

Practices and experiences on bilingual teaching

LIU Guang-rong, YE Chun-song, JIANG hua

(College of Power and Mechanical Engineering, Wuhan University, Wuhan Hubei 430072, China)

Abstract: The implementation of bilingual teaching is specialized course in one of the important teaching reforms and it is also the inevitable trend in cultivating talents with high quality. In the paper, several problems of currently restricting the method are pointed out in China and experiences on bilingual teaching of “fundamentals of water quality science” are summarized. The focus of this paper is on the request for bilingual teachers, textbook, teaching mode in class and teaching approach.

Key words: bilingual teaching; class efficiency; teaching reform

In the modern world where international economic competition becomes so fierce, mastering English skills is of vital importance in helping Chinese people to gain more competence. Bilingual teaching (Baker, 2001), an important teaching methodology, is the purposes of making students to grasp professional knowledge and skill, is its purposes of enhancing the students' ability of English application and of cultivating talents with high quality for education reforms in the university (ZHOU Zhen-zhong, 2004).

However, the present situation of bilingual teaching is not satisfying, the main problems are as follows (TAN Fu-juan, 2005). Firstly, there is insufficient support and instruction from the individual institutions. Secondly, there is a lack of enough qualified bilingual teachers and a great inaccessibility of the suitable textbooks. Thirdly, the inadequate bilingual class efficiency exists as a hindrance, due to the comparatively low speaking and listening capability of some students and with the culture misunderstandings as an obstacle.

After we have practiced twice on bilingual teaching of “fundamentals of water quality science”, some experiences and efforts have been made. As regard to the third circumstance, this paper expounds the views and the focus is on the request for bilingual teachers, textbook, teaching mode in class and teaching approach.

1. The Request for Bilingual Teachers

1.1 Fully preparation

Preparation for bilingual teachers is very important, because it can make up their drawbacks in competence. A teacher with ample preparation and weaker competence may achieve better result than another teacher with better competence and no preparation.

The preparation should range from classroom formulaic to every terminology in the subject. Before we begin our bilingual instruction, we not only prepare teaching plan in English, but also conclude and abstract contents through other devices like PowerPoint. Bilingual teachers should go over the whole process by themselves and

LIU Guang-rong, Master, lecturer of College of Power and Mechanical Engineering, Wuhan University; research field: water and wastewater treatment.

YE Chun-song, Ph.D., professor of College of Power and Mechanical Engineering, Wuhan University; research field: water and wastewater treatment.

JIANG Hua, Ph.D., professor of College of Power and Mechanical Engineering, Wuhan University; research field: mechanical engineering.

check uncertain pronunciations or grammar with many channels.

Meantime, the students should fully prepare as well for the class to echo the teacher. Of course, there is another point that should be taken into account. The teacher should not only present the new words and phrases in Chinese ahead of time, but also emphasizes the sentences required reading in advance before the teacher begins the new lesson.

1.2 Helping students' comprehension of content (MENG Fan-sheng, 2006)

For bilingual teachers, they tend to think English is all of English teachers' business; to them, it is only a medium and the target of content knowledge may be more salient. But in fact, it is quite dependent on the other objective, that is, professional English, or English for professional purpose. Bilingual teachers are liable to ignore this mission. We combine direct vocabulary instruction with the indirect ones in arranging the vocabulary instruction in class so as to help students' comprehension.

In bilingual class, teachers should guide the students on reading skills and strategies that look into the thinking process underlying language use. Meantime we strive to explain the contexts of the new chapter in order that we can help students understand the contents.

2. Textbook

Textbook adopted by bilingual class can be original English version, English textbook revised from original edition or English textbook written by Chinese. Original version can guarantee an original English flavor, but usually in abstruse literature and high price. In reality, some courses that renew very quickly or require frequent communication with the world should adopt textbooks in English version, even though they are carried out in Chinese in class.

For other courses that original textbook is not available, English textbook revised from original edition or English textbook written by Chinese is necessary. Textbook should try to be user-friendly and the following suggestions are worth considering: (1) All technical terms and new words, including general English are interpreted right behind. (2) Difficult sentences are annotated and interpreted at the back of the chapter. (3) Key rules or regulations are in bold form.

3. Teaching Mode in Class

3.1 The ratio of English vs. Chinese

In our class, we not only use English as a medium to convey content knowledge, but also mention features of scientific English from register aspects or rhetoric aspects. The ratio of English vs. Chinese usually keeps around half and half. This is decided by both teachers and students and mainly by students. To our students beyond the level whose courses are either too difficult to understand or very crucial for further study, it is not worthwhile to venture for the possible.

Bilingual education can be embodied in a variety of forms. It can be English-predominant presentation supplemented with additional Chinese clarifications (supplementary style) or English in definition, basic mechanism and classroom formulaic plus Chinese in complicated or difficult relationship (patch style). There can be other slight differences in practice.

3.2 Questions strategies can produce interactive atmosphere in class

In the course of classroom instruction, it proves that teacher's questions are more than elicitation techniques and appropriate questions play a much broader role in an interactive classroom (Brown, 2001). Then they can

fulfill their functions. Details are discussed as follows:

3.2.1 Using questions to initiate

Teacher should use questions to serve to initiate a chain reaction of student interaction among themselves. One question may be all that is needed to start a discussion among students; without the initial question, however, students will be reluctant to initiate the process. Of course, the teacher should strive to foster an English atmosphere by presenting content in English or explaining in paraphrase.

3.2.2 Encouraging students to answer in English

For the sake of active atmosphere in class, the teacher should articulate very clearly and the voice should also be very clear. When we ask many questions in class, we must encourage the students to speak in English. If they answered in Chinese, we would ask them to interpret it into English. Actually it breaks the passive learning tradition and is extremely meaningful to both language and specialty learning. Anyway students should be encouraged to air their opinions in English through the whole process of teaching.

3.2.3 Feedback about student's comprehension through questioning

The teacher should get the immediate feedback about student's comprehension through questioning. After posing a question, a teacher can use the student's response to diagnose linguistic or content difficulties. Grammatical or phonological problem areas, for example, may be "exposed" through the student's response and give the teacher some specific information about what to treat. If it is the professional knowledge that the students are lack of, the teacher should explain and supplement for them.

4. Teaching Approach

4.1 Multimedia

Multimedia assisted bilingual teaching is a practical performance of modern education. It has a great ability to control and cope with signs, language, words, sound and pictures. Therefore, we use its function to create a good study environment, purify feelings for students. As a result, encourage them to study hard, inspire them in thinking.

4.2 Affective factors in education

Not so much has been done in affective factors in education in China so far. Actually the affective factors within the teacher-student relationship play a very important role in bilingual teaching and learning.

By loving and treating every student fairly; by encouraging and evaluating my students frankly; by respecting and helping them in my class sincerely; by devoting everything to the mission of teaching and polishing myself, I managed to change some students' attitude in time. So they all think they gain a lot in professional knowledge and English application.

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(Edited by ZHANG Dong-ling)