

Teaching English as a Second Language in China

ENSEIGNEMENT DE L'ANGLAIS COMME LA SECONDE LANGUE ETRANGERE EN CHINE

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Abstract: As an English teacher in China, I've illustrated here some experiences and teaching methods in my teaching practice. This paper intends to help English teachers in China know some special characteristics of Chinese students, such as their purposes of learning, their learning habits and methods, so that teaching English may be more effective and fruitful.

Key words: teaching English, methods, characteristics of Chinese students

Résumé: En tant qu'enseignant d'anglais en Chine, j'ai illustré ici des expériences et méthodes d'enseignement dans ma pratique d'enseignement. L'article présente tente d'aider les enseignants d'anglais de Chine à mieux connaître les caractéristiques spécifiques des étudiants chinois, telles que leurs objectifs, habitudes et méthodes d'apprendre, de sorte que l'enseignement de l'anglais puisse être plus efficace et fructueux.

Mots-Clés: enseignement de l'anglais, méthodes, caractéristiques des étudiants chinois

AS AN ENGLISH TEACHER IN CHINA, FIRST OF ALL, YOU MUST GET KNOW YOU STUDENTS IN GENERAL. THE FOLLOWING IS A QUESTIONNAIRE ON ENGLISH LEARNING FOR MY STUDENTS.

1. Why do you choose English as your major?
A. for college B. for career C. for personal interest D. not sure
2. Do you like studying English?
A. Yes B. No C. Yes, very much D. don't care
3. Which of the following skills do you want to improve most?
A. listening and speaking B. writing C. reading D. professional knowledge
4. Do you often read English loudly?
A. often B. never C. seldom D. sometimes
5. Do you preview new lessons?
A. Yes B. No C. sometimes D. Yes, most of the time
6. Do you often review what you have learned?
A. Yes B. No C. sometimes D. Yes, most of the time
7. Can you recite the texts you have learned?

A. Yes B. No C. sometimes D. Yes, most of the time

8. Do you read extensively after class?

A. Yes B. It depends C. Not very extensively D. Never read

9. Do you take notes in class?

A. Yes B. No C. Yes, Sometimes D. Yes, most of the time

10. Do you consolidate grammatical knowledge by doing exercises?

A. Yes B. No C. sometimes D. Not sure

11. Do you use reference books such as dictionary and internet to search information?

A. often B. never C. seldom D. don't know how to use

12. Will you pay attention to the English written on the package of products on purpose?

A. Yes B. sometimes C. No

13. How do you memorize English words and phrases?

A. Keep writing them down until you remember them
B. according to the rules C. through the context D. never memorize words

14. Which of the following skills are you good at?

A. listening B. speaking C. reading D. writing

15. Do you make a plan for your English study?

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- A. Yes B. No C. Sometimes D. Seldom
16. Do you often listen to various kinds of listening materials (including radio programs) and watch English TV programs and original movies to improve your listening?
A. often B. seldom C. never D. sometimes
17. Do you often read some English newspapers, stories and magazines ?
A. often B. seldom C. never D. sometimes
18. Do you communicate with your fellow students and teachers about learning experience?
A. often B. seldom C. never D. sometimes
19. Do you always find out your weak points of English learning by evaluation(评价) and try to improve?
A. often B. seldom C. never D. sometimes
20. Are you conscious of your grammatical mistakes and correct them carefully?
A. often B. seldom C. never D. sometimes
21. Will you talk with foreigners in English when meeting them?
A. Yes B. No C. It depends D. Yes, but worried about losing face
22. Different people have different ways of learning. Some people learn best by listening, they are called hearing learners, and others learn best by reading or looking at pictures, they are called visual learners. Now Which type do you belong to?
A. hearing B. visual
23. Among the following methods, which one is the most efficient one to you?
A. self-taught B. group discussion C. attending lectures D. situational conversation
24. Do you know the cultural and historical background knowledge of English-speaking countries?
A. Yes B. No C. Yes, but just a little D. Yes, most of it.
25. In the process of English learning, do you distinguish and compare the linguistic and cultural differences between Chinese and English?
A. often B. sometimes C. seldom D. never
26. Which of the following factors hinders your English learning?
A. unable to read words B. unable to memorize words
C. unable to understand the lectures D. unable to speak
E. unable to read conversation F. unable to use grammar and sentence structure
27. Can you have a dialogue or do role-plays in English with your partners?
A. Yes B. No C. sometimes D. not sure
28. Do you have gestures, facial expressions and change

of intonations while speaking English?
A. Yes B. No C. sometimes D. not sure

From my investigation and teaching experiences, I can easily find out the problems of my students and give them adequate help.

SECONDLY, YOU MUST GET TO KNOW THE DIFFERENT PURPOSES OF YOUR STUDENTS' LEARNING ENGLISH

There are different purposes of learning English in China. For example, some may be learning English in order to be a proficient speaker in general situations. In that case, you should pay more attention to their macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

Some may be learning English in order to be an interpreter; in that case, you should be more likely to do some contrastive analysis between English and Chinese. And drive your students into the habit of often trying to find equivalent for an item they come across in any situation.

In still other cases, some may be learning English for passing a test (e.g., TEM 4/8). In that case, your students' learning will be more test-oriented. Then you should pay more attention to items which will possibly appear in the test.

Different students have different purposes, the teacher must be clear about them and provide different emphasis in English teaching.

THIRDLY, YOU MUST KNOW THE DIFFERENT LEARNERS IN YOUR CLASS

Generally, there are two kinds of English learners in China: one is called teacher-directed learner, the other is called independent learner.

The most important difference between teacher-directed learner and independent learner is: In the former, they do not have an overall plan for their learning. The teacher will do this for them. For example, the teacher will work out such things as the purpose of learning, the method of learning, the timetable, the trouble to be shot, and so on.

In the latter, they are responsible for the whole learning process themselves. They are clear about their purpose, the methods to be adopted, the amount of time to be spent on it per week, the trouble they would come across in the course of learning, and the way out etc.

It is generally agreed that L2 learners should

develop learner autonomy. Language learning is such a complex and enormous project. It is also time consuming. Even if classroom learning is available to you, it is impossible for the teacher to teach everything you need for your ultimate goal is such a complex system that it is impossible to exhaust a portion of it. In this connection, the learner should be able to learn on themselves to expand the limit of classroom learning.

What's more, independent learners will also develop independent personality. They tend to be able to cope with other problems independently. This is an important quality for L2 learner to communicate in L2 because autonomous learners are faster in adapting themselves to the new role of L2 users in different communicative situations.

Therefore, as an English teacher in China, you must encourage your students to be an independent learner and help them develop learner autonomy.

LASTLY, YOU MUST KNOW THE DIFFERENT L2 LEARNING MODELS

In middle school English learning in China, there are many practices which can be traced back to behavioristic theory. For example, when students learn a new word, they may have repeated many times until they surely committed it to their memory. Students may also have repeated after their teacher or the tape a certain sentence pattern. In doing this they believe or the teacher believes that repetition can reinforce the newly established connection—The more you practice the more surely you will grasp it.

There is another kind of learning, which is called "cognitive learning". It refers to conceptual and verbal learning that includes information, knowledge, ideas, concepts and systems of thought.

So there are different L2 learning models. One of the reasons for the existence of different L2 learning models is that different people see language and language learning differently. For example, if you see language as a set of habits, you will see L2 learning as a process of forming L2 habits. In order to form this set of habits you need to do a lot of practice, and you will prefer a model which emphasizes learning the L2 skills.

On the other hand, if you see language as an internalized system the knowledge of which enable you to speak grammatically, you will see L2 learning as a process of internalizing the L2 system. Therefore, you need to be exposed to the L2 sufficiently until you have internalized the system and are able to produce L2 creatively and naturally.

In the learning situation in China, more often than not, we are learning the English language rather than acquiring it because we seldom (if ever) have any opportunity to learn it in natural situation. Rather, we are generally learning it in formal situation of the classroom. And we seldom had any contact with native speakers of English.

So , teaching English in China is not a set of easy steps that can be programmed in a quick do-it-yourself kit. Besides what I have mentioned above, there are also many practical methods to be adopted. As an English teacher, you must always be conscious of the way of your teaching and try to find out the most efficient and proper methods in your own teaching practice.

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