COLLEGE ENGLISH GRADED TEACHING
RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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Abstract
This essay analyzes the current situation in College English teaching. And based on the experiment of graded teaching carried out in Jinggangshan College, the author discusses mainly the theoretical foundation, practicable significance and practicable experience of graded teaching and effects brought about by it.

Key words
College English □ Graded teaching □ Research □ Practice

Introduction
In recent years, how to reform college English teaching and create a new teaching ideology and how to design effective teaching mode and cultivate the wholly students' linguistic comprehensive application ability have become the themes of college English teaching and exploration. With enrollment expansion annually, their English levels vary a lot when students are admitted by the colleges and universities. Faced with the situation, many colleges and universities are taking measures to reform college English teaching mode and teaching methods. In the variety of teaching reforms, graded teaching form has been presently more and more adopted. We at Jinggangshan College have implemented college English graded teaching since 2003, from which we benefited a lot through a year and a half teaching experiment.

The latest 2004 version of College English Curriculum Pedagogical Requirements issued by the State Education advances clearly the principles of adhering to classified requirement and graded teaching in accordance with the students' aptitudes so as to meet the needs of different levels, different requirements and objectives to study. The author believes that at the present time graded teaching has realistic significance when "student-centered" teaching, learner autonomy and individualized learning are focused, which is a key means to improve students' linguistic comprehensive application abilities and a trend to develop for college English teaching. Thus this paper discusses mainly the theoretical basis, the practical meaning and the benefit of the graded teaching based on our college teaching experiment.

1 Theoretical basis of graded teaching

1.1 Cognitive theory
The term "cognitive structure" is advanced by Piaget. The theory of cognitive structure concentrates on the content and organization of a learner's learned knowledge and impact on study and focusing on a learner's cognitive structure is actually a dispensable aptitude for learning. Cognitive structure varies and then the divergent cognitive structure has different cognitive levels. Learner's cognitive structure makes an influence on learning. So it requires the designing of teaching content and organization should apply cognitive structure in students' brains. The idea supplies the theoretical basis for graded teaching.

1.2 Psychological theory
Psychological theory provides the theoretical theory basis for graded teaching. According to Ausubel's...
American modern famous psychologist claims that whether a learner can acquire new information predominantly depends on the relative concepts in his original cognitive structure. The most important factor affected the learner is what they have known. Ausbel requires that the teacher should begin to implement teaching based on their original knowledge and focus on learning motivation and initiative.

3 Student-centered theory

A study of learner-oriented has become a trend gradually in the field of English teaching. Teachers pay more and more attention to the “student-centered” teaching method and appreciate that the ultimate result of playing decisive role in teaching is learners themselves. Any successful educator has to consider individual characters and divergences in learning which may affect learner's classroom performance. Many discussions have been manifested about bringing students main parts into play. College English teaching should focus on students themselves and concentrate more on giving play to individual potentiality. Liang 2004 points out that: How to help students bringing initiative into full play in leaner autonomy has become an important project in college English teaching and in a word a teaching mode adapted to learner autonomy must be explored. Graded teaching embodies fully the teaching method of “student-centered”. Teachers classified students into different classes according to their different linguistic levels and provide them with different teaching contents which correspond to language acquisitive basic rule.

4 Researches on graded teaching

Researches on graded teaching have aroused concern of psychological linguistics cognitive linguistics and second language acquisition. Before 1997 the theoretical research findings on graded teaching were few and the actual evidence researches based on datum were fewer. But after 1997 especially in recent years more and more English teachers have managed to make research on graded teaching and have achieved some effective results. These findings are categorized as four aspects: 1 the necessity and feasibility of graded teaching 2 the theoretical research on graded teaching 3 the process research of graded teaching 4 the effectiveness research on graded teaching. These findings cover two main scopes:

1 Investigation over graded teaching from the angle of linguistics and psychology. Wang 1994 explored the science and necessity of graded teaching. He adapted Halliday’s theory of the multi-level language teaching system and the teaching methodology theory in his research and pointed out that the foreign language teaching should abide by the sequence and levels. The primary stage and high stage of the foreign language teaching is two main stages to improve students’ language applied technique. This stage theory can play active role in graded teaching. Yue 2003 and Liu 2003 analyzed the justification and effectiveness of the graded teaching in terms of “I 1” theory produced by Stephen D Krashen. They believed that the graded teaching should consider fully students’ individual variables such as language ability, cognitive style, motivation, attitude and personal characteristics. Wang 2003 based on the theory of S F Corder who thinks effective language teaching can contribute to students’ study and level improvement. They claimed that the present college English teaching pays attention to four principles: 1 the student-centered teaching, 2 communicative method classroom model, 3 focusing on students’ study style and strategy, 4 stressing different requirement about different students.

2 Investigation over the graded teaching from the teaching experience and present English teaching situation. To reform college English teaching model is a developing trend in foreign language. Through reviewing and analyzing the present English teaching situation the researchers appeal to construct new English teaching model and reform curriculum design and construct the testing and assessing system. The key of reform is to reform the goal of development and teaching model. Zhang Luo 1997, Liu 1997, “Competence education appeals to teaching with levels” Ren 1999, Gao 2002, Yue 2003 points out that implementing graded teaching can assure that students may make progress respectively on the different levels. Yang 1998 and Shao 2004 consider that graded teaching is a measure in teaching reform which contributed to solving the problem of “time costing and low effects” on college English teaching. Graded teaching can improve the teaching circumstances and stimulate students’ interests and students’ subjective potentiality. Tian 2002.

However we think that most studies of the graded teaching in China were mainly concerned the practice teaching in spite of some theoretical researches. But these teaching experiments lacked
scientific statistic analysis and arguments but their significance cannot be ignored. These findings provide a crucial means for this study. On the basis of findings, we ambitiously intend to further study the graded teaching system. This investigation attempts to be made qualitatively through concrete statistics in order to supplement these researches and answer the following questions:

1. How to establish a dynamical model in the process of the graded teaching?

2. How to provide external factors to affect the English study for students including the course content and design teaching techniques teaching management and so on?

3. Procedures of graded teaching

To explore the feasible approaches and effect, we at Jinggangshan College experimented with the teaching reform with graded teaching for Grade 2003/2004. The concrete methods are as follows:

1. Class division

We began to try graded teaching among the students of Grade 2003 and 2004. In this new teaching program, the freshmen of each Grade were divided into new classes with levels A B C according to their actual English scores upon entrance. 20% of the students with higher scores were graded into levels A to begin their study which were supposed to attain the higher requirement and pass CET Band 4 at the end of the first year. The students with medium-level B 40% and low-level C 20% learn the courses according to the original teaching program to attain the general requirement in two years.

2. Curriculum design

We made curriculum adjustment according to the new teaching program mainly for the students of classes A. When those students of classes A passed CET Band 4 in the first year, they were classified into advanced classes once again in the second year and were provided with some practical courses like Advanced English, Practical Translation and Writing, Listening, Speaking and English and American Culture etc. These courses aimed to create a supportive environment to excite the students' motivation so that they could exert their internal learning mechanisms to study actively and independently.

3. Promoting and demoting mechanism

At the end of each term all the students used a one-level test paper to participate in the final examination. 10% of the students of classes B or C could go on the more advanced classes to study respectively or vice versa. namely those students of classes A or B who failed to pass the examination would be descended to the lower classes. This kind of competitive mechanism urges all the students to study harder to meet the requirement of the course.

4. Benefits of graded teaching

Until now, we carried out graded teaching for three terms. The experiment showed that the mode of the graded teaching stimulated greatly students' initiatives and participation in study and realized individualized learning and met the needs of students' different levels and learning styles. The teachers and students benefited from it. The nearly 40% of the students with classes A passed when they took part in CET Band 4 by the end of the second term. Most of them not only mastered necessary linguistic knowledge but also learnt language practical application and improved expressing abilities in spoken and written English. The students with classes B or C played the solid foundation in linguistic basic knowledge. In a word all the students made greater progress in it. In order to know the effect brought by graded teaching after a year and a half in December 2004, we made an investigation which contains students' perspectives and benefit from graded teaching. The students investigated were selected from three different classes A B C. We delivered 775 questionnaires and got back 730 effective ones. The result is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 The students' responses to whether graded teaching is necessary or not</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number</td>
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<tr>
<td>percentage</td>
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<table>
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<th>Table 2 The students' benefits from graded teaching</th>
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<tr>
<td>very beneficial</td>
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<tr>
<td>number</td>
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<td>percentage</td>
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Table 1 shows that students suited to his/her English level study all along. The students who
considered graded teaching necessary took up 84% of the total number. Most of them took positive attitude towards graded teaching. The statistic of Table 2 shows that the students who benefited from graded teaching took up nearly 90% of the total and unbenefted only 14/15. After graded teaching the students' interests were generally promoted 84/17 and students' language basic knowledge were greatly improved 64/40 which we strengthened teaching of basic knowledge in classes B and C. But the students who improved apparently comprehensive application abilities took up only 24/48 mainly because students with level A are much less than those with levels B and C. In classes A we provided them with spoken English course and language skill courses. So the statistic in Table 3 are in line with the actual situation.

Table 3: The students' feelings and comments on graded teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement of interests</th>
<th>apparent</th>
<th>partly apparent</th>
<th>unapparent</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language basic knowledge</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language comprehensive application ability</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

In a word the experiment of graded teaching in our college was successful. From the feedback of the students most of them have adapted them to it and approved of it. The specialists of teaching assessment gave a good comment and reached fully recognition of graded teaching when they assessed the undergraduate teaching level in December 2004. Graded teaching has become a wide scope in our college and gave an unparalleled advantages which displayed new vitality. It will produce the positive and profound effect on college English teaching reform.

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