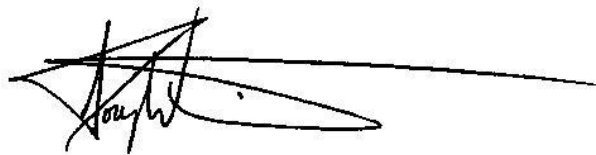


EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT-CENTERED TEACHING AND
THE ORAL ENGLISH OF NON-ENGLISH
MAJORS IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

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4/30/2009

Date: _____

Paper Advisor

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MAJORS IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

A Seminar Paper Research
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Education

by
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2009

ABSTRACT

The problem presented in this paper was to identify whether the student-centered teaching method truly has a good effect on the oral English learning for Non-English majors in Chinese universities. As English is extremely important, a lot of people are trying to learn English in China, which exerts a lot of pressure on English-teaching staff and “it is also, to some extent, a factor responsible for lower teaching efficiency and unsatisfactory teaching outcome in general” (Chu Liyan, 2004). Moreover, the globalization of world economy and China’s World Trading Organization (WTO) membership has set an even higher demand on College English Teaching (CET) (Lin Sitan, 2004). However, many undergraduates, because of their poor ability to use English in practical life, cannot find satisfactory jobs even if they passed College English Test Band 4 or Band 6. This phenomenon needs attention from educators. Some people blame this situation on the Chinese traditional method of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching, which is teacher-centered. Teacher-centered teaching puts instruction before learning, which is not the most effective way for students’ learning, especially for language learning. Instructors may pay more attention to what students want to learn and what students need to learn rather than what teachers want to teach. Therefore, another EFL teaching method, student-centered teaching, is discussed in this paper.

A review of literature on the definition of student-centered teaching was conducted. A second review of literature relating to the advantages, the resistance, and method of practicing student-centered teaching was conducted. This paper presents the roles of the teacher in student-centered teaching classrooms and then compares student-centered teaching with teacher-centered teaching. The last part of literature review is about the ways of conducting student-centered teaching in ESL classrooms.

To deepen the research on this topic and to explore the relationship between student-centered teaching and oral English learning, the author did an experiment in one ESL class in ShangRao Normal University in ShangRao, China. The results after a one-term teaching experiment indicate that the experimental class significantly outperformed the control class, which proves that student-centered teaching has some positive impact on our foreign language teaching, especially on students' oral English. Simultaneously, the author hopes that this research can arouse further studies on student-centered teaching method China.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

English learning and teaching is becoming a more and more important topic in China. Students are putting more time and energy on learning English not only for passing exams but also for communication, as English is widely used as a tool in business, education, and other different areas. However, the poor oral English competence of Chinese students, especially Non-English majors in universities, has been the target of criticism because English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers pay too much attention to the students' reading and writing ability, and as a result students have a poor oral English ability.

Grammar Translation Methodology (GTM) is the most common method to use in traditional English teaching classroom in Chinese universities. Mostly teachers teach English grammar by translation and lecture while the students just listen and take notes. There is a lack of interaction in classrooms. Non-English majors only take five English classes each week, with each class lasting 40 to 45 minutes, and most of them seldom practice English after class. EFL teachers could leave more time or provide a better environment to students to talk and to practice in EFL classes.

This paper researches the student-centered teaching method. A review of literature on the definition and the advantages of the student-centered teaching method are conducted. A second research on the popularity and effectiveness of student-centered teaching method in China also was conducted by a survey of the students in ShangRao Normal University in ShangRao, China. To explore the relationship between student-centered teaching and the oral English learning, the author did an experiment in ShangRao Normal University from February to July in 2008. The results after a one-term teaching experiment indicates the student-centered teaching method is

more effective than the teacher-centered teaching method in improving students' oral English. All the research evidence suggests that the student-centered teaching could be a very good way for college teachers to use in EFL classroom especially for teaching oral English.

Statement of Problem

The problem to be addressed is the relationship between the student-centered teaching method and the oral English of the Non-English majors in Chinese universities?

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research paper is to make a research on the definition, advantages and effectiveness of student-centered teaching method in EFL classroom. Another purpose is to find out whether the teacher-centered teaching is suitable for Chinese EFL students, especially for their oral English learning or not.

Assumptions

It was assumed that all research and review of the current literature was accurately reported. It is also assumed that the literature will make recommendations on how best to use the research available.

Delimitations of the Research

The literature research will be conducted in and through the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over seventy (70) days. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host, with ERIC and Academic Search Elite as the primary sources. Key search topics included "student-centered teaching," "learner-centered learning," "the second language acquisition," and "the oral English for Non-English majors."

The survey was conducted in ShangRao Normal University over five months. The participants comprises 180 non-English majors in grade one. Those students are science and mathematics majors in ShangRao Normal University.

Method of Approach

A brief review of literature on the introduction of student-centered teaching was conducted. A second review of literature relating to research and studies of the benefits and possible resistance to student-centered teaching was conducted too. Then a study was conducted by a questionnaire, a case study and some interviews to find out the effectiveness of student-centered teaching. The findings are summarized and recommendations are made.

Definition of Terms

Student-Centered Teaching (SCT): A kind of teaching method that focuses attention on students themselves. For example, what the student is learning, how the student is learning, conditions under which the student is learning etc. Sometimes student-centered teaching is also called learner-centered teaching.

Teacher-Centered Teaching: A kind of traditional teaching pattern in which teachers are the authority in the classroom and who continuously introduce many important knowledge points, explain them one by one, and ignore student's individual difference.

EFL: English as a foreign language i.e., studying English in non-English-speaking countries)

ESL: English as a second language i.e., studying English as a non-native speaker in a country where English is spoken. Depending on where you are from, the term ESL may be more inclusive and includes EFL. For some people the reverse seems to be true)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What is student-centered teaching (SCT)?

The public expected college professors to be effective instructors providing the assistance to their students' learning. Discussing more ways to improve professors' instruction is necessary. Just like students need guidance as learners, professors also need helpful direction in their teaching. No matter how good a teacher is, he or she can improve. No matter how effective a teaching method, it also can be enhanced (Peter Seldin, 1995). Through workshops, seminars, and networking, faculty received a lot of professional suggestions focusing on some innovative teaching methods like problem-solving, cooperative learning, multiple intelligence, gender-centered, culture-centered methods (Mako, E. Hurata & Catherine B. Stevenson, 1999). Finding the most effective teaching method for English teachers and learners has been a hot topic in China since the Chinese began to learn English formally. The traditional English teaching method is characterized as teacher-centered, which teachers dominate the whole class time, explaining difficult points from the beginning to the end. Teachers are the controllers of the classes because people always respect the dignity of the teaching profession (Wei Li, 2005). The students just act as receivers of knowledge. Students are used to studying passively and mechanically. Normally the atmosphere in class is solemn and silent (Wei Li, 2005). This kind of teaching greatly prevents the students' interests in learning. And this is not what good teaching aims. What the teacher should do is try his/her best to help the students to raise initiative and interests in learning of English (Yang Xiaochun, 2006).

Teachers who believe their job is to cover their course systematically by transmitting information to students are more likely

to encourage surface learning approaches among their students, where retention is temporary, generalization of knowledge poor and learning how to learn is minimal. On the other hand, teachers who encourage student involvement in the learning process and focus on the quality of learning outcomes are more likely to encourage cognitively deeper and richer learning experiences for their students (Newble and Cannon, 1995, p. 97).

According to Yang Xiaochun (2006), teaching should serve for learning. Besides, a teacher should teach according to the students' different characteristics and nature. A teacher should be concerned with whether or not students learn the material, determine whether or not there are common problems, and realize when students are bored or confused (Normandy, 2006). We should change "teacher-centered" teaching into "student-centered" teaching in EFL class (Yang Xiaochun, 2006). What is a "student-centered teaching" (SCT)?

The term "student-centered" describes a concept and a practice in which students and professors learn from one another. This concept proposes a shift from teacher-centered instruction to a new teaching method focusing on learning outcomes. It is not intended to diminish the importance of the instructional side of the classrooms. Instead, instruction is broadened by adding some activities that help students be more interested in learning in classroom (Lawford Anderson et al., 2006, p. 2). Student-centered teaching put students' needs, responsibilities and activities at the first place, in contrast to the emphasis on teacher-controlled lecture (Cannon, 2001). "Student-centered learning describes ways of thinking about learning and teaching that emphasize student responsibility for such activities as planning learning,

interacting with teachers and other students, researching, and assessing learning” (Cannon, 2001).

Student-centered teaching focuses attention on what the student is learning, how the student is learning, and the environment in which the student is, whether the student is learning positively and actively, and how current learning influence the future learning for the students (Normandy, 2003). In student-centered teaching, teachers should make all their planning, teaching, and assessment on the basis of the needs and abilities of their students. The main idea of this teaching method is that the teaching topics should be relevant to the students’ lives, needs, and interests. The students themselves should be actively engaged in learning (McCombs and Whistler, 1997).

Instead of the teacher being the sole, infallible source of information, then, the teacher shares control of the classroom and students are allowed to explore, experiment, and discover on their own. The students are not just memorizing information, but they are allowed to work with and use the information alone or with peers. Their diverse thoughts and perspectives are a necessary input to every class. The students are given choices and are included in the decision-making processes of the classroom. The focus in these classrooms is on options, rather than uniformity (Papalia, 1996, p. 23).

Student-centered teachers know what we expect our students to learn, design educational activities to advance their students’ learning, and provide opportunities for students to achieve those expectations. A student-centered environment encourages students to interact with the content, with one another and the teacher. It encourages student reflection, dialogue, and

engagement, and requires a reliable assessment of their content mastery (Lawford Anderson et al., 2006, p. 2). Learners are treated as co-creators in the learning process, and they deserve attention and consideration (McCombs and Whistler, 1997). Conventional wisdom has been that if the faculty teaches well or if they can offer insightful, clear, rigorous, challenging lectures, then students will learn well. Student-centered teaching questions this assumption. The faculty should pay more attention on the differences in how their students learn. The emergence of student-centered teaching arises from the quest to have all students achieve more success academically (Lawford Anderson et al., 2006, p. 5). However, we should not adopt this concept mechanically. We must seek a broader definition of student-centeredness. A student-centered classroom means more than allowing students to work in teams, to select their own reading and writing topics, or to participate regularly in lively class discussions. A teacher who can create a truly student-centered classroom understands and respects the diversity of learning, and he or she can offer choices in how information and skills will be acquired. A genuinely ‘student-centered’ classroom is democratic educational environment that enables students to equitably develop their individual learning styles to meet the diverse demands of school (Kinsella, 1995).

The benefits of student-centered teaching method

Demographics have changed the student population and their needs. The new emphasis on teaching comes from the new needs. The public demands that educators take action to improve their teaching. Instructional behavior is not inborn but rather a learned combination of skills, attitude, and goals. Students differ in experience, ways of thinking, and motivation. There is not a single method effective for all the students (Peter Seldin, 1995). Teachers are still in a role that is to deliver the lesson, give a test, and assign grade, with very little opportunities to identify or address what the problem is to individual students. Thus, adopting a new conception

of teaching is crucial (Linder Darling-Hammond, 1992). We are in a period that teaching should be shifted to learning, and thus, it is vital for faculty to find effective and creative ways to engage all students in classroom. The shift toward student-centered teaching is a change in emphasis which can arouse the faculty rethink how they should teach and assess the teaching goals for meeting students' needs (Lawford Anderson et al., 2006). At any rate, individual learners differ in their learning habits, interests, needs, and motivation, and develop varying degrees of independence throughout their lives (Tumposky, 1982). Learning arrangement need to be more personalized so that teachers can get to know their students well. Curricula and methods must be more focused on learners' needs rather than on standardized procedures (Linder Darling-Hammond, 1992). Individual learners are also seen as possessing unique interest, styles, needs, and goals which should be reflected in the design of methods of instruction (WeiLi, 2005).

Student-centered teaching takes the students as the center part in classroom. All the teaching activities must center on the students. Student-centered teaching has a lot of good effects on both teacher and students (Yang Xiaochun, 2006).

1. In order to design any lesson, the teacher must first think of the students, rather than the content, and so we are assured that the students' needs are being considered. Student-centered teaching can improve the teacher's teaching skill (Yang Xiaochun, 2006). Student-centered teaching helps teachers design effective instruction for every member of the classroom, no matter what his or her diverse learning needs. Student-centered teaching is adaptable to meet the needs of every student (Stuart, 1997).

2. Motivation is one of the important factors in the learning process, which helps to determine the level of proficiency achieved by different learners (Guo Yali, 2003). Student-centered teaching can attract the students' attention and rouse the students' learning interests.

Through this approach, the students' became to eager to study and their motivation will become stronger (Yang Xiaochun, 2006). In a student-centered environment, students become autonomous learners, which accelerate the language learning process (Zulkuf Altan, 2005). Student-centered teaching has been proven effective in its ability to teach students the material they need to know. A lot of studies shows that students who were taught in the student-centered approach not only increased the motivation of learning, but also did a good job in learning. Students who were taught in a student-centered classroom retain more active for longer periods of time (McCombs and Whistler, 1997). In order to learn, the brain cannot simply receive information; it must also process the information so that it can be stored and recalled (Silberman, 1996). The active nature of the student centered approach helps students actually work with information, and therefore learn it and store it.

3. For foreign language students, especially, the student-centered method has special benefits. When students use the language, they retain it more than if they would simply hear the language. If the students can get the practice actively by themselves they can produce meaningful conversation and be more fluent than they only do some passive work, for example, taking some filled out worksheets with sentences designed by teachers (Benson and Voller, 1997).

Conti (1985, p. 11) also made some conclusions about learner-centered teaching. Teachers using student-centered teaching support a more collaborative mode that encourages students to take responsibilities for their own learning. They also employ a lot techniques that personalizing teaching to meet the unique needs of each student. Student-centered teaching emphasizes on cooperation rather than competition. Teachers emphasize on learning activities and consider students' prior experiences and encourage students make learning relevant to

current experiences. In student-centered teaching classrooms, teacher set a friendly and favorable climate for learning. They encourage students interact with other students and dialogues are encouraged too. Besides, errors are viewed as a part of learning process and taking risks is favored too.

The possible resistance to student-centered teaching

Student-centered teaching is a big change to traditional teaching pattern, although it has many advantages, some students and faculty still resists the change (Weimer, 2002).

Students' resistance

There are students who like student-centered instruction while many students claim to prefer choose teacher-centered teaching (Weimer, 2002).

Weimer (2002) suggests that students resist student-centered teaching because it makes less demands upon them until the evening before an exam. However, student-centered pedagogy requires a more active role in learning the classroom. Weimer lists four reasons for students' resistance:

1) Student-centered approach means more work not only to teachers but also to students. Students have to prepare more, participate more in classrooms and to do more homework because teachers give them more time to learn by themselves.

2) Student-centered approaches are more threatening to students have to participate more and answer more questions, which means students have more chances to be wrong in answering questions.

3) Student-centered approaches involve losses, which means student-centered teaching requires students to do more work by themselves so there is a higher risk to do it wrong and a higher risk of loss.

4) Student-centered approaches may be beyond students. Because student-centered teaching has higher requirements for students, students must direct themselves to a higher intellectual level. Teachers do not give certain answers in student-centered teaching classroom, so students will not feel certain they have the right answer to each question. All these reasons probably can result to uncomfortable feelings of students.

Faculty's resistance

“Despite the growth of the faculty development movement over the past two decades, as a practical matter, only a relatively small percentage of faculty take advantage of available teaching improvement programs” (Peter Seldin, 1995, p.5).

Many teachers argue that the biggest block to improving teaching is the reward system that encourages research more than teaching in colleges. Many institutions give the importance of teaching but then turn around and just reward scholarly research and publication. If the whole system does not give the central role to teaching for rewording promotion or hiring, faculty will surely put more energy and time on research and publication only (Peter Seldin, 1995).

Another reason for the resistance to student-centered teaching comes from the method itself. Studies have shown that although many teaching methods classes for teachers are teaching about the students-centered teaching method, many teachers still tend to use traditional techniques despite the more progressive views they may have adapted in college. Teachers are overwhelmed by the rigor of the job, and they tend to feel vulnerable, so they retreat to the more familiar form of lecture (Aarinsohn, 1996). “If student teachers come to learn not only the philosophical theory, but also learn explicitly how to implement the theory in practice, however, the method becomes more comfortable, natural, and nearly second nature” (Aaronsohn, 1996, p. 3).

Another reason for faculty's resistance is that student-centered teaching can mean a shift of some level of responsibility to students, which may make the teachers feel like a loss of control. It is threatening for some teachers to give up some control and power in classroom. They are not the exclusive content expert any longer, which may make teachers feel bad (Weimer, 2002).

The Role of the Teacher in Student-centered Teaching Classroom

The traditional roles of the teacher in China

The processes of learning in China have been greatly influenced by the Confucian tradition (Yum, 1998). The Confucian tradition places a high value on education, and particularly on education people how to interact with each other (Yum, 1998).

HSU (1981) contends that the "Chinese child learns to see the world in terms of a network of relationship. Confucianism stresses the benefits of fixed hierarchical relationships in which respect is shown for age, seniority, rank, and family background." What should be of particular interest to EFL instructors who teach Chinese students is the Confucian relationship between teacher and student. This relationship is much more hierarchical than teacher-student relationship in the United States. The teachers are more directive in making decisions about what goes on in the classroom (Nelson, 2002).

In China, the teacher is an authority figure. Confucius thought that the teacher must know all (Hudson-Ross & Dong, 1990). Confucius and his disciples also modeled a very close relationship between teachers and students Teachers, like parents, not only teach students about knowledge but also help students develop as complete well-adjusted human beings (Herbert, 1998).

According to another Chinese ancient famous educator HanYu, “Teachers are those who can answer puzzled questions and explain why.” There is an ancient Chinese saying: “If a teacher for a day, a father for life.” That is to say whoever has been a teacher to a person; has a special role in the person’s life. As a result, teachers teach and act as controllers in classroom, which is a typical feature of Chinese education and it is called teacher-dominated teaching method. The teacher models the target language, controls the direction and pace of learning, and monitors and corrects the learners’ performance. Learners play a reactive role by responding to stimuli. And thus students have little control over the content, pace, or style of learning (Richard & Rodgers, 1986). In the teacher-dominated teaching pattern, teachers actually would control students’ minds and thinking. Students couldn’t have imagination, creativity, or their own characteristics. Sometimes students even couldn’t have different answers to their teacher’s. Students’ minds are limited merely to their textbooks so that they spend quite a lot of time studying on theory and barely have time to practice (Wei Li, 2005). The truth to all of these is that teachers are the controllers of students and they would not like students to disobey their orders. That is not only really harmful to a sound education system but also harmful to learners’ healthy psychological development (Wei Li, 2005).

The role of the teacher in student-centered teaching is to promote learning which is a different role than the traditional one most teachers have embraced (Weimer, 2005).

For a teacher, it is not enough only to impart information; he or she also should create a friendly environment for students to produce what they have gained, and provide more opportunities for them to participate in the teaching program. Really good and effective teachers should just act as cooperators and facilitators (Wei Li, 2005). A teacher is not only the deliverer

of the knowledge, but also the director, conductor and organizer. He/she must be a facilitator for the students (YangXiaoChun, 2006).

Weimer examined the effects of too much teacher control and its adverse effect on student motivation, confidence, and enthusiasm for learning (2002). “Students are more likely to become self-regulated learners when some of the conditions of their learning are more in their control” (Weimer, 2002). Yang Xiaochun thinks student-centered teaching doesn’t mean that the teacher is superfluous, or the teacher will give up the control to the teaching. On the contrary, this kind of teaching puts a high demand for the teacher. And the whole class needs the teacher’s organization and management. At the same time, the teacher will help the students recognize and explore their study power. This is also a challenge for the teacher. They must be proficient in their teaching, and above all, they must design a set of student-centered teaching plans supplying the students with their real needs (2005, P.3).

The comparison between student-centered and teacher-centered

Introduction to “Teacher-centered” teaching pattern

Teacher-centered teaching pattern is one of the traditional ways of Chinese education. In this case teachers always talk almost from the beginning to the end of the class. They continuously introduce many important knowledge points, explain them one by one patiently, analyze and prove them correctly, give some typical examples. So on and so forth. The whole class time passes like this. All the students need to do is just to write down what the teachers have said and bear them in mind. It seems that students miss a lot. Teachers have just ignored each individual’s different qualities (WeiLi, 2005). This is because not only the teacher but also the students are influenced by Confucian school which emphasis the authority of teacher and teaching material. As a result student always intend to depend on teachers and ignore their own

activity and creativity (JiangZukang, 2002). So, in traditional teacher-centered classroom ,students “sit with backbones straight, eyes directly ahead until they are called on to raise a hand, stand to recite, or take out materials to work” (Hudson-Ross & Dong, 1990). They “expect to listen to adults, not interrupt, sit quietly and listen attentively” (Scarcella, 1990). “They arrive, they listen, they take copies notes, they depart, even when invited to make comments or ask questions, they are reluctant to speak”(Hu & Grove, 1992). Many Chinese students learning English have poor ability to use English in practical life can not find satisfactory jobs even if some of them passed college English Test Band 4 or Band 6 (Lin Sitan, 2004). A small-scale investigation on Chinese “Individual learners were also seen as possessing unique interest. Styles, needs, and goals, which should be reflected in the design of methods of instruction. Teachers were encouraged to develop learning materials on the basis of the particular needs manifested by the class” (Applebee, 1974). It is also unfair for students with diverse comprehension abilities. For teachers can't satisfy every individual's need. Some quick learners would like to learn more and also to be given more chances to express their own opinions but they have not got the opportunity, some learn so slowly that they aren't able to catch up with the teacher. That's all because teachers occupy the whole class time. By the way, many students just don't like teacher-centered pattern or the way of “chalk and talk”. They don't want to learn passively and mechanically. They just want to attend the teaching process actively. Therefore, student' centered pattern has been asked for. It is said that one learns best when he joins in a certain activity. It is one hundred percent true for language learning.

Method: How to conduct student-centered teaching method effectively?

Anderson says it has always been important to “know your students” (2002). “If the idea is endorsed of “student-centered” classroom, then there is no question about the necessity of considering individual learner differences” (Kinsella, 1995). “In a large country like China, divergences in the development of economy are bound to cause divergences in the development of education. As a result, the students’ English levels vary a lot when they got in an EFL class” (Li Jing, 2004, p.4). Besides, there were significant differences in learning strategies between good and less-successful students (Yang Weiwei, 2003).

Li Jing points out that “a teaching management system which pays little attention to the wide differences of the students’ level will fall to fire the students with enthusiasm for learning English.” (2004, P.5) “Although there is probably some truth to the maxim that teachers teach the way they were taught, there is probably a lot more truth in saying that teachers teach the way they learned best in school” (Kinsella, 1995). Yang Weiwei (2003) believes that classroom observation is important in the student-centered teaching classroom. She says, “In China, students attach much importance to classroom learning activities, so their performance in classroom can qualitatively reflect some of their learning strategies.” Yang Weiwei’s observation aimed at identifying the general and particular strategies the students used while performing individual tasks in his or her classroom.

Lawford Anderson et al. (2006) think active teaching is as important as even in student-centered teaching classroom. “Faculty are encouraged share their passion regarding the subject and to feel free to get personal by offering their own anecdotes” (p.5).

In order to allow students to gain power in SCT class, teachers cannot simply lecture and let students take passive roles. They must design activities that let students take initiative and that

let students discover meaningful information for their own lives. Teachers must also get to know the students on an individual basis. So teachers can better respond to the individual needs and interests of the students. In general, teachers need to focus on the student's needs, abilities, and interests—they need to look at how students learn, rather than at what there is to teach (Aaronsohn, 1996).

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Is student-centered teaching workable in English classes in Chinese universities? Is the student-centered teaching method more effective in improving students' English than traditional EFL teaching in China? To test this point, an experiment and several surveys were conducted from March 2008 to July 2008.

Survey

Methodology

A survey was conducted the first week of the second semester among 102 freshmen (non-English majors) in ShangRao Normal College Jiangxi, China. The survey was designed to find out if students liked or were satisfied with the traditional ESL teaching methods; how much the students knew about student-centered teaching; and were they willing to accept the student-centered teaching method in English classrooms?

Participants and the questionnaire

102 participants in this study are all non-English major freshmen (Grade 2007) in ShangRao Normal College JiangXi, China. There are 50 in mathematics majors (Class B15) and 52 majors in life and science (Class B18). All the Non-English majors in ShangRao Normal

College have been divided into different classes in three levels Level A, Level B and Level C based on their English scores in the college entrance examination. Since Class B15 and B18 are at the same level B, the 102 participants generally are in the same level for English proficiency. Class B15 was the control group and class B18 was the experimental group.

The questionnaire sought primarily to target use of student-centered teaching methods in English classes. The initial pool of items consisted of five questions (listed below in part 2.3) concerning the students' attitudes to traditional and present English teaching and learning. And other seven questions concern the attitude to SCT in English class. All the questions were designed as multiple choice like a), b), and c). Each choice stands for one degree, like a) =very much; b) = partly; c) a little d) =definitely no.

Procedures of the first survey

The questionnaire was conducted by the author in the English classes at the beginning of the second semester (March 2008). Before delivering the questionnaire items, the author explained those questions in Chinese to make sure every student understood all the questions. During the time they were answer questions they were encouraged to ask questions if they were confused.

Students were advised that there was no right or wrong answers on the questionnaire and their responses would not affect their course grades, so they were urged to answer forthrightly. In addition, specific care was taken to remind the subjects that the questionnaire did not measure their beliefs, but did measure their attitudes to English learning.

Results of the survey

After the questionnaires were collected, each of them was examined, and 120 papers were selected to use. Among the 102 participants, nearly 60% of them reported that they don't

like the traditional English class at all, although nearly half of them do not have a negative attitude to the language itself. It suggests the traditional English teaching method can not motivate EFL students to learn English. Another fact is that 64% of them think they are best in reading but only less than 11% of them are good at listening or speaking. That is to say, most student do not have enough communicative ability using English. Surprisingly, there are almost 61% of them seldom speaking English in spare time and 29% of them never speak English in spare time. Also, 60% of them seldom speak English in English class and 15% of them never speak English in English class. We can tell that the opportunities teacher provided to students in English class are far from enough. Also, more than 60% want to have more opportunities to talk English in class, and nearly half of them like to belong to a group in English class. We also can see 41% of them believe student-centered teaching method could improve their English better than traditional teaching method, and 40% of them said they do not refuse to try student-centered teaching in English classroom. Most students are willing to try student-centered teaching method in their English classes.

The survey and the results are as follows:

Table 1

Items					
1.Level of likeness for English	Class	Much	Partly	Little	Not at all
	B15	30%	30%	26%	14%
	B18	14%	40%	32%	14%
2.The best ability in using English		Listening	Speaking	Reading	writing
	B15	10%	10%	70%	10%
	B18	6%	16%	58%	20%
3.The level of likeness for traditional English class		Much	Partly	Little	Not at all
	B15	6%	14%	20%	60%
	B18	4%	16%	26%	54%
4.The time spending on speaking English in spare time		Often	Sometime	Seldom	never
	B15	0%	8%	56%	32%
	B18	4%	4%	66%	26%

5.The time spending on speaking English in English class		Often	Sometime	Seldom	never
	B15	6%	36%	54%	4%
	B18	4%	4%	66%	26%
6. How much do you know about SCT?		A great deal	Some what	A little	Not at all
	B15	6%	14%	20%	60%
	B18	0%	8%	58%	32%
7. How much time do you think the teacher should talk?		A great deal	Some what	A little	Not at all
	B15	2%	54%	40%	4%
	B18	8%	48%	36%	8%
8.When are you feeling more nervous talk English to?		Teacher	Classmate	Foreigner	
	B15	%	%	4%	%
	B18	90%	2%	8%	%
9.In what kind of way do you learn English most efficiently		Listen to the teacher	Read more	Discuss with classmate	Teach others what know
	B15	%	%	%	%
	B18	24%	24%	30%	22%
10.Do you like to belong to a group in English class		Much	Partly	A little	Not at all
	B15	24%	46%	14%	16%
	B18	28%	38%	32%	2%
11. Do you think SCT can improve your English in a better way?		Much	Partly	A little	Not at all
	B15	50%	40%	10%	0%
	B18	32%	50%	16%	4%
12. Do you want to talk more in English class?		Much	Partly	A little	Not at all
	B15	74%	20%	6%	0%
	B18	40%	38%	18%	4%

Implications for Pedagogy

This survey has shown that while some college students like English, most of them do not like the EFL classes. Teachers can not ignore this fact and the teaching methods are in need of improving or changing badly.

Experimental Class

Methodology

Student-centered teaching was applied among 52 randomly chosen first-year non-English majors class B18. The other 50 first year non-English majors which belong to class B15 were

taught with the traditional whole-class-lecture approach. Students' attitude, confidence, and passion towards English learning, participation and involvement in class activity, opportunities for using language in class, response and feedback to teachers' assignments are all the variables. Two oral English tests were conducted, one was taken at the first beginning of the semester and the other was taken at the end of study, which is the end of that term.

Step for executing SCT in the experimental class

According to the first survey, 81% students are willing to accept SCT while 85% students don't know very much about student-centered teaching. Student-centered teaching was introduced to the experiment group before it was conducted in class. Several Second Language Acquisition theories, such as Krashen's Theory, Piaget's Theory, and Vygotsky's Theory, were taught in class.

Organizing the SCT classroom

In a SCT classroom, cooperative learning in small groups is one most advocated. And cooperative learning teams are best when small and heterogeneous (YuXin, 2004). So, 52 students were required to form 13 groups of 4 members, who were heterogeneous in terms of language ability and learning attitude. Each group had one top-level student, two middle-level students and one struggling student. The top-level student who is always the top ten students in English examinations would become more advanced by helping others. Because the struggling one was usually less prepared, he or she needed other's help. These groups were not permanent and students sometimes formed in new groups by different ways. Every group member had a role in each group. The group facilitator was responsible for moderating team discussions and ensuring everyone assumed his or her share of responsibility. The group recorder was supposed to keep all necessary records. The group reporter needed to orally summarize group's

conclusions. The timekeeper needed to keep the group aware of time constraints. Group members performed their functions respectively according to their roles. Students in one group sit together in class. Groups were kept for at least four weeks, and for some long-term tasks, such as writing and speaking, groups were kept for an entire semester. For other activities such as discussion and reading, groups were rebuilt four times a semester. It was beneficial for students to experience being in new groups. They learned more by working out the relationships and the communication patterns.

Name	English name	Gender	Roles
Fu Guoliang	A	Male	facilitator
Cheng xinqi	B	Female	recorder
Leng Lingling	C	Female	reporter
Lin Jiannei	D	Male	timekeeper

Figure 2: Sample Group

(Note. Members can change roles at any time.)

Designing the Class

A teacher who is going to take on an EFL class with student-centered teaching method should better find out about the students' information: How old are they? How much English do they know? How much do they like English? What kind of teaching method do they like? The result of the first survey should be considered seriously in the preparation for the class. In this paper, the teaching object is college students, the author designed several class activities according to their age, their English level, and the requirements of the new Chinese college English syllabus. In a student-centered classroom, students are the focus. For example, before explaining the text, the teacher can ask the students to express their understanding about the title

of the passage; the teacher can also give them some pre-reading questions to let them think about the meaning of the article, of the content, etc. Through these kinds of class activities, students would improve their communicative ability and became more active in learning. Besides, student-centered teaching requires carefully designed materials, which has to be designed with a level of complexity. The problems should engage all the students and could not be more effectively solved by one student. Sometimes, students themselves even can choose what kind of materials they would like to learn.

Here are some of the routine student-centered activities for the experiment class:

Daily Representation for Individual Student

Students needed to make at least two reports in this semester. They were free to choose any topic they are interested in and they also could choose any way to make this representation. For example, one could make a formal speech in front of the whole class one could recites an English poem or sing an English song, and one also could report one piece of news, he or she saw in the newspaper. They even could use PowerPoint to make a presentation. The time for every student was 5 minutes of each class. All of the students were required to take turn to do this in each class.

Drama Play for Group

Every group in the experiment class could do a drama play at least one time in this semester. They could choose famous dramas from Shakespeare, for example, to act and they also could play their original drama. Four students in each group were required to cooperate with other members and no one could get a “free ride.” When they acted, they were to speak their lines in fluent English without looking at the script.

Debate

Each group gave a debate once a week. They were given many controversial topics to choose such as: should we legalize gay marriage? Should euthanasia be legalized in China? Should only-child policy be abolished in China?

Being “Teachers”

For some part of the textbook, students were given opportunities to be the teachers to teach their classmates. As the Chinese saying goes, what I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I understand.” Or as the Indian saying goes, “Tell me and I’ll listen. Show me and I’ll understand. Involve me and I’ll learn.” So, students could be more active and more efficient when they are involved in teaching.

A 20-minute Television Show

Students in group needed to make several English programs. In 20-minute there should be English News, talk shows, interviews, advertisements etc, in every group show. They can imitate any English channel or make original shows as long as those programs are related to English.

One-minute Papers

One-minute papers can be used to facilitate a team discussion or to provide feedback to the teacher. This activity focuses students on the content. The one-minute papers should be immediately followed by a team discussion, making good use of these question papers. This technique was first used after reading the text of Unit Seven of New College English I. After the team members answered each other’s questions, they came to the “Group Discussion” on Page 184 of that text. Their question papers helped them organize their ideas. They were eager to express what they thought of when they wrote the one-minute question paper (YuXin, 2004).

Round Robin Brainstorming

In this activity, a question posed with many answers and students were given time to think about answers. After the “thinking time,” members of the team shared responses with one another, and the team recorder wrote down the answers. This technique actually proved very successful in answering the question “What are the causes of social problem?”

Three-Step Interview

Each member of a team chooses another member as a partner. First, individuals interviewed their partners by asking clarifying questions. During the second step, partners reversed the roles. For the final step, members shared their partner’s response with the team. This technique was effective for some “Case Study,” e.g., “What Would You Do?”

Grading and Assessment

Since student-centered teaching is not test-oriented, students are graded and examined in various aspects. The assessment can be divided into several parts. The main part is the final-term exam (60%) including one paper test, oral English test, oral presentation and then the relative minor one covers attendance (10%), class performance (10%) concerning how active students are, what contributions students make to group work (10%), self-monitoring like practices after class including oral English, reading extra material, previewing text etc. (10%).

Apart from test scores teacher gets the feedback and evaluating data with the help of each recorder in every group or the monitor or students’ self assessment. Different forms were designed to students, which are filled out every month by recorders or teacher.

Table 2. Self-Monitoring Sheet

Name: belong to Group	1st week		2nd week		3rd week		4th week	
	Tues	Fri	Tues	Fri	Tues	Fri	Tues	Fri
Speak English the entire class session								
Speak English after class								
Contributed to the group's work								
Finished homework								
Attendance								

Table 3. Peer Evaluation Sheet

Note: Please place a checkmark (√) in the column below and person's name if you think they contributed to the group's overall success.

Name of Group				
The name of each member of group	Facilitator	Recorder	Reporter	Timekeeper
	Member was consistently present			
Member shared their ideas to the group				
Member listened attentively to others				
Member completed assigned tasks				
Member contributed to the group's success				

Table 4. Peer Evaluation for Daily individual Presentation or Group Presentation

	Group1	Group2	Group3	Group4	Group5	Group6
The themes, ideas, and/or issues presented in the activity directly relates in some way to the themes, ideas, and/or issues presented in class						
The activity is expressed in a way that is easily understood. Meaning is clear throughout						
Purpose of activity is clearly explained. Activity is original and contributes to audiences' progress in area.						
Power point or handout is well constructed and adds to activity being presented by extending it in some manner						

Results and Findings

The study here was undertaken to see whether student-centered teaching can be implemented in EFL class and if it can help non-English majors to improve their oral English better than the traditional English teaching method. Another questionnaire was conducted by the end of the semester. The data from the questionnaire came from both the experiential and control class. The data shows that the teaching method was warmly accepted as a method superior to the teacher-centered teaching method. Than two oral English tests were given to both the

experiential and control class. The results show that the student-centered teaching improved the experiential class students' oral English better than the control class students.

Table 5. A Comparison between Experimental class and Control class.

variables	items				
Interest in learning English	a great deal	more interested	get interested	a little	not at all
experimental class	24%	36%	18%	8%	4%
control class	10%	14%	22%	28%	26%
Improvement in Oral English	a great deal	somewhat	a little	not at all	
experimental class	30%	32%	20%	18%	
control class	18%	14%	30%	38%	
chances of using English	many	A few	rare	none	
experimental class	40%	32%	28%	0%	
control class	8%	26%	42%	24%	

Table 6. The results of the tests from the experimental class and the control class

Grades	Experimental class	Control class
A	38%	18%
B	30%	26%
C	24%	34%
D	8%	18%
F	0%	4%

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Around the world, English is taught in different ways and it is learned not only for unspecific general purposes but also for the academic or business purposes. It is clear that the old English teaching way is in transition to a better way. China has a big population for learning English. English is even the compulsory courses in universities in China, so how to conduct an effective teaching method in EFL classroom is crucial. This research is taken to see the relationship between student-centered teaching and the improvement of non-English majors' oral English. Some related literature review was made in the first chapter of this paper. Student-centered teaching has a lot of advantages than teacher-centered teaching method because it can help teacher focus attention on what the student is learning, how the student is learning and create a positive environment for learning. Student-centered teaching is especially good for language learning class because it can give students more chances to talk and practice in classrooms. To see if the student-centered teaching has a good effect on the oral English learning for non-English majors in Chinese universities the author did an experimental study in Shang Rao Normal University, Shang Rao, China. After one semester study, all the statistics showed that the students who were learning English in student-centered teaching classroom improved their oral English much better than those students who were learning English in teacher-centered teaching classroom. On the basis of the experimental study, student-centered teaching method could be widely used in EFL classrooms in Chinese universities. One implication of this study for the English instructors in China is that it is the right time to shift to student-centered teaching from the traditional English teaching, teacher-centered teaching because it is more effective in

language teaching. The author hopes that further studies on student-centered teaching in EFL classroom would be conducted in the future.

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