established in the 20th Century. In addition, China is a populous country with relatively scarce education resources compared with the large population. Chinese parents undoubtedly have to place a high value on their young generation's academic performance. As a result, so do teachers and educators of schools in China.

Under the trend that going to a university, especially a ranking forward university, is much better than going to vocational and technological college. Often times, these students have learned English through the memorization of words and sentences, but cannot express themselves competently in a free flowing conversation of ideas. They were able to get high marks in their previous education because it was

based on a learning model that did not require this skill level. To further complicate the matter, these students tend to be acted upon with prejudice (actually, it may be the situation nowadays, at least in China), that it, is more difficult for students in vocational colleges to find jobs and good jobs than students in general universities. As a result, their characteristics are low confidence and motivation, combined with low self-esteem.

English teachers in vocational school should aim at teaching students to learn on their own, to find the most effective way for them to improve ability of communication and application in order to raise their own interest and motivation. No matter what kind of teaching method, a student-centered teaching mode is easier for students to learn more actively and autonomously. To take this kind of principled stand, the role of teacher should be changed. In former conception, the teacher is the center to control the whole class time, organize the teaching process and every class activity, and explain all the knowledge to be learned. The role of teacher should be more like helper and only to help students to complete the teaching objectives together. Induction-Interaction Learning Community (IILC) is a typical case to model how it works. It is known that IILC is to “make students practice English through a number of pair activities and group activities”(Xie Jie, 2). It is carried out in a relaxed and open atmosphere with compiling teaching resources, formulating teaching syllabus and compacting teaching procedure according to the practical situation of different majors, different professions, different working backgrounds, and needs of students’ development mentally and physically, needs of social development and

students' English proficiency (Yonglong, Zhang, 55).

According to American psychologist Maslow's theory, people's demands have different levels; the fulfillment of a higher level of demand may become motivation as the most urgent demand for people is the reason and motivation for their actions. Based on this conclusion, in order to induct vocational school students' motivation to learn English, it is necessary to apply different levels of teaching objectives and procedures according to the levels of students' competency (Wei, Wang, 2004). In China, there are two measurements: one is to divide all students into classes of A degree and B degree respectively with the same teaching objective but different teaching procedures. Teachers in classes of A degree emphasize communication and application in real life while those in classes of B degree emphasize dealing with the exam. The other measurement is carrying on relatively different teaching objective or different capability requirements: A level and B level. A level is a general vocabulary level while B level is for students who are poor in English with less vocabulary. The final purpose is that all students can reach A level.

Web-assisted language learning emancipates teachers from a large amount of resource preparation to a more effective resources arrangement and class activities organization. Web provides an open, lively and well-dispersed learning information database to both teachers and students. Meanwhile, it provides a creative research space for an easier and instant teaching approach.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In dealing with vocational English teaching in China, educators and educational experts have sought to improve teaching efficiency. However, two big problems remain. One is the lack of practical evaluation system for teacher's teaching, and the other is student's competency.

Vocational students' English competency have demands for five aspects of English learning, that of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. With these demands, the disjunctions of book knowledge and social knowledge weaken vocational students' interest and motivation, and discount the implementation of teaching requirements.

Another situation complicates this issue. Due to lower competency of vocational students and lower salary of vocational school teachers, often times the teachers are probationary. Sometimes these teachers are not invested in their teaching and may not want to lead the vocational students to a more efficient Web Assisted Language Learning.

In all, the purpose of this paper is to review a collection of research regarding the improvement of the efficiency of vocational students' English proficiency and to give suggestions about improving this efficiency. It should be improved in two ways: teaching evaluation system and teaching procedure itself.

For the teaching evaluation system, research indicates that Layered Motivation Model should be applied in periods of students' evaluation. With regard to teaching

procedure, it was found that Student-Centered Teaching Mode should be enforced through the whole teaching period. Induction-Interaction Learning Community should be employed during the teaching procedure, and Layered Motivation Model can also be adopted in class division teaching.

References

- Dou, Huiming. (2007). Improving vocational school's English teaching quality through Internet media. *Journal of Liuzhou Vocational & Technical College*, 7, 157-159
- Liu, Li, & Chen, Wenbai. (2010). A study on higher vocational English teaching. *Computer Society*, 752-755.
- Su, M. Min-hsun. (2005). A study of EFL technological and vocational college students' language learning strategies and their self-perceived English proficiency. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 2(1), 44-56.
- Wang, Wei. (2004). Layered motivation model of vocational school's English teaching. *Health Vocation Education*, 22, 79-80.
- Zhang, Yonglong. (2008). A practical english teaching mode of vocational education: induction-interaction learning community. *English Language Teaching*, 1, 55-56.
- Zhao, W., & Coniam, D. (2009). Towards a common scale for China's vocational education English. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 61(3), 335-355.