

Received: November 2, 2017

Revision received: April 12, 2018

Accepted: April 20, 2018

Copyright © 2018 ESTP

www.estp.com.tr

DOI 10.12738/estp.2018.6.246 • December 2018 • 18(6) • 3400-3407

Research Article

Foreign Language Education in Colleges and Universities Based on Globalization Background

Xuekun Hu¹

*School of Foreign Languages
Xianyang Normal University*

Abstract

The advent of the era of globalization has made people's social interactions cross the boundaries between regions and nations, therefore, foreign language teaching is particularly important in this context. Mastering new ways of communication is only the surface value of foreign language learning, increasing new thinking modes and improving thinking skill are the deep value of foreign language learning. This paper takes college English teaching and thinking mode as the starting point to study the foreign language education in colleges and universities under the background of globalization. Based on behaviorist psychology, this paper investigates and analyzes the current situation of college English teaching and college students' thinking mode transformation, and puts forward reform methods for college English teaching which serves the transformation of students' thinking mode. The research results show that there is a divergence between current college English teaching and the transformation of college students' thinking mode. To promote the transformation of college students' thinking, college English teaching should be reformed from three aspects: teaching concept, teaching content and teaching method. This research enriches the theoretical research of college English teaching and has important and far-reaching significance for the reform of college English practice teaching.

Keywords

Globalization • College English Teaching • Thinking Mode • Teaching Reform

¹Correspondence to: Xuekun Hu, School of Foreign Languages, Xianyang Normal University, Xianyang 712000, China. Email: bridgeus@126.com

Globalization is the product of modern people's practical activities; the era of globalization puts higher demands on talents. The comprehensive thinking mode is one of the basic qualities of new talents in the context of globalization (Kramsch, 2014), in order to adapt to the demands of globalization reform, people's thinking modes must undergo fundamental changes. As a public course in colleges and universities, college English should also incorporate cultivating students' comprehensive thinking mode into its teaching objectives (Martel, 1999).

Globalization is a concept that has been used frequently by academic circles in recent years. However, there is no unified concept of what is globalization. Some scholars summarize and abstract globalization from different perspectives and aspects such as communication, economics, politics, culture, and sociology (Smotrova, 2012). In general, the research of globalization can be divided into two types (Lo Bianco, 2014), one type takes globalization as the research object, and studies its nature and characteristics; another type takes globalization as a theoretical background to examine its impact on other social phenomena. This paper has adopted the latter. Thinking mode (Arohunmolase, 2006) is the core of human culture. It is the thinking process of the subject reflecting the object, and it is the comprehensive mode of knowledge, experience and concept in people's thinking activities. In the context of globalization, people are paying more and more attention to their dialectical and integrated thinking mode, metaphysical thinking mode, and the simple and overall thinking mode (Sheridan, 2015). The era of globalization has made people's social interactions cross the boundaries between regions and nations. Therefore, foreign language teaching is particularly important in the context of globalization. As one of the international languages, English is a public basic course for colleges and universities, so exploring reform methods for college English teaching mode which serves the transformation of students' thinking mode is the current focus of college English teaching. Through reading relevant literatures at home and abroad, it is found that although there are many researches on foreign language education in colleges and universities, the researches on college English teaching and the cultivation of students' thinking mode under the globalization background are quite limited. By summarizing related studies, it's found that researches on language and thinking mode are divided into two categories: the language-thinking identity theory, and the language-thinking non-identity theory (Kramsch, 2013), it can be concluded into three viewpoints: language determines thinking; thinking determines language; thinking and language are independent of and interact with each other. Because thinking mode is closely related to language, and the values and social background of the English nations are also reflected in the college English textbooks, it is possible to influence the students' thinking mode through college English teaching (Barnett, 2010), but the current college English teaching has ignored the requirement for the transformation of talent thinking mode in the context of globalization.

Based on the above analysis, this paper investigates the current situation of college English teaching from three aspects: teaching concept, teaching content and teaching method. It is found that there is a divergence between college English teaching and the transformation of college students' thinking mode. This paper analyzes the defects of the thinking mode of current college students, and takes the investigation results as the basis to propose reform strategies for college English teaching which serves the transformation of students' thinking mode.

Current status of college English teaching and the transformation of college students' thinking mode

Current status of college English teaching

Teaching concept at present, college teachers still retain the tradition English teaching concept, that is, language is taught, not acquired (Lüdi, 2010), therefore, the teacher-centered and exam-oriented teaching concept is still existing obviously.

(1) Teacher-centered

The teacher-centered teaching concept results in the situation in which, as the knowledge owner, teachers pass all knowledge to students as much as possible, while students are the passive receivers of knowledge, their learning initiative is restricted, they rely too much on the teachers, and they lack of self-learning ability and thinking skill.

(2) Exam-oriented

Many colleges and universities take students' pass rate of College English Test (CET) band four and band six as the goal of teacher assessment, besides, CET-4 and CET-6 help students with their future employment, so all these conditions forced teachers to take exams as the teaching goals, while students also take exams and employment as the learning goals, Figure 1 shows the survey results of the main purposes of college students' English learning. The results are contrary to the requirements of normal teaching order and quality-oriented education, which has resulted in a large number of "deaf-mute English" learners who can't listen-to or speak English, they can't adapt to the quality requirements of people in the era of globalization, let alone the thinking training.

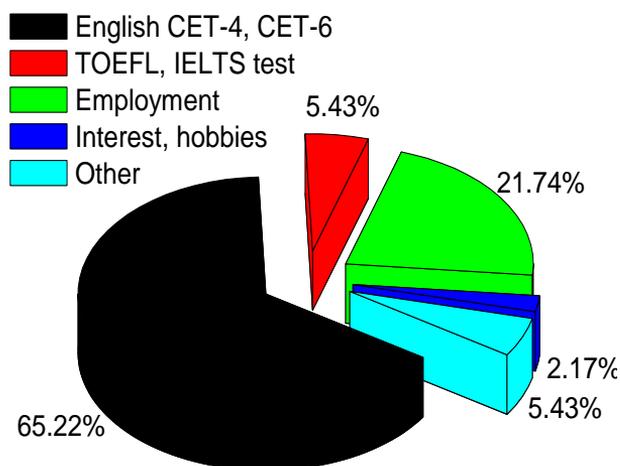


Figure 1. The main purposes of college students' English learning.

Teaching content Through the investigation, it is found that the content of college English teaching has the problem of over-emphasizing reading and writing, while neglecting listening and speaking; over-emphasizing language teaching, while neglecting cultural introduction; over-emphasizing introduction of surface-level culture and customs, while neglecting the introduction of deep-level culture, as shown in Figure 2.

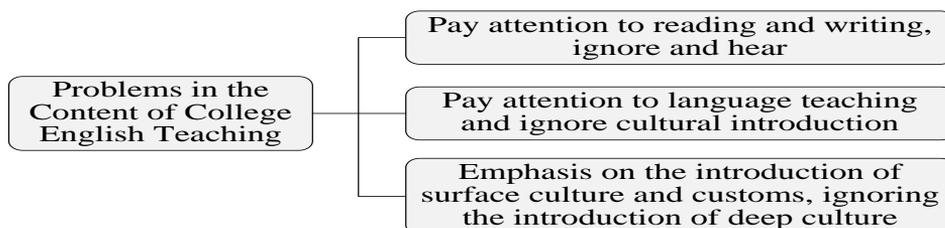


Figure 2. Problems in the content of college English teaching.

(1) Emphasize reading and writing, neglect listening and speaking

Figure 3 shows the proportion of college English listening, speaking, reading and writing in teaching. It can be seen from the figure that reading and writing are still the focus of college English teaching. Teachers emphasize on the explanation of language points and vocabularies in teaching, and the focus of tests and exams is also the writing skill and the reading skill. Students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills have not been developed equally, however, listening and speaking skills are important ways to cultivate students' analytical thinking and systematic thinking.

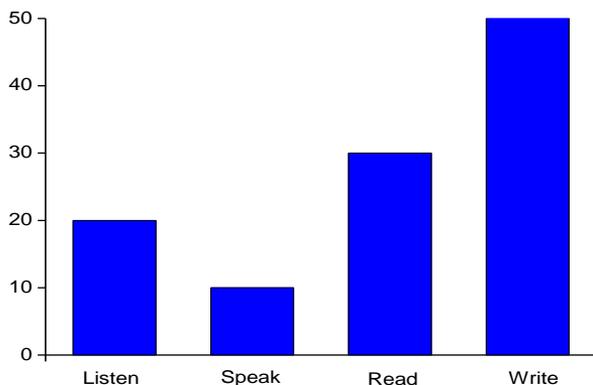


Figure 3. The proportion of college English listening, speaking, reading and writing in teaching.

(2) Emphasize on language teaching, neglect cultural introduction

Although most teachers have realized that cultural background knowledge has a positive effect on language learning, neglecting cultural introduction has always been a common problem in college English teaching in

China. Teachers believe that as long as the vocabulary, grammar and other linguistic knowledge are mastered by students, they can know how to use English to communicate. Therefore, the introduction of cultural factors is quite arbitrary, students can't combine communication strategies with cognitive skills such as thinking and reasoning, and they can't understand the differences between Chinese and Western cultures or use English to communicate appropriately.

(3) Emphasize introduction of surface-level culture and customs, neglect introduction of deep-level culture

At present, the introduction of language and culture by college English teachers basically stays in the introduction of surface-level or middle-level culture such as form of address, greetings, customs and habits, etc., while English culture has a strong dialectical and analytical thinking tradition. However, since teachers simply explain the grammars, sentence patterns and articles without exploring its deep-level culture in the teaching, students can't understand the relevant thinking modes in English culture.

Teaching methods the former Soviet Union Kaiipob's "five-link, three-center" education theory emphasizes the systematic study of knowledge and the leading role of teachers, which deeply influenced our classroom teaching, so our country had carried out many education and teaching reforms. Through investigation, it's found that 69% of the teachers adopt the lecturing teaching method as the main teaching method, while teachers who use task-driven teaching method and heuristic teaching method are 11% and 9% respectively (as shown in Figure 4), indicating that the lecturing teaching method is still the major approach in current college English teaching.

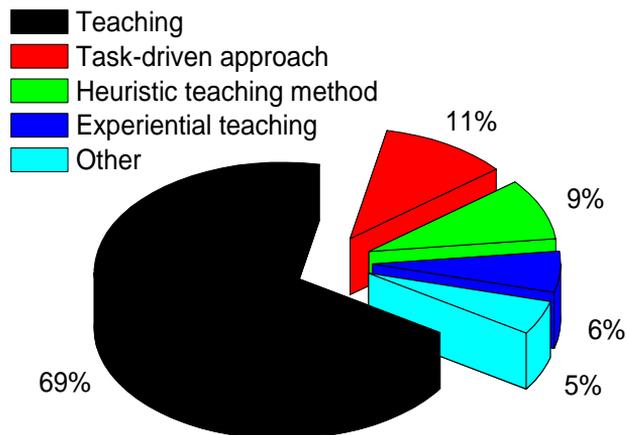


Figure 4. Teacher teaching method survey results.

Although the lecturing teaching method can facilitate teachers to organize and manage the classrooms, as well as improve teaching efficiency, since teachers' knowledge lecturing occupies most classroom time, students become passive receivers, their learning interest and initiative are low, let alone the cultivation and improvement of thinking skills.

Thinking mode of college students

Studies have shown that (Hayati & Mashhadi, 2010) college students' thinking mode is in a dynamic and changeable state, and as the students' age, knowledge structure and life experience continue to grow, their thinking mode is becoming more mature. But many investigations have discovered there are certain defects in the thinking mode of college students, the specific manifestations are: intuitive thinking is especially weak, dialectical thinking is lacking and analytical thinking is insufficient.

Reform of college English teaching to serve the transformation of students' thinking mode

In view of the deviation between current college English teaching and college students' thinking mode transformation, this paper puts forward college English teaching reform strategies from three aspects: teaching concept transformation, teaching content reconstruction and teaching method update, as shown in Figure 5.

Teaching concept transformation

Student-centered The cultivation of language skills depends on the practice of students. Students can only master the skills on the basis of understanding and absorbing the teaching of teachers. But college English is a highly practical subject, so it is necessary to take students as the center in the teaching process and guide them to actively process and integrate the required knowledge, so that students can discover the laws of language, and they can participate in the teaching activities psychologically and mentally.

Application-oriented Cultivating students' comprehensive English application skills is an important goal of English teaching, and basic knowledge such as pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary are the basis for effective communication in English, but it does not mean that it is the only focus of teaching. In the teaching process, besides basic knowledge learning and exams, we also need to pay attention to the cultivation of students' intercultural communication and language application skills, so as to achieve the goal of training students' various thinking skills.

Teaching content reconstruction

Emphasize overall improvement of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills Listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating are the presentation of the specific skills of language. With the advent of the era of globalization, the requirements for students' English application skills are gradually improved. Therefore, the cultivation of comprehensive application skills of students should be the focus of teaching.

Emphasize both language teaching and cultural teaching Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is the environment of language. When teachers are teaching, they need to change the former teaching method which emphasizes on knowledge explanation and language learning, and to integrate the language material with

its cultural background knowledge, in this case, students' vision is broadened and their learning interest is promoted, they can understand the Western thinking mode, and improve their language communication skills.

Emphasize learning of surface-level, middle-level and deep-level culture Different cultures in China and the West lead to different thinking modes, and the thinking modes have a potential power over the expression of language. Therefore, in the process of language learning, we should not only stay in the learning of surface-level culture, but also go deeper into the learning of English-speaking countries' material culture, institutional culture and psychological culture, and understand their thinking mode, which is not only conducive to improving students' English learning efficiency, but also promotes the training of students' comprehensive thinking.

Teaching method update

When college English teachers are performing teaching activities, they should make full use of multimedia resources, enrich teaching methods and teaching forms, and introduce various teaching methods such as task-driven teaching method, theme-based teaching method, and interactive heuristic teaching method into English classroom teaching. Teachers need to choose and apply the teaching methods flexibly, so as to improve the effectiveness of English teaching and to cultivate talents with multiple thinking skills.

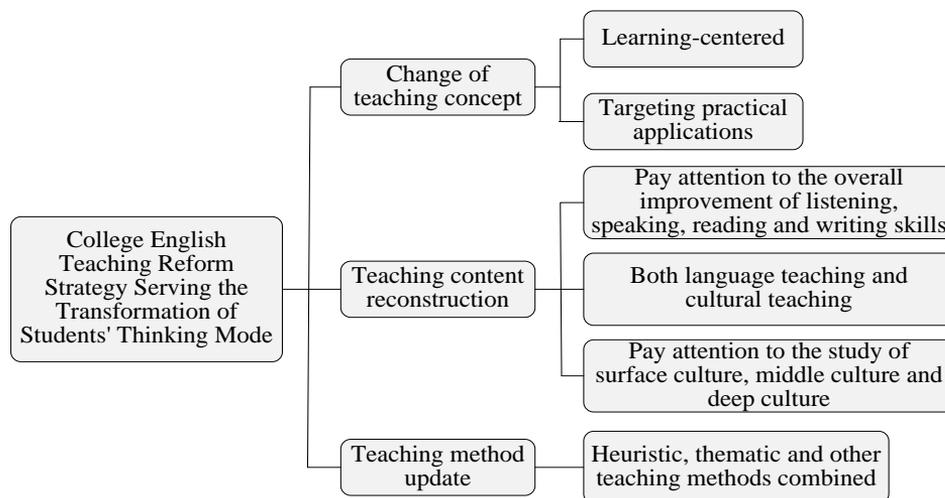


Figure 5. College English teaching reform strategies.

Conclusion

This paper takes globalization as the research background, and takes the college English teaching and thinking mode cultivation as the starting point to study the foreign language education in colleges and universities. The specific conclusions are as follows:

4.1 Through investigation it is found that, in the context of globalization, there is a divergence between college English teaching and the transformation of college students' thinking mode.

4.2 There are certain defects in the thinking mode of college students, the specific manifestations are: intuitive thinking is especially weak, dialectical thinking is lacking and analytical thinking is insufficient.

4.3 From the three aspects of teaching concept transformation, teaching content reconstruction and teaching method update, this paper proposed reform strategies for college English teaching which serves the transformation of students' thinking mode.

References

- Arohunmolase, O. (2006). Globalization and the problems and prospects of teaching and learning of Yoruba as a second language. *Language, 50*, 2.
- Barnett, C. K. (2010). The Michigan global agenda: research and teaching in the 1990s. *Human Resource Management, 29*(1), 5-26. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/hrm.3930290102>
- Hayati, A. M., & Mashhadi, A. (2010). Language planning and language-in-education policy in Iran. *Language Problems & Language Planning, 34*(1), 24-42. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/lplp.34.1.02hay>
- Kramersch, C. (2013). Invited colloquium: Foreign languages in an age of globalization. *Language Teaching, 46*(3), 425-427. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444813000128>
- Kramersch, C. (2014). Teaching foreign languages in an era of globalization: Introduction. *Modern Language Journal, 98*(1), 296-311. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2014.12057.x>
- Lo Bianco, J. (2014). Domesticating the foreign: globalization's effects on the place/s of languages. *Modern Language Journal, 98*(1), 312-325. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2014.12063.x>
- Lüdi, G. (2010). Are 'diversity management' and monolingualism compatible? In a context of globalization, are diversity management and monolingualism compatible? From foreign language learning and use under the influence of globalization. *Language Teaching, 43* (4), 494-495. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000273>
- Martel, A. (1999). Culturally colored didactics: The sociopolitical at the heart of second/foreign language teaching in Francophone geolinguistic spaces. *Instructional Science, 27*(1-2), 73-96. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/a:1003038611759>
- Sheridan, C. L. (2015). National journals and centering institutions: A historiography of an English language teaching journal in Taiwan. *English for Specific Purposes, 38*, 70-84. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2014.12.001>
- Smotrova, T. (2012). Globalization and English language teaching in Ukraine. *Tesol Quarterly, 43*(4), 728-733. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00200.x>