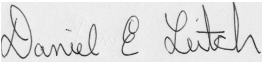


A STUDY ON CONFUCIUS' EDUCATIONAL IDEOLOGY AND ITS APPLICATION IN
COLLEGE ESL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CHINA

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Abstract

A STUDY ON CONFUCIUS' EDUCATIONAL IDEOLOGY AND ITS APPLICATION IN
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Li Peng (Birdy)

Under the Supervision of Daniel Leitch , Ph.D.

Confucius is the greatest and most influential thinker and educator in Chinese history. For over 2000 years, Confucius has been regarded as “the Chinese Sage”. Many of his teachings and sayings have a formative influence upon the culture of China and modern education, such as “providing students with an education that matched their aptitudes”, “reflective thinking”. His argument has turned out to be of great help to the teaching and learning. In the study, the author first introduced Confucius; then explored Confucius' educational ideology, including: goals of education, content of education, principles of education and methods of education; in the following chapters, the author presented the current situation of college ESL education and studied application of Confucius' educational ideology in college ESL teaching and learning in China. It is hoped that the paper will be helpful for the college English teachers in their teaching and students in their learning.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

China and East Asia, constitute almost one-fourth of the world population, play a more and more important role in the world. In order to understand the culture of the people of East Asia, Confucian study is a must. Confucianism is an Oriental heritage and a cultural gene, which deeply influences the behavior of those people who are born and raised under Confucian culture. This Confucian culture is the unique nucleus of the behavior in East Asia, just as Christianity is essential for people's behavior in the West. As a matter of fact, the question of whether the Confucian ethic has contributed to the rise of East Asia has attracted considerable public attention and generated a great deal of scholarly inquiry since 1960s (Jun ,1999).One scholar MacFarquhar (1980) says that the West has dominated the world for 200 years since the beginning of the industrial revolution, but now this dominance is “threatened” by Confucianism. Indeed, the challenge in terms of thinking historically is related to almost every aspects of life including the economic, political, and military. Confucianism will come into life again with timeless values, become young, and serve a new age. It is time to take a new look at Confucianism, and to study it.

Confucius (551-479B.C.) is the greatest and most influential thinker and educator in Chinese history. For over 2000 years, Confucius has been regarded as “the Chinese Sage”. Many of his teachings and sayings have a formative influence upon the culture of China and modern education, such as “providing students with an education that matched their aptitudes”, and “reflective thinking”. His arguments have turned out to

be of great help to the teaching and learning.

Then focus of literature for the paper will include introduction of Confucius; Confucius' educational ideology, that is, goals of education, content of education, and principles of education; the application of Confucius' educational ideology in college ESL teaching and learning in China.

It is hoped that the thesis will be helpful for the college English teachers in their teaching practice and provide some perspectives on the innovation of college English teaching such as graded English teaching and fostering autonomous learning.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the report and discussion will be to explore the application of Confucius' educational ideology in college ESL teaching and learning in China. The problems to be addressed in this paper are as follows: What is the main Confucius' educational ideology? How can his educational ideology be applied in the ESL teaching and learning? If possible, how is it applied in College ESL teaching and learning in China?

Definition of Terms

Ideology. A set of ideas and attitudes that strongly influence the way people behave (Merriam-Webster, 2005).

Autonomous Learning. The ability to take charge of one's own learning and to take the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all the aspects of learning (Holec, 1981).

ESL. Abbreviation for the term English as a second Language

Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville online. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC, Academic Search Elite and Google/Google Scholar as the primary sources. Some searches will be conducted via the Internet through CNKI e-library at the Wuhan Polytechnic University. Key search topics included “Confucius”, “educational ideology”, and “ESL”.

Method of Approach

A brief review of literature on Confucius was conducted, and then a second review of literature on the studies of Confucius’ educational ideology and its application in college ESL teaching and learning in China was conducted. The findings are summarized and recommendations made.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Confucius

Confucius, literally “Master Kong,” (traditionally September 28, 551 BC – 479 BC) was a Chinese thinker, educator, social philosopher, and founder of the *Ru* School of Chinese thought, whose teachings and philosophy, preserved in the *Lunyu* or *Analects*, form the foundation of much of subsequent Chinese speculation on the education and comportment of the ideal man, have deeply influenced Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese thought and life. People usually like to compare Confucius’ influence in Chinese history with that of Socrates in the West.

Kong Qiu, as Confucius is commonly known, is a combination of his surname and his given name, and he was also known as Zhong Ni, which is his courtesy name. He was born in 551 BC in the Lu state (This state was in the south of modern-day Shandong Province) in the later days of the Spring and Autumn Period. He was a descendant of a noble family associated with the royal house of the Shang Dynasty (1600 - 1046 BC). Confucius’ father, Shu Lianghe, was a famous warrior who had military exploits in two battles and owned a fiefdom. Confucius lost his father when he was three years old, and then his mother Yan Zhengzai took him and left the fiefdom because as a concubine, she wanted to avoid mistreatment from Shu Lianghe’s formal wife. Thus, Confucius lived in poverty with his mother since childhood. With the support and encouragement of his mother, Confucius was very diligent in his studies. When Confucius was seventeen years old, his mother died as a

result of illness and overwork. Three years later, Confucius married a young woman who was from the Qiguan family of the Song state. Though he had a mild tempered wife who loved him, he left his family to strive for his ideals.

After reaching adulthood, he became an educator and politician, devoting himself to his country. He held various important positions. When he was 52, he served as acting Prime Minister at the position of Minister of Justice. However, he was forced to resign because he held different political views from another powerful politician. Thereafter Confucius left his home state and traveled as a pilgrim scholar, but never again had the opportunity to carry out his political reforms. In his old age he returned to the State of Lu, where he engaged deeply in education. He took nearly 3,000 disciples, 72 among whom became quite accomplished and famous. Confucius sought to revive the perfect virtue of Huaxia (Chinese civilization) and the classical properties of the Zhou Dynasty(1046-256 BC) to build a great, harmonious and humanistic society.

Confucius' philosophy emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity. His thoughts have been developed into a system of philosophy known as Confucianism. It was introduced to Europe by the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci, who was the first to Latinise the name as "Confucius."

His teachings may be found in the *Analects* or *Lunyu* , a collection of "brief aphoristic fragments", which was compiled many years after his death.

Confucius' Educational Ideology

The *Analects* or *Lunyu* is a record of Confucius' words and deeds and was written by his disciples and second-generation disciples (Wen, 2011). Confucius's ideas about education are preserved carefully in it. All his conversations with his students which are in this book reflect his thinking. Most research today on Confucius is based on it.

Goals of education

As to the goal of education in Confucius eyes, different researchers have slightly different opinions.

Some researchers put much attention on the individual development through education. In other words, they think Confucius' goal of education is to cultivate individuals. Hall and Ames (1987) pointed out the central Confucian concepts in the education was to develop a system of ability of "thinking" for the individuals, including: "learning", "reflecting", "realizing", "living up to one's word" and "signification". Elliot and Tsai (2008) seemed to agree with them and said education for Confucius is about the cultivation of the mind, as with the Greek philosophers.

Some researchers hold different opinions about it. They think the goal of education in the eyes of Confucius should include two levels: first to develop individual and then to serve the society. After all, Confucius' ideal is to build a harmonious society, and education is the best way to reach this goal. Yang (1993) said Confucius expected that education could play a vital role in two aspects, that is, the development of both society and individuals. Education had an improving effect on individuals, order and security throughout the country. Education offers not only

amends of ensuring the supremacy of virtue; it can also alter human nature and improve it in qualitative terms. So, another of education's tasks is to determine what type of person he is to form. Confucius advised appointment according to merit and "promotion of the ablest" (*Analects*, Zi Lu). He considered that the goal of education was to produce capable individuals --whom he also called *shi* (gentlemen) or *junzi* (men of quality)--who 'combined competence with virtue' and whose subsequent careers in administration and government would bring about the ideal of a kingdom managed with integrity.

Content of education

In order to implement these goals, Confucius determined that the twin pillars of education should be moral instruction, and the imparting of knowledge (Yang, 1993).

"Confucian education is moral education but one not devoid of scientific spirit. It leads the individual toward self-realization, which is to say, to becoming fully human through embodiment of the qualities" (Yee, 2002). Moral instruction has priority in Confucius' education. Why? Because at the time of Confucius, what was needed for rulers were individuals of outstanding virtue, who would assist the rulers in governing the kingdom with integrity, hence it became the basis of Confucian teaching. The education of virtue is the main content of moral instruction, and virtue could be found in all types of relations between human beings and qualities: filial piety , respect for the elderly , loyalty , respectfulness , magnanimity , fidelity , diligence , altruism , affability , kindness , frugality , tolerance , indulgence , wisdom and courage.

Confucius emphasized that each individual should cultivate virtue. Only in this way

would there be order in family affairs, would the country be well governed, would the people live in security, peace and harmony.

However, Confucius was equally concerned with the intellectual development of his disciples, that is to say, with the inculcation of culture, abilities and skills.

According to Ji (2008), Confucius always taught his students the “six arts” , the most crucial knowledge and skills in ancient China. These six arts were: ceremonies, music, shooting, driving, writing, and mathematics. Confucius also wrote six classic books for the disciples. They are: *the Book of odes ; the Book of history; the Book of rites ; the Book of music ; the Book of changes ; and the Spring and autumn annals.*

Yang(1993) thought “study of the six classics, coupled with mastery of the six arts, would inculcate sound moral sense and a solid cultural grounding that were necessary for the competent exercise of public office.”

Principles of education

Hofstede and Bond (1988) summarized Confucian teaching ideas into four key principles: (1) the stability of society is based on unequal relationships between people; (2) the family is the prototype of all social organizations; (3) virtuous behavior towards others lies in reciprocity; and (4) virtuous behavior includes self-improvement through education, diligence, perseverance, and moderation in all things. But as to the education, in the course of Confucius’ lengthy career as a teacher, he steadily put together a system of principles. Yang (1993)summarized them as follows: to provide students with an education that matched their aptitudes; to encourage independent thought; to practice self-control and self-analysis; to devote

oneself conscientiously to study and to take delight in it; to combine theory with practice and applied study with abstract meditation and so on.

Methods of education

In order to carry out his ideas, Confucius came up with many useful methods for teaching and learning. Among them, “teaching students according to their aptitude”, “heuristic teaching”, and “autonomous learning through reflective thinking” are of great significance. “Persisting in learning” and “building up an equal and democratic relationship” are also strongly advocated by him.

As can be seen from above, Confucius’ educational ideas and thoughts are rather complicated and extensive, which have become an organic system. It not only tells us what should be taught, but also how to teach and learn. Although the goal and content of his education is relatively old fashioned, the method of education still has a great significance for reference, especially for the ESL teaching and learning today. Thus the paper will concentrate on its application in college ESL teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 3

COLLEGE ESL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CHINA

ESL teaching and learning

English as a second language (ESL) refers to the teaching of English as a foreign language to people who are living in a country in which English is either the first or second language. Extensive research has been carried out to investigate the factors which make a successful ESL learner and teacher. Lightbown & Spada (2006) note that younger learners have a greater chance of attaining native-like proficiency in the second language, which shows the importance of age in the ESL learning. They also point out that motivation and attitudes have significant connections with the level of second language achievement. Saville-Troike (2006) argues that differential second language learning outcomes may also be affected by individual's learning strategies: the behaviors and techniques they adopt in their efforts to learn a second language. Gardner & Miller (1999) note teachers should shift their roles from the traditional one into the counselor, evaluator materials developer, observer, researcher, administrator, organizer, monitor and facilitator.

Present situation of ESL teaching and learning at college

In China, college English teaching has been guided and shaped by the syllabuses which were decreed by Ministry of Education (MOE), so a brief introduction to them is a necessity. The syllabus for College English education has been drafted and revised three times since the opening up of China.

Under the guideline of MOE, the Editing and Evaluation Committee of the Public College English Textbooks of Sciences and Engineering and the Editing and Evaluation Committee of the Public College English Textbooks for Arts finished the

draft of College English Teaching Syllabus for Undergraduates of Science and Engineering in 1985 and College English Teaching Syllabus for Undergraduates of Arts in 1986. Syllabuses 1985/1986 covered in detail College English teaching targets, objectives, requirements, arrangements and testing. Besides these, four appendices were listed: “vocabulary”, “Grammatical Summary”, “Functional and Notional Category” and “Language Skills”.

The Syllabuses 1985/1986 was in effect for about 15 years. Many ideas in the syllabuses had far-reaching influences on College English education in China. However, with the development of ESL teaching and College English teaching, the shortcomings of Syllabus 1985/1986 began to arise. They are criticized fundamentally for being test-oriented. No matter how promising the other aspects of the syllabus are in improving the students’ language proficiency, they must subject to a uniform evaluative system, That is, teachers’ teaching and students’ learning are assessed exclusively by the CET-4 (College English Test Band-4) and CET-6 (College English Test Band-6). These Syllabuses emphasized the reading skills, which stated that the objectives of College English were to cultivate the students’ basic strong ability to read. To achieve this goal, the teaching contents of “Vocabulary” and “Grammatical Summary” were listed, and grammar translation approach prevails.

The 1990s witnessed a rapid development and change of China economy, politics and culture. The deficiencies of Syllabuses 1985/1986 became obvious, which was recognized by the MOE in 1999, as it points out, “the employers are commonly not satisfied with the English comprehension competence of tertiary students who

have graduated in recent years, particularly students' oral English and writing ability. Tertiary students are eager to further improve their oral English and writing ability, so it appears more and more important to raise tertiary students' comprehension competence skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating”.

So in 1999, a revised syllabus was released by Chinese Higher Institution Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Guidance Committee empowered by MOE. The objectives of the revised syllabus or Syllabus 1999 were to “cultivate in students a relatively high ability in reading, and a moderate ability in listening, speaking, writing, and translation, so that they will be able to employ English as a means for exchanging information.”

By comparison of Syllabuses 1985/1986, Syllabus 1999 emphasized the exchanging information with English. In this way, Communicative Teaching Approach was popular. However, Syllabus 1999 is still test-focused in nature. According to it, if students' language level failed to meet the basic requirement, it is the college and university's duty to take possible measures to improve their language level to meet the basic requirement. If the students passed CET4, they may move to take advanced course in order to surpass CET6. The syllabus 1999 is tentative in nature, which renders it hard to formulate an effective alternative assessment system to substitute the traditional CET. Times wait for a new syllabus.

In the following five years, radical changes happened in many aspects in China, which called for education to make adjustments. In 2004, a *College English Curriculum Requirement (trial)* was published by MOE, which is a syllabus of

comprehensive reforms and which should be the milestone of China College ESL teaching. Requirements 2004 has following remarkable features:

1. Different levels of requirements. The requirements for undergraduate College English teaching are set at three levels, i.e., basic requirements, intermediate requirements, and higher requirements. Non-English majors are required to attain to one of the three levels of requirements after studying and practicing English at school. The basic requirements are the minimum level that all non-English majors have to reach before graduation. Intermediate and advanced requirements are recommended for those colleges and universities which have more favorable conditions; they should select their levels according to the school's status, types and education goals.
2. Developing students' overall competence in English. The main purpose of College English is to develop five basic skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. The objective of College English is to develop students' ability to use English in a well-rounded way, especially in listening and speaking, so that in their future studies and careers as well as social interactions they will be able to communicate effectively.
3. Introducing a new evaluation system. Requirements 2004 proposed an evaluation consisting of formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment included students' self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher's assessment and school administrators' assessment. Summative assessment referred to final tests and proficiency tests.

4. Individualized English teaching. As China is a large country with conditions that vary from region to region and from college to college, the teaching of College English should 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.
5. Autonomous learning. Requirements 2004 points out the importance of enhancing students' ability to study independently and improve their general cultural awareness so as to meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges.

From above, we may get a relatively clear image of the changes of China college English syllabuses. Yes, we are happy to see they are moving towards the right direction of ESL teaching and learning in China, but Rome was not built in a day, under the direction of the syllabuses, especially the formal two syllabuses, the ESL teaching and learning become more and more rigid and test-oriented before the Requirements 2004 came out. Till now, the invisible influence can be felt in the current practice of College ESL teaching and learning.

The actuality of College ESL teaching and learning.

In the daily teaching, you may often hear such complaints from the teachers: "I've tried hard to teach them, but they just can't learn it." "Why? Why my devotion can not deserve the students' understanding and cooperation?" While students frequently complain: "I find my English class very dull and boring, all the teachers do are about tests, and they don't teach me something new, let alone the critical thinking

and creative work” “Learning English is really a tough job, though I’ve learned English for almost ten years, I just can’t speak it at will; I can not express myself freely and fluently. I have lost the interests in learning English”, “I have learned so many words, but I forget them easily and can’t recognize them when listening, nor find them in my memory when speaking or writing.” “I learned English grammar by heart and I am very familiar with those grammatical rules, but I can not write composition idiomatically.” “Why am I always speaking or writing Chinglish?” These complaints are very common.

Let’s study it carefully what really happened in the College ESL class in China. At present, most college students learn English in a large class with at least sixty students in it. Teachers are busy with preparing lesson, giving lectures, going over students’ homework and setting test papers. So it is more or less difficult for teachers to pay attention to each learner’s individual affective needs which are considered as important factors in language learning.

In those classrooms, the teaching mode and methods are still very traditional although reforms voice is very loud. Teachers, like a machine, give the class continuously without noticing the response of the students. They neglect the important roles played by such learners’ emotion as anxiety, fear, self-esteem, self-confident etc. The core of language teaching is viewed as the transmission of a collection of static discrete knowledge and facts needing repeating and memorizing without personal meaning. Much similar to the fate of the Peking Duck, before it is cooked into delicious roasted Peking Duck, the farmer will stuff much food into it in order to

increase the weight and meat of the duck. In the class, the teacher tries every means to pour such knowledge into students, hoping they can learn it by heart, while students also try hard to squeeze every piece of it into memory which, however, never keep much for long and they can not digest it.

The undesirable results caused by both teachers and learners are made worse by external environment and pressures. The compulsory CET4 is representative. For students, they treat the CET as a task and as long as they pass the exam, they may have a slight advantage in hunting a job in the future. Therefore, they just memorize vocabulary and some sentence patterns which may be used in the exam. They don't take the exams as a good opportunity to improve their English level. For teachers, it becomes the "right excuse" for sticking to the traditional attitudes and methods. So teachers try hard to pour all those new vocabulary and grammar required for CET4 in limited class hours in case anything is omitted, thus leaving no time for students to actively think and participate in class activities. The comprehensive class has genuinely become intensive reading class characterized by explaining and translating knowledge, a continuous round of rote learning, for a continuous round of examinations. In such an environment, students slowly lose the interest in English learning, because they cannot get some guidance from teacher when they are eager for it. Student becomes completely passive knowledge receiver rather than an independent thinker, an active learner.

Obviously, there have been some problems with college ESL education in our country, i.e. 1) our teaching is not given according to the students' individual needs

and conditions 2) students' learning is passive rather than active, and they don't learn by themselves. With time passing by, they have never been solved but become more serious.

Neither teachers nor students are satisfied with the present ESL education. But who and what should we blame for this? Many teachers wonder about it, sometimes feel lost and helpless. We need an Aladdin's lamp. Thanks to our master, Confucius, he is that lamp. He has pointed out the right way to go.

CHAPTER 4

Application of Confucius' Educational Ideology in College ESL

Teaching and Learning in China

From the discussion above, we know that the achievement-test oriented language learning overlooks learners' potentiality in the learning process. In fact, the students who fail to get high scores are not the poor students necessarily. They may be quite able to speak English fluently in their learning process. They may make progress in one specific aspect of language learning. If teachers overstress the results, the learners will be in a poor position to understand their language learning and evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. The lack of clear understanding of themselves in the learning process makes it impossible for learners to set appropriate goals and use effective strategies to work towards the goals. So the excessive emphasis on test scores instead of learning process is really great obstacle of ESL education.

Faced with the problems, what steps can we take? Let's go back to Confucius to see what he taught us to do to tackle the difficulties.

Application in teaching

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Confucius stressed "providing students with an education that matched their aptitudes", and "heuristic teaching" and encouraged "independent thought, reflective thinking", and advocated "building up equal relationship between teacher and student" which should and have become the theoretical basis of current college ESL education reforms.

Graded teaching.

From the perspective of Confucius, to provide students with an education that

matched their aptitudes is the best way of teaching. “Teaching students according to their aptitude” was one of Confucius’ educational ideas, as described in the *Analects*:

Zi Lu said: “should actions be based on what is heard?” Confucius said, “with father and elder brothers still living, how can actions be based on what is heard?” Ran You said, “Should actions be based on what is heard?” Confucius said, “Act on what is heard.” Gong Xihua said, “When Lu asked if actions should be based on what is heard, my Master said that his father and elder brothers are still living. When You asked if actions should be based on what is heard, my Master said that he should act on what is heard. I was perplexed and ventures to enquire.” ” Confucius said, “You is deterred. Therefore I impel him. Lu is boundless. Therefore I deter him.” (*Analects*, XI.21)

From the quotation, we know that Confucius knows their disciples pretty well and they have different personalities and characters, so he responded to the question differently, encouraging one to act and stopping the other.

More and more college ESL teachers realize that learners differ in their approaches to language learning, including their aptitude and motivation for language learning, their perception of language and learning processes, their background experience and their learning styles. These differences in turns affect choices made by both teachers and learners as to which materials, teaching and learning approaches, and forms of interaction which are most effective for language learning.

Thus, China ESL teachers spontaneously turn to Confucius for help to adopt method of graded teaching, teaching students according to their aptitude, which has become

popular among the colleges English teaching in China.

In fact, Confucius's idea of educating according to the aptitude is well- preserved and inherited by Chinese people and educators. Zhang (2006) pointed out large-scaled and standardized classification of specialties in higher education lays a more scientific and systematic foundation for "teaching students according to their aptitude". The teaching approach of "teaching students according to their aptitude" can be achieved in a more sophisticated and scientific way which harmoniously combines students' subjective interests with their personalities, professional knowledge with cultivation of students' creativity, "teaching content" and "students' aptitude" with the need of society. Wang (2010) proposed a dynamic hierarchical teaching method based on different individual attributes. This method made use of diversity of students in three attributes: intelligence, knowledge, attitude, which turned out that different levels of students have different learning ability and testified the necessity of teaching students according to their aptitude. Chen (2005) argued the principle of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude is necessary for College English level-based teaching. Level-based teaching is a form of the traditional classroom teaching .It is the key to improve the teaching quality of College English and is the important procedure to carry out quality-oriented education. Yang(2011) reviewed gradation teaching reform of college English teaching in Beifang University of Nationalities from 2005 to 2011 and analyzed some existing problems in order to further promote gradation teaching reform of college English and to continuously improve the teaching quality.

Not only did Chinese educators do some research on it and put this idea into practice, but foreign researchers did much research on it. And uniformly they explored the importance of teaching according to the individual difference. Scott (2010) pointed out that individualism is the dominant value system in western cultures and it affects the conduct of every aspect of human endeavor, including education. One of the most enduring effects on education has been the search for individual differences that can explain and predict variation in student achievement. Chwen Jen (2005) carried out a study which aims to investigate the effects of a virtual reality (VR)-based learning environment on learners with different learning styles. The findings of the aptitude-by-treatment interaction study have shown that learners benefit most from the VR (guided exploration) mode, irrespective of their learning styles.

Great minds think alike. Krashen (1985) pointed out that the only way to acquire language is to get comprehensible input that is at the level of “ $i+1$ ”, which has much in common with Confucius ideas. Krashen said it was only in this way that is a little beyond the learner’s current level that he can get desirable result. In fact, this “ $i+1$ ” is kind of reflection of Confucius’ idea of educating according to the aptitude. Let’s say more about this theory. If the input is too difficult, which is far beyond their level, i. e. $i+2$, they will be less self-confident and feel anxious, which makes a heavier layer of filter of the affective factors, so the input cannot enter the language Acquisition Device to be internalized and eventually causes the failure of acquisition. And if the input is too simple or below their level, i.e. $i+0$, the student cannot get new knowledge and skill, they can also feel anxious and tired of it, which makes the teaching

inefficient. In China, college students have different aptitude and different levels of English learning, so they have the demand for different teaching objectives, materials and methods. Naturally, “i+1” theory, or to be more precise, teaching according to the aptitude now has become the essence and theoretical basis of college English graded learning and teaching in China.

Heuristic teaching.

In the teaching practice, Confucius gradually realized that the center of the study must be student himself, and teacher’s main task is to give directions and supervision. He insisted the heuristic study. So in the *Analects*, he said:

“I do not open up the truth to one who is not eager to get knowledge, nor help out any one who is not anxious to explain himself. When I have presented one corner of a subject to any one, and he cannot from it learn the other three, I do not repeat my lesson.” (*Analects*, VII.8)

Obviously, Confucius required that a student should be good at drawing inferences about other cases from one instance. He would not enlighten and inspire the students until they thought about the questions fully and independently and they were eager for the guidance from the teacher. In fact, Confucius words enlightened us on the college ESL education. That is, (1) teacher must arouse students’ interest and enhance students’ motivation in ESL learning (2) teacher should shift the role from the traditional” pouring” to “enlightening” in ESL teaching.

As we all know, a desire to learn is the proposition of a good learning circle. It is an important motivator for a student. So is interest. Thus, how to arouse students’

interest and how to keep it all the time in language learning is very important.

Students' interest may be aroused by providing plentiful new information. Teachers may offer the information vividly through modern technology, such as with pictures, movements, voices and images, and make good use of the students' audio and visual senses to attract their attention. Moreover, for students who like using computers, the immediate feedback from the computer can stimulate students to learn more. In addition, to arouse students' interest teachers may also carry out colorful activities and design different tasks to ask students to do. Thus, students will form strong learning desire and motivation gradually.

The roles of teachers now should be dramatically different from their traditional teaching roles. Teachers should not dominate the class any more to pour the knowledge into the students while learners are not passive receivers any longer. However, it does not necessarily mean teachers are less important. On the contrary, the teachers' job is more demanding and challenging in helping learners grow up as creative and independent learners for life (Qi, & Pang, 2002). Teachers not only perform the roles administrators and organizers, but also those of counselors, assessors, evaluators, material developers and managers. Teachers need to learn new skills to take on their new roles. Teacher must realize that a language can only be learned and not be taught. Learning will not happen when the teacher insists on teaching rather than letting the learners learn for themselves. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to make learners more aware of their central role in the decision making process. Students have to learn to take an increasing amount of responsibility for their

learning. They have to learn about the importance of reflection on their learning and how it can help them to redefine their goals to make them constantly relevant to their needs and wants. Learners bring their own beliefs, goals, attitudes and decisions to learning and these influence how they approach their learning.

The teacher must take part in the students' group study actively, contributing ideas and opinions, or relating personal experiences. The teacher should also help students and provide some useful information, responding to students' requests for any questions concerning study. At other times the teacher is a monitor, checking what students have produced. In this student-centered class the teacher has to shift his or her role from a dominant teacher to an organizer or a director, because the goal of language teaching is to enable students to use the target language to communicate efficiently in real life.

Application in learning

Autonomous learning

Autonomous learning has been proved an effective way to improve the ESL learning, and many colleges and universities in China have begun to implement it. It is not difficult to find learning by oneself, self-directed learning or autonomous learning has a very solid base which is from Confucius.

Autonomous learning is a means through which the goal of autonomy can be achieved. When it comes to the definition of "autonomy", it will go to some western scholars and experts instead of Confucius. The most widely quoted and highly honored is Holec's version. Holec (1981) defines autonomy as the ability to take

charge of one's own learning which is to have and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of learning: i.e. determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking; and evaluating what has been acquired. So for Holec learner autonomy is ability, not an action.

Little (1991) describes Learner Autonomy as the new "buzz-word" in the field of applied linguistics, and he defines it as a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. To him there is a certain amount of awareness (critical reflection) involved. Nunan (1995) thought the ability was important for learners, and if learners reached a point where they were able to define their own goals and create their own learning opportunities, they became autonomous. If we look at the discussed definitions, we find that they focus on autonomy either as all ability or as a certain act of learning. These definitions seem to be incomplete. To have an ability to do something doesn't mean it would be useful, so Benson(1997) notes that the term Learner Autonomy can have at least five different connotations: (1)for situations in which learners study entirely on their own;(2) for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning (3) for all inborn capacity which is "unpressed" by institutional education (4) for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning (5) for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

From above, we know autonomous learning needs learners to be more responsible for their own learning while autonomy enables learners to ingrain

life-long learning skills. Autonomy is not a once-for-all product. It needs constant development through autonomous learning.

How to find effective and efficient ways for successful autonomous learning is the urgent requirement in ESL learning in China. In fact, Confucius had already given us the answer, that is, learn by oneself through independent reflective thinking.

Method of thinking while learning.

Confucius emphasized the importance of self-learning, independent thinking and persistence in learning, and he was strongly for autonomous learning, as described in the *Analects*:

Confucius said, “To learn without thinking is labor in vain. To think without learning is desolation.” (*Analects*, II.15)

From the quotation, we know Confucius stressed the combination of learning and thinking. Kim (2003) also argued that Confucius’ view of learning in the *Analects* entails critical thinking. It is pointed out Confucius advocated and emphasized the importance of reflective thinking. For Confucius reflective thinking of two sorts is essential to learning: (1) reflection on the materials of knowledge, in order to synthesize and systemize the raw materials into a whole, and to integrate them into oneself as wisdom; (2) reflection on oneself, (a) in order to ensure that such synthesis, systemization, and integration proceed in an open-minded, fair and autonomous way, and (b) in order to integrate knowledge with the self, that is, to internalize it until it becomes oneself.

In fact, reflective thinking plays an extremely important role in autonomous

learning, and it is also the goal and ideal state that college ESL autonomous learning wants to reach nowadays in China. Reflective thinking influences all of the participants in education. Reflection helps all stakeholders review question, discuss, and understand how learning, instruction, curriculum, and assessment are interwoven and reciprocal. Reflection is a powerful process for promoting independent and self-directed learning-at all ages. Learners can clearly gain insights into their own learning when given opportunities and encouragement. On the contrary, they can become detached and disengaged from their learning if they are not provided frequent opportunities to reflect on their work and discuss crafts of their learning.

The current situation is that, most learners, even with more years of English learning experiences, such as college students in China, have limited opportunities to reflect on their own learning and remain naive or confused about their own language abilities, strength, weakness, and accomplishment etc. If more regular opportunities for reflection are provided for students to assess themselves in everyday instruction, learners will have a better understanding and assessment of their language abilities, thus they can self-manage their language learning: set goals, make plans and then work hard to realize them, which is a process of going toward independent, self-directed language learning.

So it is important to have regular opportunities for reflection in everyday English learning.

Application in the relationship between teacher and student

Equal and democratic relationship between teacher and student

Confucius stressed the importance of the good relationship between teacher and student, and it is valuable for China college ESL education. Whether in or out of the class, the relationship between teacher and student should be equal and democratic. Teacher and student may learn from each other. As described in the Analects:

The Master said, “When I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities and follow them, their bad qualities and avoid them.” (**Analects**, VII.22)

From the quotation, we know that Confucius respected the people around him and was good at finding their strong points. This shed some light on the teaching and learning of ESL in China. Usually, in the class, teacher is the absolute authority and it can not be challenged and criticized, so there is a huge gap between teacher and student. When students have some questions and puzzles, they are afraid of asking teacher about them, even when they are confused about what the teacher taught and doubt the correctness, they are reluctant to point them out in front of the teacher. After all, teacher is always right in the eye of students.

While, English is a second language to both teachers and students, and teacher may commit some mistakes. We should learn from Confucius, no matter what kind of person he is, whether he is a teacher or student, if he has some good qualities, we should treat him equally and respect him and follow him. Harmonious relationship between teacher and student is beneficial to the ESL teaching and learning. Only when students freely present questions and puzzles without being afraid of criticism, only when teachers can sit together with students to explore and discuss the questions

democratically , may the ESL teaching and learning be improved.

CHAPTER5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers pay more and more attention to Confucius and try to study him from different perspectives. However, during the process of exploring and studying, the author found that it was very difficult to find some relevant literature on Confucius in English. There are only a few researches on his thoughts in Chinese and its application in Chinese class. Rarely can the research on its application in ESL education be found. So there is a lack of systematic and explicit exploration on its application in College ESL education.

After review of the related literature, in this paper, the study first introduces and discusses systematically the Confucius educational ideology, including a brief introduction of Confucius, goals of education, content of education, the principles of education, and the methods of education; then a deep analysis is given on the current difficult situation of college ESL education in China, which points out that the basic reason for it lies in the test-oriented syllabuses and traditional and inefficient teaching and learning method. The embarrassing actuality and the urgent call for reforms and perfecting the current ESL education need us to take steps to change. Now it is the proper time has come to apply Confucius' educational ideology in college ESL teaching and learning.

Confucius stressed “providing students with an education that matched their aptitudes”, and” heuristic teaching”; encouraged “independent thought, reflective thinking”, and “constant reviewing”, and advocated “building up equal relationship between teacher and student”. All of them are still useful in present college ESL

teaching and learning, which have become the theoretical basis of current college ESL education reforms.

This study enriches the theory and practice of college ESL education since it proposes new ideas and approaches to promoting ESL education. That is, applying Confucius' educational ideology to promoting college English teaching and learning. Moreover, it has great practical significance: "teaching students' according to their aptitudes" help us to implement graded teaching, "independent thought, reflective thinking" enlightened students to learn by themselves, and so on.

Although the author has tried his best to find some useful literatures related to the topic but failed eventually, Confucius' educational ideology has not be researched and explored thoroughly, and it has not fully unfolded its immense potential in ESL education. Therefore, in the author's opinion, in the further study more research should be involved on Confucius educational ideology and its possible application in college ESL teaching and learning. Confucius is such a great master that he and his thoughts deserve further and deeper exploration.

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