

Practical Research on Classroom Strategies in the Grading Teaching Model

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Abstract—In response to newly-implemented grading model of teaching in our university, frontline teachers like me are supposed to try out new strategies in classroom teaching. Inspired by previous research on language learning strategies and second language classroom acquisition, the present article shares a teacher's first-hand teaching experience in actual classroom activity in the expectation to throw out a brick to get gem. Ideally students at different levels of English are placed in different classes for greater efficiency in teaching and learning. But the truth is not that simple in reality. Good or bad effects walk along. Sincerely expect more teachers to contribute generously and further promote the reformation to the better.

Index Terms—classroom strategy, grading teaching model, *New Horizon College English*, CET-4

I. INTRODUCTION

As a result of increased enrollments in universities and colleges since 1999 in China, college English teaching has become more challenging with every generation of college-bound students coming. They were born and grew up with advanced technologies of smart phones and internet, their English learning is more or less aided by tremendous numbers of foreign movies and music, but their learning is more fragmental. Furthermore, on one hand, most of them are realizing the importance of mastering a foreign language like English with China's globalization and liberalization. On the other hand, their level of English proficiency seems not to be improved efficiently though investing a wealth of time and energy into it in the process of their learning before college. What's worse, quite a part of them are forgetting what's mastered, their English skills are declining after two years of university study, and are totally losing their English ability upon graduation. Confronted with newer generation every year, college English teachers are expected to be quite innovative in their teaching styles and willing to keep on updating knowledge bank and exploring new strategies applied in classrooms.

In 2007 the State Education Ministry proposes in China College English Curriculum Requirements, that college English course "should be fully individual-oriented, taking into account students with different starting points, so that students who start from lower levels will be well taken care of while students whose English is better will find room for further development. College English course design should help students to have a solid foundation in the English language while developing their ability to use English, especially their ability to listen and speak in English. It should ensure that students make steady progress in English proficiency throughout their undergraduate studies, and it should encourage students' individualized learning so as to meet the needs of their development in different specialties." (2007) Since then, universities and colleges at all levels have started to adopt the grading teaching model "in accordance with the Requirements and in the light of their specific circumstances" (2007).

Our university, as a west provincial university, among those that responded lately, has gone through two stages of practical exploration. In Grade 2015, after taking an objectively-graded proficiency test upon entering college, freshmen are divided in two levels: level A students are specially trained to prepare College English Test Band Four (CET-4) in December 2015 while level B students are basically guided to strengthen their basic knowledge about the English language so that some of them are selected to take College English Test Band Four in June 2016. It's proved that the present model is more efficient than former grades before Grade 2015 who take English course in the form of natural classes. Its measuring standard is that the overall proportion of students passing CET-4 had gone up to 60.94% in December 2015 by comparison with about 40% in previous grades of freshmen. Encouraged by this achievement, in Grade 2016, the same grading model is practiced in the first semester, which makes greater progress in the rising proportion of 63.06% in December 2016. Differently from the second semester of Grade 2015 which has exactly the same students in level A and B, students are further divided into three levels: Level A is supposed to enhance students' comprehensive skills and prepare for College English Test Band Six in June 2017, level B is trained to prepare for CET-4 in June 2017, and level C is continuing to reinforce English basic skills.

Theoretically this practice is well-directed and ideally “follow the principle of providing different guidance for different groups of students and instructing them in accordance with their aptitude so as to meet the specific needs of individualized teaching”.(2007) Here comes a tough problem: “As a strategist to help students to cope with numerous tests or exams in their learning career, college English teachers are expected to design some efficient strategies to arouse students’ enthusiasm, stimulate their motivation and facilitate their efficacy in classroom teaching.”But what strategies can be employed in actual classroom teaching especially in face of “silent learners and responsible note-takers”?

II. RELATED REVIEW

A. Classroom Situation

This semester I was assigned four classes: one level A class who are admired as lucky dogs, two level B classes who belong to level A in the first semester of their freshmen year but fail to pass CET-4 in December 2016, and one level C class who is not entitled to CET-4 because of their test paper scores in English final exam below the minimum standard. Here is given table 1 to show the components of students’ majors and number of each class because there are important reference factors influencing teachers’ design in classroom teaching strategies and the overall learning environment.

TABLE 1:
COMPONENTS OF STUDENTS’ MAJORS AND NUMBER OF EACH CLASS

Class	College & School	Major	Number of students	Total
Level A	Computer Science	E-commerce	23	72
		Computer Science	10	
		Software	23	
		Computer Network	6	
		Internet of Things	10	
Level B	Keys majors	Polymer Materials	19	61
		Brewage	20	
		Accounting	22	
	Economics	International Trade	14	52
		Hotel Management	7	
		Tourism Management	7	
		Rural Regional Economy	13	
		Investment	11	
Level C	Civil Engineering	Water Supply & Drainage	26	97
		Cost Engineering	25	
		Civil Engineering	46	

As we know, when placing students into different levels of class, we take every college or school as a unit. So for every level of class, almost all majors of the relevant college or school are included. Personally level B classes feel down and overwhelmed but are easier to help regain their strength as they have a clear goal of preparing for CET-4, and level A and level C are tougher in that the former class feel content, self-satisfied, or even arrogant, while the latter feel depressed, hopeless, and frustrated. Considering various majors in the same level of class, large class size and other possible factors that decrease the class efficiency like students’ motivation and side effect of the present grading model, teachers should be very dedicated, responsible, innovative and passionate to create a positive learning environment and establish a pleasant relation with learners both in class and outside class.

According to undergraduates’ college English course syllabus for non-English majors in our university, level A and level C adopt two textbooks of *New Horizon College English* in classroom teaching: one is *Reading and Writing*, and the other is *Listening and Speaking*, and level B mainly deal with old exams in previous CET-4 all through the semester. As we know, those unitary textbooks are used in both level A and Level C classes doesn’t mean their teaching styles are uniformed. If teachers concerned don’t take time to design different classroom strategies, on one hand, it is hard to retain students in class; on another hand, students present at class may not make any progress in this course, which is painful and wasteful for both teachers’ and students’ investment in time, energy and attention. All along I work hard at knowing students, and trying out some strategies well-directed at my students, at least my intention going that way. Specifically with regard to teaching objectives over this term of united efforts made by students and myself, level A students can participate in conversations in their daily life or work on some topics related to our classroom discussions, level C students have confidence to join in simple conversations in English and are able to compose a 150-word or so essay with correct diction, right grammars and complete sentences. As to Level B students, most of them are lucky enough to pass CET-4, or feel like making some progress, or develop independent learning abilities for further challenges ahead. To achieve respective goals for each level, classroom teaching methods are illustrated as follows.

B. Language Learning Strategies and Second Language Classroom Acquisition

Language learning strategies were first introduced to the second language research in 1975, mainly focused on the good language learner (Rubin, 1975). At that time it was thought that a better understanding of strategies deployed by successful learners could help inform teachers and students alike of how to teach and learn languages more effectively. Initial studies intended to record the strategies of good language learners. In the 80s the emphasis shifted to

classification of language learning strategies. Then strategies were first classified on two aspects of being direct or indirect. Later on they were further divided into cognitive, metacognitive or affective/social categories. (O'Maley; Chamot, 1990). In 1990 in her book "Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know", Rebecca Oxford proposed "Strategy Inventory for Language Learning"(or SILL) (Oxford, 1990), which was widely accepted and practiced by numerous researchers in the 1990s and early 2000s. Though there exist controversies concerning basic issues like its definition, some researchers (Macaro, 2006) stopped trying to define it in favor of listing essential characteristics. Others (Dornyei, 2005) abandoned the strategy term in favor of "self regulation". Here I do owe previous researchers an abundance in that they do give me inspirations in actual classroom teaching. Their research suggest when adopting some language strategies, several factors should be taken into consideration like learners' motivation, learning styles, differences in gender, characters and personalities. Give the present grading model of teaching, learners' state of mind should be included.

Now goes to second language classroom acquisition. Research has indicated that many traditional language-teaching techniques are extremely inefficient. (Lightbown c.f. Ellis, 1994) Research on this at different levels of language has produced quite different results. It is generally agreed that pedagogy restricted to teaching grammar rules and vocabulary lists does not give students the ability to use the L2 with accuracy and fluency. Rather, to become proficient in the L2, the learner must be given opportunities to use the L2 for communicative purposes, learning (as for example, through a teacher's corrective feedback) to attend to both meaning and formal accuracy. (Doughty, Williams, Jessica, 1998; Ellis, 1994). As expected (but not really) advanced English learners, students' level of proficiency is not quite optimistic. Knowledge of grammars has been taught over and over again before college. Thus it is unrealistic and ineffective to repeat it in college English classroom. But what's most necessary is to integrate grammar rules and new vocabulary into communicative practice in the process of teaching and learning activities. On one hand, it is for "poor" students who don't master grammars well. On the other hand, practical use of the English language is crucially important for college students and skillfulness in grammar and vocabulary is a premise. When devising classroom teaching strategies, teachers should be conscious of all factors direct or indirect, and teach students how to "use" (communicative competency) English in practice.

III. PRACTICAL PRACTICE IN CLASSROOM TEACHING

A. Level A Class

As is stated above, *Reading and Writing* and *Listening and Speaking* are employed in classroom teaching. In accordance to university college English syllabus, six class periods are required to complete a unit in *Reading and Writing*, two class periods needed to finish the corresponding unit in *Listening and Speaking*. In the former textbook, in every unit there are two sections. Normally it takes four class periods to complete Section A which is mainly taught as intensive reading because besides comprehension of text, vocabulary, there are exercises like sentence structure, C-E translation and E-C translation, text analysis and structured writing. And two class periods are taken for Section B which is treated as extensive reading in that there are only two exercises of comprehension of text and vocabulary. Teaching plans of this term is from Unit 1 to Unit 5, which involve topics of culture difference, Olympic spirit, mixed marriage, true love, parent-child relationship and name & appearance. Four weeks before June 17 when CET-4/6 take place is reserved to deal with old exam papers of CET-6.

1 Reading and Writing

1) Vocabulary: Section A, Unit Two, Book II (2nd edition)

TABLE 2:
NEW WORDS &.PHRASES

1.pat; 2.presence; 3.promising; 4.amateur; 5.skier; 6.session; 7.amusing; 8.lower; 9.anniversary; 10.woolen; 11.romantic; 12.gratitude; 13.perceptivity; 14.ski; 15.massive; 16.fatigue; 17.clearing; 18.approximately; 19.breeze; 20.powder; 21.fuss; 22.indifferent; 23.rebel; 24.rebellious; 25.bachelor; 26.low-budget; 27.shift; 28.makeshift; 29.stack; 30.sticky; 31.mate; 32.teammate; 33.assert; 34.napkin; 35.swear; 36.damn; 37.unfair; 38.outburst; 39.passion; 40.assist; 41.frown;; 42.billion; 43.rank; 44.ranking; 45.indissoluble; 46.bond; 47.tropical;
48.next to; 49.in sb's presence=in the presence of sb; 50.by no means; 51.count on; 52.on one's occasion; 53.come upon; 54.pack into; 55.take notice of; 56. sing out

Firstly read after me. I teach them twice so that they can pronounce new words correctly, help to memorize them easily and have more time to be focused on memorization in class. If letting students to read aloud themselves, some might not read or cannot read properly, which is wasteful in time. When teaching, the teacher walks around the class to check them out. Next learn new words. I classify the whole New Words table into three groups: difficult pronunciation; word-building; and important words, which is shown in the table below.

TABLE 3:
CLASSIFICATION OF NEW WORDS

Difficult pronunciation: 4. amateur; 9. anniversary; 13 .perceptivity; 18. approximately; 45. indissoluble
Word-building: Prefix or suffix: 10. n.+en, adj.+en; en+adj; 22. in- +adj.; 24. n.+ -ous; 37. un- +adj.;
Compound word: 26. low-budget; 28.make-shift; 32.team-mate; 38.outburst
Important words: 2.presence; 21.fuss; 22. indifferent (to); 40. assist; 41. frown (upon)

For difficult pronunciation, students are required to make frequent practice so as to coordinate larynx, tongue, teeth, and lips well enough to pronounce English words in a proper and natural manner. For word-building, its aim is to help students have some ideas of word-guess skills and expand vocabulary as well. And for important words, also called active words, besides proper pronunciation and correct spelling, students are expected to construct complete sentences with correct grammars. After explaining related phrases, I will invite volunteer students to do Chinese-into-English translation. The examples are shown in table 4 below:

TABLE 4:
EXAMPLES OF "IMPORTANT WORDS" PRACTICE IN CLASS.

1. 当着这么的人的面说英语，他一点也不害羞或者紧张。 <i>(Though) speaking English in the presence of so many people, <u>he</u> didn't feel shy or nervous at all.</i>
2. 据说相关领导会出席我们今天下午的班会。 <i>It's said that <u>the leaders</u> concerned will be present at <u>our</u> class meeting this afternoon.</i>
3. 她不是一个在小事上斤斤计较的人。 <u>She</u> isn't such kind of persons to make a fuss over the trifles.
4. 作为一个有社会责任感的的大学生，我们不应该对身边有困难的人漠不关心。 <i>As college students <u>with</u> social responsibility, <u>we</u> shouldn't be indifferent to people <i>(who are) in trouble.</i></i>
5. 他经常帮助妈妈做家务事。 <u>He</u> often assist <u>his</u> mother in doing housework.
6. 我反对在公共场所吸烟。 <u>I</u> frown upon smoking in public (places).

When designing each example, make a conscious effort to the following points. A, Try to include various persons such as those underlined in table 4, e.g. he, the leaders, she, we, he, his, I. B, Present tense and negative (or questions) sentences are at high rate of misuse in practice. For example: Tom's parents don't like him clothes (or what his wear). Mary **don't enjoys** she life in the countryside. Examples are given in bold typeface in sentences of table 4. C, Changeable structures are devised to further strengthen student' practical skill beyond vocabulary practice like those structures in italics above in table 4. And lastly, give examples with positive meanings. If replaced example 1 in table 4 as “当着这么的人的面说英语，他感到害羞和紧张。” (... , he felt shy and nervous.), it sounds like a signal of finding a reasonable excuse for some silent students. As far as I'm concerned, it is of some importance to be an encouraging teacher. After having finished the part of New Words & Phrases, give students five minutes or so to reinforce vocabulary by doing Exercise III in the form of word-bank/filling, e.g. Why **are** you _____ all the time? Try to look happy! (**frowning**). Or: He _____ his own idea *though* it **didn't** work well. (**persisted in**). When students are busy doing this exercise, walk around the classroom to check it out in case some students might need individual instruction.

2) Text: *Learning the Olympic Standard for Love*, Section A, Unit Two, Book II

The topic of Unit 2 is about the Olympic spirit (or the spirit of commitment). I, for one, always emphasize classroom teaching of higher education is not all about knowledge inculcation, but more importantly, the development of abilities such as (in) lifelong independent study and of awareness of social responsibilities besides focusing on personal growth or success. Definitely I'm trying to practice those concepts in classroom teaching. For this text my original intention is to guide students to use key information to describe a person with proper adjectives and make a fair judgment about a person on basis of drips and drops of daily life. Two close-end questions are designed: A, What kind of person the writer's coach is? And B, What does the writer learn from her coach? Teachers' suggestion is: to read the passage, grasp main information and organize the answer to each question. Here in table 5 I extract some paragraphs as an example to explain how to answer question 1 *What kind of person the writer's coach is?*

TABLE 5:
EXCERPTS OF THE TEXT

Para. 1: Nikolai Petrovich Anikin was <u>not half as intimidating as</u> I had imagined he would be. No, this surely was not the ex-Soviet coach my father had shipped me out to meet.
Para. 2: But Nikolai he was, Petrovich and all. He invited me inside and sat down on the couch, patting the blanket next to him to get me to sit next to him . I was <u>so nervous</u> in his presence.
Para 3: "You are young," he began in his Russian-style English. "If you like to try Olympic Games, I guess you will be able to do this . Nagano Olympics too soon for you, but for 2002 in Salt Lake City, you could be ready? "
Para 4: "Yes, why not?" he replied to the shocked look on my face . I was a promising amateur skier, but by no means the top skier in the country. "Of course, there will be many hard training sessions, and you will cry, but you will improve. "
Para. 14: When coaching, he would sing out his instructions keeping rhythm with our stride: "Yes, yes, one-two-three, one-two-three." A dear lady friend of my grandfather, after viewing a copy of a video of me training with Nikolai, asked, "Does he also teach dance?"

To encourage more students to participate, a warm-up question is asked "According to Para. 1, and Para. 2, how does the writer?" As is expected, students are very active and showing interest in answering it. (She felt nervous.) Then

continues the second question “Why is she nervous?” Hearing this question, some formerly-active students keep silent because students don’t quite enjoy “why-question” or indirect question whose answer is not clearly written in the text. In this case further explanation is made to help students think “Normally what do you think a coach may look like?” Some students say with laugh, “strict”, “serious” (highlighted parts in italics). More often students use words in place of complete sentences while answering questions. Encouragement is given to students, in the meantime, more practice is expected: use a complete sentence to explain “Why does the writer feel nervous?” Some brave students stand up and give correct answer (Because she thought(/thinks) the coach was(/is) strict.). The teacher continues to explain: the writer thinks the coach is strict, which is only the writer’s imagination (before seeing him) and her normal response (when meeting him in person). But in truth, what kind of person the coach is according to their face-to-face meeting in Para. 2 (in bold typeface)? Finally students contribute some words like “friendly” and “easygoing”. Well done (applause). In the end the teacher adds a new difficult word “approachable”. The same guiding strategy is implemented to help students think and approach to correct answer. In bold typeface of Para. 3, we can see the coach is encouraging (inspiring), and sincere (honest), Para. 4 tells that he is perceptive, and honest (sincere), and Para. 15 shows that he is passionate and intelligent (smart, or brilliant).

As to the second question, *what does the writer learn from her coach?* Not everyone becomes a great man out of something huge or sensational. By doing little acts of kindness continuously, we can also act as a role model for people around, which, I guess, is all about the theme of this unit or real life. After intensive reading in the last paragraph shown in table 6,

TABLE 6:
PARA. 21 OF THE TEXT

Nikolai taught me to have the courage, heart, and discipline to persist, even if it takes a billion tries. He taught me to be thankful in advance for a century of life on earth, and to remind myself every day that despite the challenges at hand, "Now must be love, love, love."
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It is a good paragraph to train students’ reading and speaking skills. For one thing, students have to practice to understand full meanings of key words like courage, heart and discipline. What’s more, practice to explain them in complete sentences. According to what’s discussed in the first question, it is helpful to answer this question. *The writer learns to be courageous (or brave) even in face of any difficulty, be determined (or passionate) in what we pursue, and be strict with oneself to follow it through. In addition, be a thankful person and loving one.*

Finally, difficult sentences are explained and important structures are practiced in accordance with Exercise IV Sentence Structure, i.e. The usages of *Despite (prep.)* and inverted structure introduced by *nor* or *neither*.

2 Listening and Speaking

For this textbook, we mainly deal with listening skill. There are three parts in form of multiple choice for classroom practice: ten short conversations, one long conversation and one passage with five questions respectively. For traditional forms of multiple choices, students are skillful to cope them. Here my focus is on repeating short conversations. In the part of short conversations, normally from one to five is easier than from six to ten. Each time in listening class, I will let students do “listen and make the best choice” for the first five short conversations at the first time of listening. Next forget about possibly right or wrong choices as it is time to “repeat” what each speaker has said by second, third or even more time of repeated listening. At the second time the whole piece of the conversation is played so as to get the whole main idea. Then play each speaker before a volunteer student repeats him or her correctly. Let’s also take unit 2 as an example. The five short conversations are about “All that glitters is Olympic Gold”, which is a little more difficult than daily life topics like mixed marriage or parent-child relationship.

TABLE 7:
EXCERPTS OF SHORT CONVERSATIONS IN UNIT TWO, *LISTENING AND SPEAKING*, BOOK II (2ND EDITION)

2. M: I watched a TV show last night, called “All that Glitters Is Olympic Gold”. W: I watched that too. It was about the training and sacrifice/ necessary for athletes/ to compete in the Olympics. Q: What was the TV show about?
3. W: Running the hundred-metre dash is nothing/ compared to the passion/ necessary to run longer races. M: Are you kidding? I’ve run both and I know they both require determination. Q: Why does the man disagree with the woman?
4. M: Do you think/ drug taking is widespread/ among amateur athletes/ trying to get stronger. W: It’s hard to say/ whether it’s true or not. So much of what we hear/ seems to be rumors. Q: Does the woman believe that there is a problem with amateur athletes taking drugs?

In the three conversations, except for the male speaker in conversations two and three which was repeated after twice-played, all the others were played more than four times. The reasons may be accounted for from three aspects: A, before this semester, they had been trained like this: “repeating short conversations, a mission impossible” told by students after class. They were not challenged to challenge themselves. B, complex structures are reasonably hard for them to understand and repeat as well. And C, they are used to understanding what’s said word by word, instead of through meaning groups. The examples of meaning groups are marked with slashes. In conversation four, the female speaker doesn’t say anything difficult but there are so many “small” words (with brief and weak sounds in speaking) hard to figure it out. So students took some time to repeat it correctly. In this way, students listen carefully, take notes

occasionally and recite efficiently from the memory and notes. After one class of this practice, students feel a great sense of accomplishment.

B. Level B Class

Level B students are easy to conciliate. As long as teachers are trustworthy in students' eyes, the general strategy is to lead them in preparation for CET-4 step by step. But teachers must also be aware that most students are seeking for quick success. In this case teachers should be quite patient, well-organized and eloquent in continuous explanation and frequent encouragement on the issues of test-taking techniques, life lessons, or even stories of success. In classroom I design the whole semester into two phases: regarding three types of test exercises on the aspects of listening, reading, translation, and writing skills, the emphasis of phase one is placed on their basic knowledge on basis of module-based methodology. Four weeks before June 17 it is phase two which can be defined as sprint phase and is focused on classroom simulation training. Since every skill starts with vocabulary, here I'm giving space to detailed explanation on classroom teaching on the aspect of vocabulary.

Concerning the importance of vocabulary and grammar, some quotes speak louder. "Lexis is the core or heart of language" (Lewis, 1993, p100), while Widdowson (1990) stressed that obviously grammar played a central role in the function of language. Wilkins (1972) explained further "while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p111). For any language learning, vocabulary is a base in constructing a building. According to experience, if students have a proficient mastery of vocabulary in twenty units of Book I and Book II altogether in *Reading and Writing*, their basic knowledge is good enough to well prepare for CET-4 on the aspect of vocabulary. But the problem is: in the first semester we have briefly dealt with from Unit 1 to Unit 6 in Book I within three weeks at the pace of one unit per two class periods. Most time is poured into "sea" tactic training for CET-4. Last semester we highly recommend students "do it yourself".

My teaching plan is to direct students to memorize vocabulary by telling them two units of vocabulary will be dictated each time of English class as I know students enjoy dictation and will take it seriously. Furthermore, it is an easier way to test and supervise them. Every week there are two times of English classes, and four units will be covered, which means in five weeks all vocabulary will be "learned" and also students will be fueled a sense of accomplishment. However, if given class time to explain words and phrases, students might feel no challenge, or get distracted, or become "passive" note-takers. My classroom dictation is not simply listen and write. I adopt the strategy of "association", which means I explain how to use the words in sentences by letting them listen to my constructions and sometimes make sentences with important words or phrases in relation to latest news because in CET-4, there are three pieces of news items in listening comprehension (seven questions afterwards) besides long conversations and passages. Two types of vocabulary will be heard, one is "passive" words, the other being "active" words. The first type is to handle "listening" comprehension and "reading" comprehension, thus students don't necessarily know how to spell or use them, but for sure can recognize them once heard or come across. The second type is to cope with "essay-writing" and "translation" which require to spell correctly and to use them and their related phrases properly as well. Take Unit 9 and Unit 10 as an example.

TABLE 8:
ACTIVE WORDS OF UNIT 9 AND UNIT 10

Unit 9: 1.ambitious; 2.tender; 3.deceive; 4.keen; 5.intermediate; 6.sympathize; 7.refugee; 8.equivalent; 9.corruption; 10.overall; 11.correspond; 12.scatter; 13.considering; 14.margin; 15.relevant; 16.integrate; 17.disabled; 18.meantime; 19.regarding; 20.scope; 21.oblige; 22.undertake; 23.simplify; 24.guarantee; 25.deserve; 26.abundant; 27.exclude; 28.rarely
Unit 10: 1.rescue; 2.whichever; 3.spit; 4.crash; 5.punishment; 6.sorrow; 7.royal; 8.channel; 9.raid; 10.surrender; 11.ancient; 12.endure; 13.cast; 14.historic; 15.survival; 16.sway; 17.sector; 18.historical; 19.explode; 20.realistic; 21.glimpse; 22.outward; 23.heal; 24.weed; 25.layout; 26.expose; 27.luxury; 28.dizzy; 29.uneasy

Those active words are listed in Exercise III vocabulary. When explaining and dictating, I divide them into active and passive words. Firstly it is the emphasis of pronunciation like intermediate, sympathize, refugee, integrate, oblige and guarantee in unit 9 while words in unit 10 are relatively easier. Next is to integrate the latest news with word illustration. In these two units, words like tender, sympathize, refugee, corruption, rescue, crash, sorrow, raid, endure, survival, sector, and explode are high frequency of news items which is also one type of text exercise in listening comprehension in CET-4. I quoted king's speech on first anniversary of Brussels attack "Let us dare to be tender.", "The world people sympathize with the dead and the wounded in London terrorist attack.", "The world will continue to be uneasy as long as quite a number of people are enduring extreme poverty and pain.", "The rescue team arrived at the spot soon after the explosion." Also some fun is added to cheer up (refresh) the class. For instance, when explaining the words of "historic" and "heal", I illustrated, in Rio 2016 Olympics during a live CCTV interview at the pool, Chinese diver Yuanhui Fu used "洪荒之力" ("I have used all my prehistoric powers to swim.") to express her overjoy and excitement. I further explained, for her enthusiastic exclamation, foreign media really exhaust their Genesis powers (All my abilities are on cooldown!). For the word of "heal", I mentioned the English song "Let the music heal your soul", and afterwards during break between classes, I played this song. Likewise, I suggested memorizing words using the knowledge of word-building, e.g. inter+mediate, over+all, mean+time, under+take, which+ever, punish-ment, sur-render, out-ward, lay+out, and un-easy. Lastly, extra emphasis is laid on special usages like regarding and considering which are used as

preposition. By this means of dictation, students focus on spellings and listening to teachers' explanation of word usages. Later on I had face-to-face conversations and also QQ chats with students asking for further suggestions to test their vocabulary banks. They all agreed it's an exciting and efficient way to learn.

C. Level C Class

Different from syllabus of level A, eight class periods are for completion of one unit in *Reading and Writing*, and for this semester unit one, three, five, seven and nine will be covered on the topics of culture difference, mixed marriage, parent-child relationship, work, stress and health, and vision of success. Likewise, four weeks before CET-4 on June 17 is spared to help students know about question types and its corresponding preparation techniques. Besides that, students are given class time to do text exercises in old exam papers.

1 Reading and Writing

Considering large size (in total 97 students) in this class, I ask them to form freely in groups but fixedly in the same group for this semester. Altogether there are 16 groups who are required to sit in the same or next row in front or back as each time when having classes, they are supposed to participate in class activity as a whole. My purpose is to let every student do something. Since they are comparatively less accomplished than level A students, I adopt a slow-down strategy. According to course syllabus for level C, unit 2(4, 6, 8, and 10) is for their self-study. Here take unit 3 as an example to show how classroom teaching is carried out.

1). Vocabulary

TABLE 9:
NEW WORDS & PHRASES, SECTION A, UNIT THREE, BOOK II (2ND EDITION)

1.character; 2.compromise; 3.subtle; 4.hatred; 5.illusion; 6.married; 7.mutual; 8.compatible; 9.overlook; 10.expectation; 11.painful; 12.divorce; 14.bud; 15.resistance; 16.supportive; 17.grand; 18.counsel; 19.date; 20.subsequently; 21.harbor; 22.reservation; 23.prejudice; 24.charm; 25.caring; 26.indication; 27.confirm; 28.citizenship; 29.suspect; 30.harsh; 31.hesitate; 32.cancel; 33.proceed; 34.quote; 35.hardship; 36.racist; 37.realistic; 38.devotion; 39.idealistic; 40.resolve. 41.work out; 42.ups and downs; 43.all along; 44.proceed to do sth; 45.for a time; 46.take care of

Firstly read after me. This is to help students with correct pronunciation. After that, give them five minutes to get acquainted with word pronunciation. The teacher walks around in case some students might need individual instruction. As is said, almost every class activity requires students' participation as a group. When it is time to check students' pronunciation, the group has to elect one but each time (unit of this activity) a different group member is elected, while in another class activity, another different member participates. Only in this way, can every student of the whole class have an opportunity to show though most consider it a shy or stressful burden. From table 9, there are many difficult words for students to pronounce properly such as compromise, illusion, compatible, expectation, resistance, supportive, counsel, subsequently, reservation, prejudice, indication, confirm, suspect (v. n.), cancel, racist, realistic, idealistic, and resolve (solve).

Now it is time to practice word usages in sentences. I try to use simple structure at the first time, then expand the sentence by adding adverbial elements step by step. Sometimes students are invited to translate, sometimes I translate and then students repeat what I've said. Examples are shown in the table below.

TABLE 10:
EXAMPLES OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE FOR NEW WORDS & PHRASES USAGE

2.compromise n. v. e.g. 他们就这个问题已经达成了妥协。They have reached a compromise on <i>this issue (matter)</i> . 经过一个星期的谈判,他们就这个问题已经达成了妥协。Over one week of talk, they have reached a compromise on <i>this issue</i> . 经过一个星期的谈判,他们就双边贸易问题已经达成了妥协。Over one week of talk, they have reached compromise on <i>this issue of bilateral trade</i> .
10. expectation; 15. resistance n. e.g. Gail的婚姻遭到了她家人的强烈反对。Gail's marriage met with much resistance from <i>her family</i> . 令人大家意外的是,Gail与Mark的婚姻遭到了她家人的强烈反对。To our expectation, Gail's marriage with Mark met with much resistance from <i>her family</i> .
22.reservation, 27.confirm e.g. 请确定我们的酒店预定。Please confirm our hotel reservation. 请拨打电话确定我们的酒店预定。Please call to confirm our hotel reservation. Or: Please confirm our hotel reservation <i>on the phone</i> . 出发前,请拨打电话确定我们的酒店预定。Please call to confirm our hotel reservation <i>before departure</i> .

Examples in table 10 are shown to do expansion practice for classroom translation when learning new words. The parts in italics are adverbial component added by the teacher after students manage to translate the main structure. For each translation, three group at least are invited to know about their skills in diction, grammar and speaking in order that teachers can give timely correction. For another, give students chances (moderate stress) to think and participate.

After finishing vocabulary practice, 10 minutes is given to do Exercise III (vocabulary) in form of word-bank/filling. When students are busy doing this exercise, walk around the classroom to check it out in case some students might need

individual instruction. Different from level A students who can finish it in about five minutes, within 10 minutes, level C students can only “transfer” Chinese meanings into the box of the chosen words. When time is up, “best” students finish less than five sentences of ten. Still I persist in adopting this strategy of doing the corresponding exercise in class soon after finishing learning vocabulary because I intentionally give students time to digest what’s learned. If teachers assign it as homework, the textbook is clean and empty next time they return to class.

2). Text

Most students have difficulty understanding the text. If teachers adopt the same strategy as in level A by asking questions in a general sense, it will be a total disaster: the whole class will be desperately silent. Under such a circumstance, it is better to ask targeted questions at specific paragraphs. Before learning the text in class, questions will be given to students as homework for preview. Here the sample text is taken from Section A, Unit 3, Book II. This text is about interracial marriage between Gail, a white American girl, and Mark, a black foreigner in US. When Gail spread their marriage news, her marriage met with some resistance from her family. Thus the major reading task is to find out Gail’s mother changeable attitudes towards her relationship and her father’s three reasons why he opposes her marriage. For the text five questions are designed as shown in Table 11. For better effect of preview and class performance, specific paragraphs will be designated for every question.

TABLE 11:
PREVIEW & CLASSROOM QUESTIONS FOR THE TEXT

Para. 1: How do Gail and Mark treat their relationship?
Para. 2: What do they think about their difference in race and culture?
Para. 4: How do other couples treat their marriage wrongly?
Paras. 5-7: Explain how Gail’s mother’s attitudes change toward their relationship? <i>Tips are given when dealing with this question in class.</i> i. Before she sees Mark, what does she think about mixed marriage? ii. When she meets Mark in person, how does she feel? iii. After she hears about their marriage news, what does she say?
Para. 8-22: List three reasons why Gail’s father opposes their marriage?

Considering the relative answers cover from Para. 5 to Para. 7 (her mother’s emotional) and from Para. 8 to Para. 22 (her father’s rational), I will illustrate my classroom strategy using paragraph 1 and paragraph 4.

TABLE 12:
EXCERPTS OF THE TEXT, SECTION A, UNIT 3, BOOK II (2ND EDITION)

Para. 1: Gail and I imagined a quiet wedding. During our two years together we had experienced the usual ups and downs of a couple learning to know, understand, and respect each other. But through it all we had honestly confronted the weaknesses and strengths of each other’s characters.
Para. 4: We wanted to avoid the mistake made by many couples of marrying for the wrong reasons, and only finding out ten, twenty, or thirty years later that they were incompatible, that they hardly took the time to know each other, that they overlooked serious personality conflicts in the expectation that marriage was an automatic way to make everything work out right. ...

When dealing with the first paragraph, I will give students five minutes to read it with the question in mind “*How do Gail and Mark treat their relationship?*” From Table 11, we can see the second and third ones are complicated though altogether there are only three sentences. Asking questions is not the ultimate purpose, but to guide students to develop a good habit of reading with aim and critical thinking. When asked to answer, students’ biggest problem is to read sentences directly from the passage though those sentences are closely related to answers. They don’t take time and patience to think and develop answers with their own knowledge. Thus teachers should make rules like “Don’t read the answer!”, or “If the answer is directly from the text, recite it from your memory!”, or “The best answer is to develop your own answer based on information from the text.” Students are encouraged to discuss with group member and then elect a spokesperson for presentation. Normally my classroom question is not very hard. e.g. The suggested answer can be “They take it seriously/rightly?”. I devise this question for the comparison with paragraph 4 “*How do other couples treat their marriage wrongly?*” It is proven that this question is easier than the one in the first paragraph because students can grasp “...hardly take time to ...”, “overlook serious personality conflicts...” which are easier to recite.

2 Listening and Speaking

For this textbook, I’m still thinking about how to use it in an efficient way. So far I abide by traditional teaching styles. There are ten short conversations, one long conversation and one passage in form of multiple choices. When dealing with short conversations, I play twice for each conversation as the first time is to make the best choice as in the text, and the second time is to correct their listening immediately. After ten conversations are played, I will let students say out their answers. If more voices give right answers, I will move to the next. Or else, I will play for the third time, or the fourth time. For long conversation and passage which are followed by five questions respectively, I play twice. At the third time listening, I will let students listen and figure out correct answer for every question. I play, pause, and play till most students understand the answer part.

IV. CONCLUSION

Since teaching profession is a challenging task, frontline teachers' dedicated practice play a crucial role in an overall improvement of China quality education on the path of the reformation. Doubtlessly the grading teaching model is a valuable exploration though some educators and teachers are starting to question its widespread practicability. With regard to my personal experience, I am doing my best to implement new strategies possibly efficient in the grading model of classroom teaching. On one hand, new strategies underway do stir up a positive learning environment and stimulate students to read, think, listen, and speak in an effective way. But on the other hand, I notice something sadly negative in level A and C classes. Among those students active in class participation, quite a part of them belong to larger group of majors in the new combination of class. For example, in level A, each time's highest percentage for students' number of class participation is either e-commerce or software, and occasionally one or two students of other three majors participate though active students' English is good. The same is true of level C, students majoring in civil engineering always have some volunteers but never one in other two majors. On this issue I had face-to-face conversations and QQ chats with representatives of each major, from which I began to understand the minority don't have a sense of settling and belonging in this "new" environment where they only gather twice every week for English classes. Alas, the reformation is not as simple as improving the efficiency of classroom teaching by devising new strategies, but far more to deal with for sake of students' well-being at university.

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