

Removal of toxic English teaching & learning styles in China

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Abstract: There are a few unique English teaching and learning styles among some Chinese teachers and learners, which affect their work efficiency or are toxic to their work and study. Some suggestions on getting rid of toxic teaching and learning styles are necessary to the improvement of teaching and learning efficiency. Cultivating healthy styles for English teaching and learning is the key to success.

Key words: English teaching and learning; toxic styles; healthy styles

1. Introduction

English teaching and learning styles influence teaching and learning efficiency. Although great energy has been directed towards English teaching and learning in China, the result is not widely accepted by the public up to now. Some teachers complain about their students while some students may not be completely satisfied with all the teachers. It seems that the key point is how to help them to be less controversial. All the people need to keep calm for a while to analyze the core of the problem. There are a few unique English teaching and learning styles among some Chinese teachers and learners, which affect their work efficiency or are toxic to their work and study. A good understanding of the disadvantages of the toxic teaching and learning styles is conducive to the solution. Both faculties and students are required to cultivate healthy English teaching and learning styles to create harmony in the field.

2. A few toxic English teaching and learning styles

The following English teaching and learning styles are described as toxic simply because they are malfunctions in terms of relationships, enthusiasm and adjustment to modern times. They undermine the teaching and learning environment; contribute to pessimism among teachers and students.

2.1 Authoritarian style

Under the influence of Confucian teaching, all the Chinese teachers make the decisions during the class. They decide what to teach and learn, how to teach and learn, when to teach and learn and where to teach and learn. Even when the decisions are harmful to the learners, no one dares to challenge teachers. The standard mode of authoritarian style is command and control, with no regard to diversity and efficiency of teaching and learning.

With authoritarian style, learners are to be controlled, manipulated and occasionally pacified like little children. They are motivated by fear rather than enthusiasm or passion for learning. They are expected to do what they are told without questioning. The main criterion for progress is high scores in examinations rather than

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competence and commitment. As a result, competent performers who dare to question are sidelined, while those who obey the decisions blindly get the reward.

2.2 Rigid style

There is a strong resistance to any kind of change. Some teachers cling to out-dated methods and traditions, unwilling to adapt to the changes in the world. They teach for a number of years, the dominant texts, which are often authorized by officials. Students are discouraged or even reprimanded for suggesting innovative ideas. As a result, the world passes them by and eventually they are left with an empty shell of the former self.

There exists a popular tendency of unity. Teachers put various students in the same place, teach the same contents, and assign the same homework to all the students, regardless of their intelligence and backgrounds. They follow the same syllabus; require all the students to learn in the same pace. Students seldom probe into foreign materials. Both sides resort to the results of various kinds of examinations for criteria, leading to cheating and fraudulent practice.

2.3 Chinese-based style

There seems to be a powerful Chinese-based or Chinese oriented style for English teaching and learning all over the country. Teachers are often obsessed with translating English into Chinese in terms of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. in the belief that translation into Chinese version is the core of the work. On the other hand, the Chinese students are interested in comparing all the elements of English with those of Chinese. When they learn English, they try to compare and find equivalents of pronunciation, correspondence, with the negligence of the fact that China enjoys a culture which is different from the west.

As a result of Chinese-based style, there appears a special terminology for Chinese-English. Some teachers rely on the rivet of the Chinese grammar. They spare a lot of energy and time on the comparison of the English grammatical rules with the Chinese grammar. Some students learn English but think in Chinese no matter whether there is similar correspondence or not. They create special ways of explaining their ideas in Chinese- English or Chinglish.

The above three toxic styles are not mutually exclusive. For example, a person may suffer both authoritarian style and rigid style, or the three toxic styles. When he or she is addicted to a multiple of toxic poisons, effective reforms are needed to save him or her from misfortunes. The following healthy styles are essential for operations.

3. Healthy English teaching and learning styles

The following English teaching and learning styles are listed as healthy in that they are functioning in terms of relationships, enthusiasm and adjustment to modern times. They help invent a friendly teaching and learning environment, contribute to optimism among teachers and students.

3.1 Cooperative style

It is essential to establish a cooperative relationship between teachers and students. Both of them are equal in cooperation. Teachers are responsible for macro design and students are real participants of the operation. Both of them have the right to decide what and how to teach and learn. The standard mode is cooperation and discussion, taking diversity and efficiency of teaching and learning into full consideration.

With the help of this style, learners are not simply taught and dominated like little children. They are

motivated by enthusiasm or passion for learning. They are expected to do what they are supposed to. The main criterion for progress is competence and commitment rather than high scores in papers. As a result, competent performers dare to question and get the reward.

3.2 Flexible modern style

Flexibility requires both teachers and students to adjust quickly to any kind of change in modern times. Teachers do not value the certainty of remaining the same. They need to try up-dated methods, relying on computerized or network communications, willing to adapt to the changes in the world. They can select from the media or networks their materials of various kinds, including sports, education, science, industry, agriculture, medicine, military, economy, finance, travel, services, etc., which are often full of life. Students are encouraged to suggest innovative ideas. As a result, students learn beyond the sake of learning.

Moreover, there needs to be a popular culture of diversity. Teachers teach different contents, assign different homework to different students according to their intelligence and backgrounds even when they are in the same class. They design their own schedule, allowing timely changes and reforms. Students are encouraged to probe into foreign materials. Both sides resort to performance and participation rather than to the results of examinations for criteria. They are open to new ideas and willing to adopt innovations.

3.3 English thinking style

There is an Indian saying: Good judgments come from experience. Experience comes from bad judgments. English teaching and learning has rules of its own. The trial and error method is indispensable to all the people. Therefore, teachers are supposed to do more than simply translating English into Chinese in terms of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. They should conduct all kinds of activities, oral or written, to get rid of their personal preference of some items to others. Students need to be fully plunged into English context without blind comparisons or thinking of equivalent pronunciation, correspondence.

As China enjoys a different culture from the west, teachers and students ought to take non-grammatical aspects into full consideration. They are required to rely on the rivet of the culture rather than on grammar. Teachers are supposed to think in English when they teach whereas students are requested to remove a toxic habit of learning Chinese- English or Chinglish. They should learn to think in English instead of excessive comparison. An English thinking style does matter a lot in their progress.

3.4 Individual style

Someone may be confused by individualism and individuality, which are similar in spelling but different in connotation. The former refers to the belief that the rights and freedom of individual people are the most important rights in a society, the behavior or attitude of someone who does things in their own way without being influenced by other people. The latter refers to the quality that makes someone or something different from all other things or people. In English teaching and learning process, individuality is of great importance, for no one is sure of a certain method, which is effective for all in China. Individual teachers need various teaching methods for different regions and persons. They cannot be fixed in teaching style. Students are required to find an individual learning style for different contexts. Everyone is valued and validated, regardless of their intelligence and backgrounds. The focus is on the formation and cultivation of the concept of an individual style.

4. Conclusion

English teaching and learning is complicated in that it is influenced by a few toxic teaching and learning styles including authoritarian style, rigid style and Chinese-based style, because they are malfunctions in terms of relationships, enthusiasm and adjustment to modern times. They undermine the teaching and learning environment; contribute to pessimism among teachers and students. When a person is addicted to a multiple of toxic styles, effective reforms are needed to save him or her from frustrations. Some measures to get rid of toxic teaching and learning styles are necessary to the improvement of teaching and learning efficiency. Cooperative style, flexible style, English thinking style and individual style are recommended as healthy styles. Cultivating these healthy styles is the key to success.

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