Some Practical Approaches to Developing Learners' Wisdom, Ability and Quality*

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Abstract—Linguistic competence is closely related to developing learners' wisdom, ability and quality. The major intention of the paper is to arouse awareness of coordinating the development of wisdom, ability and quality. Some approaches are introduced on a tentative basis including wise applications of intelligent skills, linguistic humor, individuality, flexibility, adaption of materials, infiltration techniques, integration of skills, etc.

Index Terms—practical approaches, wisdom, ability, quality

I. INTRODUCTION

Much of our learners' behavior is practically influenced by our classroom teaching, while the way of our English teaching on campus is to a great extent affected by teachers' ideology and methodology. Traditionally-fashioned teaching style is focused on transmission of information and knowledge, on preparations for various examinations, including the national CET-4, CET-6 exams or Practical English Test for Colleges, etc. The ostensible purpose tends to help learners to pass language examinations or accumulate linguistic knowledge. The results of examinations stand out remarkably as a means of evaluating the quality of English teaching and learning. At present, the wide acknowledgement seems that great achievements have been achieved in college English teaching and learning. English has become more popular than ever across the country. More people are quite interested in what is conducive to efficiency and proficiency. On the other hand, some learners are still short of pragmatic communicative competence, and the society is not fully satisfied with some graduates' performance, or with language teaching on campus. For the sake of sustainable development of English teaching and learning in the future, we need to project a forward-looking image of college English teaching and learning, work out some solutions to the existing problems, especially insufficient attention to the coordinated development of learners' wisdom, ability and quality.

II. A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF WISDOM, ABILITY AND QUALITY

Teachers bear the responsibility to provide learners with required amount of scientific knowledge. The teachers of English ought to supply linguistic information, explain rules of grammar, contents of culture, sciences, etc. English knowledge is essential and English knowledge is power. But knowledge is not necessary wisdom, ability or quality. Practically speaking, the majority of the learners in China work hard at accumulation of knowledge. Some may be superior to a few native speakers in the aspect of grammatical knowledge. However, when they meet with pragmatic problems in their virtual work, they often lack wisdom for solution. How to help the majority of learners make wise use of knowledge, to improve their ability and quality remains a tough task for us to fulfill as well as a source of academic research. It is true that different approaches, tentative ideas or practices contribute to the steady development of wisdom, ability and quality.

The first aspect for discussion is to analyze the implications of wisdom in the process of English teaching and learning. In a broad sense, wisdom refers to good judgment, skillful tactics, intelligence or intelligent solutions, etc. Scientists make full use of wisdom to invent a lot of new devices e.g. machines, televisions, telephones, lights, computers, automobile, ships, planes, spaceship, radios, etc., making it possible for human beings to be stronger, faster and higher. In the process of English teaching and learning, wisdom mainly refers to good habitual judgment, learning efficiency, linguistic proficiency, healthy styles, intelligent skills, etc. Therefore, teachers and learners need to cultivate a good sense of learning flexibility, individuality, humor and intelligence. Linguistic flexibility is used to improve personal quality of changing or being changed reasonably to reach the requirements in a new linguistic context. Individuality usually refers to the quality of making someone or something quite different from all other things or people (Li, 2002). It is fundamentally concerned with the autonomous interests of learners. Linguistic humor mainly refers to the quality of making learning English as funny as possible, while learning intelligence refers to the quality of

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making it easier , more efficient and more interesting.

The next analytic aspect is aimed at the improvement of learners' comprehensive abilities. Ability broadly refers to the quality of being able to apply methods to solve problems, or useful skills for people to take part in mental and physical activities. In the process of English teaching and learning, ability includes the quality of being able to listen, to speak, to read, to write, to translate and to communicate. Generally speaking, the Chinese learners have better ability for multiple choice exercises because they are frequently trained time after time. Nevertheless, they often lack a balanced development of various abilities. At the beginning of the open-to-the-outside period, they were instructed to pay more attention to improving their abilities to read and write with less attention to abilities to listen and speak, hence the name of so-called mute English among some college learners. Later, they are obsessed with the improvement of abilities to listen and speak with less attention to the improvement of abilities to read and write. At present, it becomes an urgent task or top priority to find methods of striking a balance in developing the quality of being able to listen, to speak, to read, to write, to translate and to communicate, etc.

The third aspect for inclusion belongs to the improvement of quality. As its name implies, quality often refers to the level and sense of being acknowledged by the society including one's character, personality such as courage, intelligence, loyalty; features of a product such as size, color, feel or weight; the degree of being good or bad; the sense of satisfaction of life and work, etc. The quality needed for English learning covers various elements: political or ideological quality, professional quality, social quality, physical and psychological quality, etc. The ideological quality influences the purpose of learning. Learners with proper ideological quality are full of passion, while those with improper one are likely to be short of enthusiasm. The professional quality is closely related to the ability to learn and work. Learners with essential quality of culture and literacy obtain much enjoyment of learning. Otherwise, they may suffer hardships of learning activities. Social quality requires communicative ability including team-spirit, cooperative skills, job-hunting skills. If learners enjoy proper social quality, they are good at communicating with classmates and teachers, eager to fulfill assignments, brave to accept setbacks and make progress on their own. If learners are weak in some element of social quality, they may suffer autism, individualism, etc. Frankly speaking, it seems that the learners from multi-child families tend to possess such traditional virtues as hardworking, cooperation, etc. whereas the learners from one-child families tend to enjoy easiness, individualism, etc. What's more, physical and psychological health speaks much louder in a smooth learning process. Learners with physical health take more efforts in linguistic activities, learners with mental health are intelligent in solving problems.

III. SOME PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING LEARNERS' WISDOM, ABILITY AND QUALITY

As we all know, knowledge is one thing, and wisdom is another. Changing knowledge into wisdom requires great efforts and practice. Different persons may have different ways of study, but some interesting approaches sound a bit intelligent to the majority, deserving learner's tentative practice: (1) alliteration: the approach to thinking of an individual sub-word for each letter of a general word, e.g. news=north, east, west, south; laser=light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation; sonar=sound navigation and ranging; radar=radio detecting and ranging. (2) separation: the approach to finding a separated word for a unit, e.g. bridegroom=bride + groom; skyscraper=sky + scraper; skateboard= skate board. (3) affixation: the approach to analyzing various affixes: motel= motor hotel; gasometer=gasoline meter; autographometer=automated graphology meter; transport=trans + port; hospitalize=hospital + ize, preschool= pre + school, etc.

Linguistic humor sounds intelligent in certain contexts, too. Some learners may find that English proverbs and riddles bring along with them a certain degree of humor and interest. For instance, when learners talk about the following expressions: timetable; vegetables; comb or saw; door bell; clock or watch; the hands of a clock; river, they may enjoy a sense of humor in corresponding riddles: What table has no legs? What tables can be seen in the fields? What has teeth but never uses them for eating? What never asks questions but gets a lot of answers? What walks all the time but never leaves its place? What hands never hold anything? What has a mouth, but never speaks; what has a bed but never sleeps in it? On another occasion when learners discuss the proverb "An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity; a pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity" it is likely to produce a sense of humor and to make it meaningful to understand such new words as optimist, pessimist, calamity, opportunity.

Individuality and flexibility may also combine to be intelligent learning approaches. Individuality usually involves the approach to automatically directing, managing, evaluating and redirecting learning processes, whereas flexibility reflects the approach to changing or being changed properly. Linguistic autonomy is often required in evaluating, selecting and adapting learning materials, and frequently based on autonomous principles, objectives, procedures, specification, including pre-use evaluation, whilst-use evaluation and post-use evaluation. The core of the aspect is to examine how well an individual method or a given material matches the needs of a linguistic program and how effectively and efficiently it can realize the individual objectives. The unique feature of individuality helps arouses learners' curiosity, interest and attention to variety, novelty, appealing designs, etc. making linguistic activity so friendly to learners that they feel relaxed and confident .Individuality accommodates different attitudinal and motivational backgrounds as much as possible, catering for a wide range of learning styles so that the majority can benefit a lot.

Three levels are essential in learners' flexible adaption of linguistic materials. The first level, i.e. macro adaption is ideally executed before a program begins. After comparing the content and the requirements of a program, learners may

omit or delete certain units and supplement novel, practical contents on their own. Macro adaption is very important because it helps learners to avoid waste of energy or time. The second level, unit adaption, includes reordering activities, combining some activities, removal of toxic styles or activities, rewriting or supplementing assignments, etc. It helps individuals to fulfill the aims of a unit, making individual learning become smooth and cohesive. The third level, specific adaption or micro adaption, involves adapting a certain part of a given content. Learners may rewrite a sentence, a paragraph or part of a passage. By means of various levels of adaption, learners have more chances to express various ideas in their own styles.

Healthy styles do matter in ones' life and study. According to some experts, one's life expectancy is determined by various elements: genetic element for about 15%, living condition for about 10%, medical level in the community for about 8%,natural environment for about 7%, individual life style for about 60%.They accept the concept that a life style makes a big difference of one's life expectancy. Similarly, a learning style tends to make a big difference in one's linguistic achievements.

All the human resources are required to be involved in global arrangements at full stages of development of various linguistic skills in all activities, e.g. exercises, quizzes, tests, exams, etc. Any degree of negligence in one aspect may influence the overall linguistic development. Holistic management infiltrates in linguistic comparison. For example, when learners express the idea "People ought to be informed of full information as to prices, quantity, quality and relative particulars of the product", they need to analyze and compare different versions for various applications in different contexts: "People ought to have access to full information as to prices, quantity, quality and relative particulars of the product. People ought to be supplied with full information as to prices, quantity, quality and relative particulars of the product. Full information as to prices, quantity, quality and relative particulars of the product ought to be provided for people. Businessmen ought to inform people of full information as to prices, quantity, quality and relative particulars of the product." With comparative skills, learners are able to gradually analyze and apply various structures in reading, writing, translation, etc.

Authentic and communicative approach plays an important role in improving learners' competence. Authenticity relies on a great variety of resources such as newspapers, photographs, advertisements, radio and television programs, computerized programs, network programs, audio cassettes, videos, CD-ROMs, electronic dictionaries, disks, grammar books, workbooks, photocopied materials, flashcards, reference materials, etc. Authentic materials are superior to fixed textbooks, in that they improve learners' ability in the unconscious process of routinely reading what is transmitted on Internet, radio, TV or what is printed in newspapers, which is helpful to update learners' knowledge of new expressions, e.g. affordable houses, financial crises, inflation phenomenon, etc. hence the improvement of their reading and listening abilities. In the meantime, authenticity is closely associated with communicative approach, because communicative skills are improved in a real social environment such as job-hunting, debates, etc. By means of email letters, qq. talks, micro-blogs, negotiations, dialogues, discussions, seminars, lectures, etc, learners have practical opportunities to improve communicative competence. Through notes, advertisements, letters, essays, brochures, credentials, resumes, introductions, handbooks, manuals, etc. they are sure to make authentic progress in writing and translation. For instance, the writing item in PRETCO on December 18, 2011, mainly tests learners' ability to complete a telephone message: "Mr. Peter Margin will fly to New York next Monday. He won't be able to meet you next week. So he hopes that he can meet you at 9:30 this Friday morning and discuss with you the cooperation between the two companies. Will you be free at that time? Please call him back after reading the message." Authentically, the assignment requires that learners listen to the telephone message, translate or organize the message before writing, keep authentic notes side by side.

Most important of all, the approach to improving learners' quality plays a more decisive role than those to developing wisdom and ability. Wisdom may be like learners' wings and useful weapons, ability may be like their physical strength, but quality is like human essence of life. Knowledge is not completely wisdom, wisdom is not fully ability, and ability is not necessary quality. But quality includes knowledge, wisdom, ability, etc. It serves as the direction as well as the life of learning.

Westerners usually resort to religions for ideology. In China, the approach of ideological infiltration is recommended for educational functions .Teachers can connect ideological work with every aspect of linguistic activities .For instance, when learners translate the sentence 'Some regions suffer such disasters as human wars, carbon dioxide emissions, sandstorm, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, etc.' they are required to think about some disadvantages of human conflicts, natural disasters, analyze the cause and potential solutions, introduce the importance of harmony, cooperation, mutual respect and the like. Meanwhile, they are required to make use of the example to improve linguistic quality by considering different versions with the similar implication, e.g. "Some regions are affected by such disasters as human wars, carbon dioxide emissions, sandstorm, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, etc. Such disasters as human wars, carbon dioxide emissions, sandstorm, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, etc. affect some regions . Such disasters as human wars, carbon dioxide emissions, sandstorm, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, etc. add to the sufferings in some regions. Such disasters as human wars, carbon dioxide emissions, sandstorm, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, etc. enter into the negative existence of some regions. There are such disasters as human wars, carbon dioxide emissions, sandstorm, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, etc. which affect the economic development in some regions." Teachers can make use of the case to introduce the material for energy and resource conservation in a hotel: 'We are committed to energy and resource conservation. Energy conservation helps reduce the effects of global

warming, acid rain and smog, and protects our natural resources. Water conservation is a vital concern as well. Our standard is to change your bed linen every third day and at check-out. If you would like your sheets changed during your stay, we will gladly accommodate you. Just place this card on you pillow or call Housekeeping. In addition to the above, we've also pioneered recycling programs and installed water saving device and energy saving lighting throughout the Hotel.' Like the Chinese medicine, the approach of ideological infiltration in the linguistic activity gradually produces positive effects on learners' viewpoint of life.

Ideological quality determines the proper direction of life and learning, whereas the improvement of professional quality is like improving learners' skill to drive a car. Learners need to infiltrate knowledge of a specialty into their linguistic activities, e.g. the knowledge of architecture, textile, electronics, mechanics, financial management, etc. Linguistic work of planning professional activities is basically mental and requires thinking things through logically. Learners ought to think before acting and act in light of professional knowledge rather than linguistic guesses. Effective planning helps learners adapt to change by identifying opportunities and avoiding problems and sets the direction for teamwork.

It is recommended that learners go outside campuses to be social and sociable. Being social implies that learners accumulate the knowledge of life and work in society, cultivate the ability to solve authentic problems related to work or life. Language should be learned according to language use in real life so that learners are able to develop communicative competence, which is the ability to use language appropriately in social situations. For instance, learners can develop the ability to write notices by imitating the real one offered by the Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination in 2010:

1. China Pavilion operating hours: 9:00-17:00,last entry:16:00.The Expo Bureau reserves the right to reschedule the operating hours of the pavilion and to limit admission on a temporary base.

2. Each ticket allows admission of one person (single entry) on the designated date and time slot.

3. Non-refundable unless otherwise stated by the Expo Bureau.

4. Please maintain the ticket properly. Any improper acts, such as bending, moistening or exposing to strong magnetic forces , should be avoided.

5. No animals or any other items prohibited by the Expo Bureau are allowed in the pavilion.

6. No re-entry once the ticket is marked or punched.

7. Please keep the ticket for further check or other uses.

8. Please observe the regulations by the Expo Bureau and follow the instruction of staff on-site.

9. Hotline: +86-21-20202010-1111

There are many situations in which learners need to be sociable in the community. If they want to find a job, they need to communicate with the officer in human resource departments. Before they sign a contract with a businessman, they want to negotiate the deal. When they plan to organize a club, they persuade potential members to join the club. In order to improve communicative competence, learners need to construct a series of activities that use a variety of linguistic skills. If learners are able to negotiate with businessmen, they need to practice writing a contract. If they are able to understand a dialogue about buying things in a shop, they can use the situation as a model for practicing their speaking skills. If they are able to read a brochure, they are encouraged to write an introduction. The realistic communicative use of language encourages learners to improve their social quality.

As many factors enter into learners' development of mental and physical quality, it is frequently suggested that learners focus on such traditional virtues as health, honesty, and hardworking. For instance, when they learn the poem 'Wish You Good Health: Early to bed, Early to rise, Makes a man healthy, Wealthy and wise. Eat slow and live a long life. Eat at pleasure, drink by measure. Fear kills more than illness. Folly is an incurable disease.' they are guided to cultivate a healthy life style. If learners suffer setbacks in study, teachers ought to encourage them to improve their psychological quality, or they are encouraged to overcome difficulties by themselves.

Nowadays, there is a negative tendency that a few learners resort exclusively to Internet for information. They tend to download everything from networks, e.g. a paper, a letter, a resume, a story, etc. hence an epidemic of so-called plagiarism on campus. In order to get rid of the negative effects of Internet, two ways of integrating skills are promoted: simple integration, by which a receptive language skill serves as a model for a productive language skill, and complex integration, which is a combination of activities involving different skills and thematically linked. More practices of interactive skills are introduced in the classroom: dictations, debates, contests, etc. Dictations make learners convert the spoken words accurately into written language. Debates and contests make learners listen, speak, sometimes write down and read pieces of messages. These communicative activities play a role in enlarging learners' range of language production, cultivating their hardworking and honesty.

IV. CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal of foreign language teaching and learning is to enable learners to independently use the language in their routine work or daily life. Learners ought to be supplied with the language that will be used in the real world. But a gap still exists between the use of language in real life and the traditional pedagogy on campus. In virtual life, language is often used to perform communicative functions, whereas in traditional classroom pedagogy, the focus is on linguistic form rather than on communicative functions. Language is always used in a certain context, while traditional pedagogy

tends to isolate language from its context. One possible solution to narrow the gap is to develop learners' competence, which includes both the knowledge about the language and the knowledge about how to use the language appropriately in certain contexts.

The development of competence is closely related to wisdom, ability and quality. Wisdom is like our brain, it improves with the use of several intelligent methods, e.g. alliteration, separation, affixation; a sense of humor, e.g. proverbs and riddles; individuality and flexibility, e.g. adaption of learning materials, so on and forth. Different persons may have different levels of understanding, yet the development of learners' ability to read, to write, to listen, to speak, to translate requires several practical approaches, e.g. useful techniques of comparison, form of variety, balance of multiple skills, etc. Most importantly, we regard the improvement of learners' quality as the core of our task. Quality serves as our top priority, the direction as well as the life of all the activities in ELT. All of us need to connect ideological work with every aspect of our activities, through gradual infiltration. Integrating linguistic skills are of use for quality: simple integration, by which a receptive language skill serves as a model for a productive language skill, and complex integration, which is a combination of activities involving different skills and thematically linked.

Wisdom, ability and quality are interdependent. Wisdom without ability and quality is no better than foolishness. Ability without wisdom and quality is nothing but bluntness. Quality without wisdom and ability is meaninglessly out of function. Wisdom is like our money in a bank, ability is like our use of the money in the bank, and quality is like the proper use of the money in the bank. Some persons may possess the wisdom and ability to speak and write. Others may have the wisdom and ability to read and write, or enjoy a certain degree of quality. How to make the three elements coordinately develop is a really tough topic, which is beyond the scope of a single passage. Several practical approaches to developing wisdom, ability, quality require authentic practice, and our major intention is to arouse much awareness of the topic ,which may deserve further research in the future.

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