

Enhancing Undergraduates' Academic English Proficiency in College English Teaching in China

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Abstract

The present college English teaching (CET) in China is undergoing a critical stage of transition in history, a stage characterized by the shift of teaching English as a foreign language at college and university from general English to English for academic purposes, and to develop undergraduates' academic English proficiency will become one of the important teaching targets for CET. Following Cummins' distinction of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) from basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and the theory of common underlying proficiency (CUP), we believe that developing CALP will benefit students learning of English and their knowledge of content areas as well as their preparation and performance in the internationalization of the curriculum of various disciplines. This study was intended to analyze the content, model and process of college English teaching which is targeted at enhancing undergraduates' academic English proficiency, with a purpose of exploring its significant function for implementing a teaching with academic reading and writing as a core and drive, and practical and exploratory teaching activities as methods and means. The study of our preliminary teaching attempts and students' feedbacks indicated that teaching academic English at tertiary level in China promoted students' general English based on the real world experiencing and meaningful language communication, increased their learning tasks and activities for practical use of English, and contributed greatly to the enhancing of their awareness and capabilities in academic English reading and writing.