Professional Development of English Teachers in Second Language Teaching

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Abstract—**English education is an integration of many factors such as teaching methods, curriculum design etc. In particular, teachers' ability plays an important role in English education. This paper discusses the development of teachers' teaching ability and proposes a series of basic requirements for more effective English education. It is argued that adoption of scientific and appropriate teaching methods, effective curriculum design, development of teachers' language skills, scientific research ability and application of modern teaching facilities etc. are the necessary abilities required by the English teachers in modern English education.**

Index Terms—**professional development, teaching approach, curriculum design**

I. INTRODUCTION

In the research of language teaching and learning, the ability of English teachers plays an important role. In general, the higher the teachers' teaching ability is, the better the teaching effect will be. The role of the language teacher has taken great changes in recent years. In traditional English teaching framework, he/she tries to control the learners and deliver language knowledge to the learners. Nevertheless, this kind of teacher-centered teaching mode restricts learners' language learning. Therefore, professional development of English teachers is required for the better English education in the new century. A teacher, as the main organizer and guide in the teaching process should be familiar with various factors that influence ultimate teaching result. Precisely speaking, English education is an organic integration of many factors and development of teachers' ability plays an important role in the whole process of English education. This paper focuses on the professional development of teachers in Second Language Teaching (SLT) in order to meet the challenges as a non-native English teacher. It is argued that application of effective teaching methods, development of curriculum design, conversion of teachers' role, expansion of major knowledge, development of language skills and scientific research ability etc. are the major fields related to the development of teachers' ability.

II. LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Language teaching methods have undergone many years since 18th century. Nevertheless, many non-native English teachers are not so familiar with those teaching methods, especially the teachers whose major research field is not related to the English education do not care much about application of teaching methods. As a matter of fact, language teaching should depend upon appropriate language teaching methods so that it can lead to a satisfactory and effective teaching result.

A. Overview of Language Teaching Methods

Language teaching theories have undergone a long history. Some of them have been very popular in particular period of time. For example, grammar-translation method was one of the most popular teaching methods in 1920s to 1930s. Communicative Language Teaching approach becomes the mainstream of modern English language education. In view of better understanding to the teaching theories, we will make a brief overview to the language teaching theories from historical perspective so that non-native English teachers may apply them in the practical language teaching process.

First of all, grammar-translation method which is known as the earliest language teaching method has influenced English teaching for a long period of time. Teachers' teaching focuses on the translation from target language texts to native language. Oftentimes it is applicable at beginner's stage. One of the features of the direct method is to use spoken language in situations without native language translation. It creates a good chance to the learners for language learning, while at the same time it also creates challenges for the teachers' ability to express their ideas. Audio-Lingual method which attaches more importance to the oral and listening skills of the learners also emphasizes use of target language. In silent way method, a teacher remains to be silent so that learners can focus their attention on what they learn. This method provides a good chance for the learners, but on the other side, it neglects positive roles of teachers in the class. Communicative language teaching which is well known to all has been popular since 1980s in China. In CLT framework, teachers and learners interact with each other and negotiation is often conducted during the course period. Class activities including information gaps, role play and games not only make learners interested in the contents concerned, but also increase teaching effect. Since communicative competence is the ultimate goal, grammar and

sentence analysis etc. are not emphasized that much. Content-based language teaching and task-based language teaching are two of the effective teaching methods often adopted in contemporary language teaching. In CBLT or TBLT, learners learn a language by studying other subjects or fulfilling specific tasks in the class. In addition, cooperative learning methods, multiple intelligence methods etc. are also applied to language teaching. The period that various teaching methods coexist is called "method era".

Various types of teaching methods have been explored and each of them has its own merits and unique features. The problem is how to apply them effectively in language teaching. Teaching experience proves that no single teaching method can lead to the completely satisfactory teaching effect. This being so, are there any solutions to this problem?

B. Development in Language Teaching Theories

Research on the language teaching methods enters a new era called "post-method era" in late 1990s which emphasizes collaboration of teaching methods rather than focusing on a specific teaching method. Eclecticism is one of the possible answers to this problem. Eclecticism means to select good teaching methods from various teaching methods. Rivers argues that "eclectics try to absorb the best techniques of all the well-known language-teaching methods into their classroom procedures, using them for the purpose for which they are most appropriate" (Rivers, 1981). Nevertheless, not all the good teaching methods are applicable in each language class. It implies that there should be a set of principles in applying these methods. This teaching method framework is defined as principled eclecticism. Precisely speaking, principled eclecticism is different from previous eclecticism or mere integration of those teaching methods. Principled eclecticism which means a "coherent and pluralistic teaching method" was firstly used by Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2000). It is "a desirable, coherent, pluralistic approach to language teaching. Eclecticism involves the use of a variety of language learning activities, each of which may have very different characteristics and may be motivated by different underlying assumptions" (Mellow, 2002).

Application of principled eclecticism largely depends on the ability of the teachers. In this sense, it is positive that selection of the appropriate teaching methods is a challenge for the English teachers. Tarone and Yule argue that "eclectic method places a great deal of responsibility on the individual teachers' ability to choose appropriate procedures and materials according to some principles or some set of principles" (Tarone and Yule, 1989). In brief, it is teachers' ability that decides effective use of teaching method. At the same time, teachers' responsibility also increases in the principled eclecticism framework. Therefore, teachers should not only be familiar with various types of teaching methods but also use them flexibly and effectively.

C. Curriculum Design

As to the definition of curriculum design, different scholars have different perspectives on the basis of its purposes. Some scholars argue that curriculum design is an aspect of education profession which focuses on developing curricula for students. Curriculum design is equivalent to the whole arrangement of the class. Hence, it reflects the whole teaching procedure in detail. Others believe that the curriculum is an academic plan, which should include the purpose of the curriculum, content, sequence, instructional methods, resources, evaluation approaches, and how adjustments to the plan will be made based on experience or assessment data. (Lattuca, L. & Stark, J., 2009) Teachers are required to make scientific and flexible application of teaching methods discussed previously, especially the principled eclecticism.

Curriculum design is closely related to many aspects. In addition to the learners in the class, teachers are also required to get prepared. Generally speaking, the following three requirements should be taken into consideration by the teachers in order to reach better teaching quality (CIDR, 1999). Firstly, teachers can ask questions about the students who will take the course. This is the process to understand the learners. Teachers can make proper teaching plan in advance on the basis of practical level of the learners. This includes preparation of teaching materials, adoption of appropriate teaching methods, arrangements of classroom activities and so on. Secondly, teachers can determine what they want students to learn and how they will know students are learning it. Last but not least, teachers can design a set of activities, assignments, and materials that will help them lead those students in their learning. As a teacher, he/she should know who will listen to your lecture. In other words, teachers should understand their counterparts' needs in the class as much as possible including all possible information about learners.

What's more, the teachers should know what and how to do during the course period, i.e., concrete teaching plan. Establishment and implementation of an effective teaching plan depends on the teachers' individual ability to a large extent. In addition, organization of class activities such as group discussion and learners' individual presentation etc. should be properly planned so that class atmosphere can be more active and learners will feel relaxed when they learn English in the class. In a word, a well-prepared class will lead to a satisfactory and effective teaching result.

III. Professional Development of English Teachers in Second Language Teaching

English is an international language widely spoken and used throughout the world in different fields of society. Most countries using English as a second language or a foreign language put great emphasis on the professional development of English teachers ability because language teachers play an important role in the whole language teaching process. One of the reasons for this phenomenon is that learners lack authentic language environment. For the sake of better development of English teachers in non-native countries, the following elements should be carefully concerned.

A.   Significance of Professional Knowledge

One of the basic requirements for a qualified English teacher is to acquire a good understanding of major knowledge, especially the English linguistic knowledge such as basic English language knowledge (vocabulary, grammar etc.), phonetics, syntax, semantics etc., British and American literature, teaching methodology, course design and academic writing ability etc. In addition, it proves that contemporary English teaching concerns more complicated transcultural and interdisciplinary knowledge. Many articles in the English textbooks are related to the knowledge from other research fields. Therefore, English teachers should face the challenges actively and improve their abilities to be a qualified English teacher. Generally speaking, English major knowledge is regarded as the most essential requirement for an English teacher. In addition to the language knowledge, an English teacher also needs knowledge of other fields. Here is one example. A text about Martin Luther King concerns historical, political and social issues. As the learners, they may not be familiar with the topic, particularly some significant historical events. For the sake of better understanding, teachers may offer necessary information about the topic to the learners by showing relevant information such as video clips, PPT presentation etc. Then the learners will grasp the gist more promptly and effectively. In order to reach this goal, teachers should make a clear understanding of their major knowledge and relevant interdisciplinary knowledge. To put it simply, teachers' research scope should not be restricted within their own majors.

B.   Development of Comprehensive Language Skills

As known to all, language is a tool for communication. Language skills are not separate single identities though we differentiate various language skills for the sake of language study such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating etc. However, in the real communication situation, it is not hard to recognize that different language skills are often interrelated in the output although the individual input seems to be independent. For instance, one should read and write in order to translate written materials and listen and speak when he/she works as an interpreter in the case of international conferences. Likewise, teachers of English are required to give a clear statement or explanation (i.e., speaking) to the learners so as to make the learners understand what they learn in the class. Teachers also need to read relevant text when they explain it. In order to provide feedback or suggestions to the learners, teachers need to listen to the learners and then talk to them. Therefore, development of comprehensive language skills is not only the basic requirement for the English learners but also the premise for the English teachers to teach effectively.

As a non-native speaker, an English teacher in SLT environment meets great challenges in the language teaching process since language teaching needs various language skills such as reading, listening, speaking, writing and translating etc. Hence, to be a qualified English teacher, one should reach proficiency, accuracy and fluency in the use of English language. Teachers can expand their knowledge through making further study and relevant scientific research.

Frankly speaking, listening and speaking skills need to be consolidated periodically. Nevertheless, in many cases teachers have less opportunity to practice their listening and speaking. As two of the basic language skills required by English teachers, speaking and listening are often neglected by the non-native English teachers. It is not rare to see that a certain proportion of the non-native English teachers give lectures in their native languages, but not in English. If this is the case, learners will have less time to contact with English except for their textbooks. In other words, learners will never have possible foreign language environment. In this sense, improvement of teachers' own language ability is the most essential problem to be solved in the course of English teaching. The best choice for non-native English teachers is to teach English through English. Teachers can improve their language skills and provide more authentic language environment for the learners. Therefore, improvement of English teachers' own language ability is the premise to teach the learners English. Other language skills, i.e., reading, writing and translating etc. need to be improved as well. In a word, comprehensive language skills including speaking, reading, listening, writing and translating of English teachers should be developed for the higher teaching levels and more satisfactory teaching effect.

C.   Teaching Based on Research

Improvement of teaching and scientific research ability is one of the effective ways to develop teachers' overall teaching ability. Research ability of a teacher reflects teaching levels to some extent. Nevertheless, research ability of English teachers proves to be unbalanced in the advanced and backward areas in China. English teachers in developed areas like Beijing and Shanghai have more chances to make direct contact with latest academic information and corresponding teaching and research materials. In comparison with previous case, English teachers in the economically and educationally backward areas have less opportunity to know about the latest teaching and research information. Notwithstanding the gap in the research ability between the developed and less developed, it is an inevitable choice for the teachers in both areas to improve their research ability. Only by keeping pace with advanced scientific research can we improve our research ability and teaching level.

Some possible suggestions are followed for the improvement of scientific research ability of non-native English teachers. First, we can increase academic communication with other English teachers and scholars to keep up with the latest research level. If possible, we can invite prestigious scholars to give lectures on the topics of common concern. Second, we can organize various academic workshops, seminars and conferences to enhance interaction and exchange of academic information and know more about current tendency of scientific research. Except for some developed cities like Beijing and Shanghai, most areas have rather poor conditions in providing English teachers with latest teaching and

research information. However, with development of internet and multimedia, communication between areas has been improved to some extent. Third, we can publish relevant academic articles and participate in major-related academic seminars and conferences to expand knowledge of English including linguistics, literature and education etc.

D. Application of Modern Technical Means

Modern English teaching requires more diversified means of teaching. In addition to the basic means of teaching i.e., giving lectures in the class, English language teaching requires application of modern multimedia facilities such as computers, internet, projectors and audio-lingual equipment to improve learners' basic language skills particularly listening and speaking abilities. Multimedia is regarded as one of the symbolic means of language teaching in the 21st century. Recently, most of the English majors in China encourage English teachers to use multimedia in the class. One of the benefits from this type of class is that learners have more chances to make contact with authentic language materials.

Application of advanced teaching facilities is inevitable. Teachers, as the main users of those teaching facilities need to be familiar with those facilities and take advantage of them. One more representative way of language teaching in the 21st century is via network. In some universities, most of the class files are sent to the learners through internet.

Some particular teaching methods have already been formed on the basis of advanced network techniques such as web-based language teaching. This type of language teaching largely depends on the network environment. Both teachers and learners have their classes on the internet. Teachers assign and check the learners' homework in front of their computers. It not only saves the teacher's time, but increases teaching effect. No matter what kinds of teaching methods we adopt, teachers should know how to use them for more effective English teaching.

E. Establishment of Cooperative Teaching and Learning Relations

Language teaching is a bilateral cooperative process which requires both teachers' and learners' attention. In traditional language teaching framework, teachers are the main controller in the language class, while the learners are passively accepting what they hear whether they understand it or not. It will inevitably affect normal language learning result. Current English teaching focuses on the interaction between the learners and teachers. This trend started from early 1990s in China with development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. Teachers and learners cooperate together to find out problems and solve them. Hence, the learners can become the main body of the teaching activities, whereas teachers become the guide providing appropriate suggestions to the language learners as well as delivering necessary language knowledge. As a result, the whole class gradually forms learner-centered, teacher-guided autonomous teaching atmosphere. In a word, teachers need to pay more attention to the interaction between teachers and learners so as to form mutual communication and interaction during the teaching process rather than teachers' unilateral teaching behavior.

In addition to the mutual cooperation in the class, teachers should try to understand more about learners. Modern language teaching encourages learner-centered education or learner autonomy. Since 1980s focus of language teaching has been converted from teachers to learners. Various factors related to the learners are more closely focused on, for instance, learners' motive, learning styles and strategies, learners' personality features and other social and cultural factors possibly affecting language learning. On the basis of the analysis above, we conclude that teachers in current English teaching framework have multiple characters, namely, teaching languages, guiding learners and understanding learners.

F. Significance of Culture Input

Culture input proves to be very necessary in foreign language teaching and learning. It is well tested that cultural competence plays a critical role in successful language learning (Ellis, 1994; Terry, R.M., 2000). In terms of English language teaching and learning, the culture of the English-speaking countries, the American or British culture as idealized model, has become an inseparable component in the second language teaching context. McKay (2003) identified two important ways that culture can play in language teaching: linguistic dimension of culture and pedagogical dimension of culture, the former involving semantic, pragmatic and discoursal features and the latter the option of the teaching material and methodology in teaching. The task of the language teacher is not to teach cultural contents word by word, but "to facilitate learners' interaction with some small part of another society and its cultures, with the purpose of relativising learners' understanding of their own cultural values and behaviors, and encouraging them to investigate for themselves…" (M. Byram, A. Michols and D. Stevens, 2001).

English teachers in SLT environment can adopt two different means to introduce cultural background to the learners. One is to teach cultural characteristics and differences through teaching materials such as course books or reference materials, the other is to create effective language learning atmosphere by using multimedia means. Modern language teaching demonstrates various features compared with traditional language teaching. Culture input proves to be one of the salient features in current language teaching.

IV. Conclusion

English teaching concerns many factors such as teaching methods, curriculum design and teachers' ability etc. In this

paper, we discussed some basic problems related to the professional development of teachers' ability in English teaching. We analyzed various language teaching methods from historical perspective in order to find out the most appropriate method to the English teachers. As a result, principled eclecticism proved to be the best choice. We also made some proposals for the teachers' professional development. Improvement of professional knowledge, comprehensive language skills, and competent research ability in specialized field etc. were mainly concerned. Conversion of teachers' role is also necessary in improving teachers' ability as well as establishing learner autonomy. Furthermore, development of comprehensive language skills and application of advanced teaching facilities such as multimedia were indicated as the necessary conditions of improving teachers' ability. Teachers' ability plays an important role in the process of English teaching. To be a professional, energetic, resourceful and creative teacher will be our common goal to strive for in the future. We hope that research done here will make contributions to the professional development of teachers and further to the development of English education.

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