



Research on college English teachers' professional development based on postmethod Pedagogy

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 10 April 2013;

Received in revised form:

10 December 2014;

Accepted: 18 December 2014;

Keywords

Postmethod,
English teacher,
ESL,
Professional.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzed the latest development of ESL teaching and gave a new definition about college English teacher from postmethod's perspective. Through discussion on difficulties faced by college English teachers, this paper also analyzed the characteristics about college English teachers' professional development, and gave new thoughts and methods for college English teachers to promote their professionalization.

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Introduction

Since 1980s, education research has shifted focus from curriculum study to teachers' research. Afterwards, research on teachers' professionalization has become a trend in teachers' education research worldwide, and a hot topic in teachers' education reform in China.

Teachers' professionalization means teachers acquire educational knowledge and skills through life-long training in their career process, and it also represents a professionally developing process in which teachers become qualified educators with professional virtues.¹ Research on College English teachers' professionalization has drawn much attention from many scholars since they are a special teacher group. Researchers have given different definitions for College English teachers' professionalization from various aspects. In summary, College English teachers' professionalization could be understood as a dynamic progress in which College English teachers progressively develop their linguistic knowledge and improve their teaching skills for teaching and study. This paper aims to analyze the characteristics about college English teachers' professional development, and gave new thoughts and methods for English teachers to promote their professionalization based on postmethod pedagogy.

ESL teaching theories in postmethod pedagogy

Development of ESL teaching theories in Postmethod pedagogy

ESL teaching theories and methods have been explored for a long time. Thanks to the development of psychology and pedagogy, many teaching methods have influenced ESL teaching, such as immersion, task-based, content-based, project-based, which could be classified into three major categories of language-centered, student-centered and learning-centered. In

the 21st century, ESL teaching methods began to be doubted as some linguists held that there should not be the most effective method. A trend of anti-method is spread which brought about the approaching of the post-method era. Famous linguist Kumaravadivelu proposed the postmethod pedagogy with his macrostrategies' theory in the early 21st century, with corresponding ESL teaching theories and curriculum reform as a result. Many scholars believed that Postmethod era in ESL teaching is coming.

ESL teaching theories in postmethod pedagogy

Linguist Kumaravadivelu proposed macrostrategies as the core of postmethod pedagogy, which include maximize learning opportunities, facilitate negotiate interaction, minimize perceptual mismatches, activate intuition heuristics, foster language awareness, contextualize linguistic input, integrate language skills, promote learner autonomy, ensure social relevance, and raise cultural consciousness.² Based on postmethod pedagogy, English teachers put linguistic skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing into context and let learners benefit most from interaction in different language situation. The macrostrategies also require teachers to consider students' feeling and instruct them to focus on language phenomena by error correction with students-oriented concept. In summary, postmethod pedagogy is an abstract opening framework rather than a specific teaching method.

Re-define teacher based on postmethod pedagogy

Linguists give a new definition of English teachers. Based on postmethod pedagogy, English teachers are supposed to be pedagogically independent; they should construct developing ESL teaching theory and practice models by their understanding

¹ Gu Mingyuan, Teachers' Vocational Features and Professionalization, Teachers Education Research[J], 2004. 6.

² Kumaravadivelu, Beyond Method: Macrostrategies for language teaching [M], Yale University Press, 2003

about different teaching context and by surpassing the bound of traditional teaching theories.

With teachers' autonomy as the base of postmethod pedagogy, teachers are practitioner, researcher and theorizer in ESL teaching process rather than only receiving knowledge and practice theories. Teachers are supposed to be theorizer and draw teaching theories by practicing and self-reflection, and then apply their own theories into teaching practice again. As a result, teachers can develop their personal practicing understanding which promotes their professionalization. Postmethod pedagogy requires English teachers to be more professional than before.

College English teachers' professional development in postmethod pedagogy

Difficulties faced by College English Teachers' Professionalization

College English teacher is a special teacher's group. Firstly, compared with other college teachers, they use English to teach English, which require them to have a high competence of linguistics and cross-culture communication. Secondly, compared with teachers for English majors, college English teachers often teach fundamental English courses, and they have fewer opportunities for professional development and research DFGV N ,M NIU, English teachers have faced difficulties for their professionalization.

Change thoughts for College English Teachers' Professionalization

Colleges and scholars should attach importance to college English teachers' professional development, since they share the responsibility for improving college ESL teaching quality and level in China. More opportunities and platforms for their professional development should be created for them to improve ESL teaching reform and research practice.

More importance should be attached to improve college teachers' linguistic competence, as it is an essential part for their professionalization. From postmethod's perspective, college English teachers should take effective ESL learning elements seriously, and maximize learners' learning opportunities with their linguistic competence and teaching efficiency. As a result, only highly qualified and competent English teachers would facilitate learning interaction and promote learner autonomy. Based on postmethod pedagogy, college English teachers should develop professional competence dynamically by life-long learning and improve linguistic skills by practicing English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. In addition, they also need to enhance teaching skills through practicing various ESL teaching methods in different context, to instruct learners to acquire second language learning strategies, to let learners experience different thinking styles and cultural customs of English-spoken countries, and to master learning theories and educational psychology as well.

More attention should be paid to college English teachers' autonomy for teaching and research. With teacher's autonomy as the base of postmethod pedagogy, college English teachers should construct their own teaching theories and develop practicing research through daily work. It is universally acknowledged that their ability for research is undesirable in China. Many scholars have analyzed reasons for this inability, such as short of cross-subject knowledge, lack of consciousness for research and competition crisis, and unreasonable

distribution for subject research in colleges. From postmethod's perspective, college English teachers should have consciousness for research improving and teaching reflection, and devote themselves into cross-subject knowledge studying such as education and psychology with enthusiasm.

Methods for college English teachers' professionalization

Teaching reflection is an important method for college English teachers to promote their professional development, since they are unity of practitioner and theorizer. Teachers theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize. (Edge, 2001) In teaching process, they conduct teaching reflection before, in and after classes by planning, interaction and evaluation rethinking. They reflect teaching strategies and process which benefit teachers' teaching improvement and teaching models' optimization. Teaching reflection is not a simple step for feedback or conclusion, it is a deep exploration and research which includes knowledge, methods, thoughts and strategies in the whole teaching process. Teaching reflection could arouse college English teachers' activeness and creativeness.

Group's corporative development is another effective way to enhance college English teachers' professionalization. Affected by different educational background, college English teachers vary in academic competence. Some are good at applied linguistic study and cross-culture communication; some are skilled in translation and interpretation; and others are expert in phonology or social linguistics. College English teachers should conduct collaborative teaching and research to satisfy learners' various needs, and absorb other teachers' advantages to enhance teaching competence. College English teachers can form specific teaching or research groups in which they can improve their professional skills by mutual-study and corporation.

Conclusion

College English teachers' professional development based on postmethod pedagogy is a systematic project in education. Besides teachers' own efforts, colleges should offer more opportunities and various supports for teachers' teaching and research autonomy in order to make them pedagogically independent. On the other hand, standards for college English teachers' professionalization should be studied and made to evaluation and assess their professional development. All in all, through collaborative efforts, college English teachers can fulfil their professionalization.

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