Bilingual Teaching Methods of Physical Education Classes for Students with Sports Majors at Universities in Wuhan

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Abstract. Bilingual teaching has become more and more popular in the past decade at universities. Many instructors have adopted bilingual teaching methods in subjects such as computer science, marketing, and engineering, and have received positive feedback from students. However, bilingual teaching in physical education (PE) classes is still not common at most universities. This article analyzes the reasons why bilingual teaching is still rare in PE classes at universities in Wuhan, especially for students with sports majors, and explores practical bilingual teaching methods for PE classes to help students not only improve their English and sports skills, but also improve their job prospects.

1. Introduction

Bilingual teaching (Chinese-English) has become a trend for years in university. Teaching bilingually is one of the best ways to not only help students improve their English, but more importantly, help them develop creative thinking skills, problem solving skills, and other cognitive skills because it exercises the brain to process and convey thoughts in two different languages.[1]

While many instructors have been experimenting bilingual teaching methods in different subjects especially in science at universities, very few physical education instructors are teaching bilingually at universities in Wuhan. In fact, PE class is one of the best classes to teach in two languages because of its unique characteristics such as high level of interactivity and straightforwardness. Even if students are not familiar with sports vocabulary, you can combine it with demonstrations of sports movements, which can reinforce the learning of English and sports movements at the same time. Moreover, it is extremely important for students with sports majors to be familiar with sports English and use them in some international sports events. For example, becoming an international referee is most students’ dream. To achieve this dream, English ability is one of the core requirements. Also, many students with sports majors have lots of opportunities to attend international competitions. Being familiar with sports English and use them would definitely help students communicate with their foreign opponents better, make more friends, and increase their job prospects in such a competitive job market. This article analyzes the reasons why bilingual teaching is still not common at universities in Wuhan and explores some practical and efficient bilingual teaching methods for students with sports majors at universities. Hopefully, it would help students not only improve their English but also enhance their abilities to compete in an interconnected world.

2. Reasons Why Bilingual Teaching is Still Rare in PE Classes at Universities

2.1. Low Level of English Skills Among PE Instructors

One of the main reasons why bilingual teaching in PE classes is still rare at universities is because many PE instructors do not have enough good English skills to teach bilingually. We interviewed one hundred PE instructors at different universities in Wuhan about their English levels. Only seventeen percent of instructors passed the College English Test Six (CET6). About forty five percent passed the College English Test Four (CET4). About thirty two percent of instructors never
took an English test because they were not required to when they were at schools. They took some English classes before but they forgot most of the English they learned since there have not been many opportunities for them to practice English in real life. The rest six percent of instructors expressed that they barely knew any English. From the statistics, we can see that almost forty percent does not have enough English ability to teach PE classes bilingually. Among those who passed CET4 and CET6, some of them expressed that they did not feel very confident to teach PE classes bilingually yet because they have not used English that much ever since graduated. However, many of them expressed that they are willing to teach PE classes bilingually if their universities can offer some English courses for them to improve their English. Thus, lacking of proper ability in English is one of the main problems that prevent instructors from teaching PE classes bilingually, but it is still possible for many instructors to teach bilingually once their English gets improved.

2.2. Lack of Support from Universities

The other reason why bilingual teachings is still not common in PE classes is because most sports departments at universities do not attach enough importance in bilingual teaching. They mainly focus on sports skills, sports theory, and sports events. Some sports departments were trying to encourage PE instructors to do bilingual teaching, but due to the lack of English ability and initiative, bilingual teaching plan was just not successful. Thus universities need to make some practical plans to improve PE instructors’ English. For example, they can provide Sports English course for instructors. They can also invite instructors from other universities who can teach PE classes bilingually to share some bilingual teaching methods and demonstrate how to integrate English with sports. All of this would help PE instructors improve their English, develop their interests in bilingual teaching, and prepare them to teach bilingually in PE classes.

2.3. Negative Attitude Towards Bilingual PE Classes Among Students

Students’ attitude towards learning is the key to teaching effect. According to our interviews with many students with sports majors at different Universities in Wuhan, many of them have not realized the great importance and benefits of bilingual teaching in PE classes. Some of them think it is unnecessary to take bilingual PE classes. Some of them expressed that they could learn English and sports skills well at the same time because their English levels were just not good enough to handle two different things together. They were afraid that they may not be able to learn sports skills well if they focus on too much English learning. Thus, students’ negative attitude is one of the main reasons why bilingual PE classes is still not very common at universities. Universities need to find some ways to make students realize the importance and benefits of bilingual PE classes and stimulate their interest.

3. Bilingual Teaching Methods for Students with Sports Majors

3.1. Transitional Method

Transitional method is a method that instructors teach PE classes in both Chinese and English, mainly use Chinese to teach in the beginning, and then increase the use of English later on when students are more familiar with sports English vocabulary.[2] In the beginning, instructors can only focus on basic English vocabulary of sports. These words should be the most commonly used ones, so students can appreciate the practical use of English in sports. For example, when instructors demonstrate how to serve in badminton, they can teach the word “serve”. When they teach how to return different spins of serves of table tennis, they can teach words such as “return”, “top-spin”, “under-spin”, and “side-spin”. When they teach how to become a referee, they can teach words such as “referee”, “score” “yellow card”, and so on. The purpose of each class in the beginning is to help students remember basic vocabulary first, such as “serve”, “exchanges”, “smash”, “forehand”, “jump”, “goalie” and etc, so students can easily learn and develop some interests in sports English first. If it were too overwhelming for students at the very beginning, students may not only lose
interest in English, but also may not be able to learn sports skills well. The goal of teaching PE classes bilingually is to improve students’ English and sports skills at the same time, not just one of them. Once students are more familiar with the basic sports English vocabulary, instructors can increase the use of English more, such as forming more complete English sentences or using more complicated English words.

3.2. Group Learning Method

Group learning has been proven to produce stronger academic achievement. It can help students develop content knowledge as well as problem-solving, reasoning, communication, and self-assessment skills.[3] Since students have different levels of English, it is necessary to divide them into groups according to their English levels. They can have a placement English test. Instructors can use more English and more complicated vocabulary when teaching students with higher English level. When teaching students with lower English level, instructors can keep the English part as simple as possible. Thus, instructors need to make different syllabi and assessment test plans for each group. Students whose English get better later on can go to higher English level PE classes. It is also important for groups to interact with each other. Instructors can encourage students with better English to help those whose English levels are lower, and encourage students whose sports skills are better to help those with lower sports skill level. This would stimulate students’ interest in learning and create a more active learning environment for students.

3.3. Video Teaching Method

Besides traditional teaching in person, instructors can also make videos to teach PE classes bilingually. Due to the widespread of internet, young generations are used to watching online tutorials. There are a few advantages of making teaching videos. First, instructors can make videos very interesting and creative by using some visual or sound effects while combining English with sports skills. They do not have to make videos unnecessary long since most young people have very short attention spans nowadays. Instead, they could make short Tik Tok videos since Tik Tok is one of the most popular platforms among young people, and it has many built in functions to help make videos more interesting and creative. Second, instructors can put both English and Chinese subtitles at the bottom of videos, which can help students be more familiar with the spelling of English vocabulary. Students can repeat what are said and what are demonstrated in a video, which would help them master English and sports skills more efficiently. Third, making videos can increase interactivity between students and instructors and also among students. In a traditional teaching environment, it is very hard for instructors to interact with every student since in-class time is limited. However, The comment section of each video provides a great space for students and instructors to interact. Students can give their feedback to instructors by leaving comments. Students can also comment on other students’ comments, which would increase communications among students and create a better learning atmosphere. Last, videos are good resources for students to reinforce their knowledge. They can watch them whenever they need to. It also attracts attention more easily, and hopefully it would make bilingual teaching in PE classes more common at universities in the future.

3.4. Create Opportunities for Students to Interact with International Students

Most universities in Wuhan, such as Wuhan University, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, and Jianghan University have International Education Schools. Since most of international students speak English, PE instructors can create opportunities for students with sports majors to interact with international students. For example, having them play sports games together would be a great opportunity for students to communicate in English. This experience would not only be fun but also make students have more practical experience with sports English. It can also increase their interests in bilingual PE classes. Also, most students majoring in sports have pretty good sports skills, so they can teach international students how to improve their sports skills in English. This would not only help students gain some teaching experience but also improve their communication skills.
4. Conclusion

Teaching PE classes bilingually is important for students with sports majors at universities. Even though the general English level of PE instructors is not high, it is still possible for many PE instructors with better English skills to teach bilingually. Universities need to provide more support to help instructors improve their English and also help students realize the importance of taking bilingual PE classes. PE instructors can use transitional method, group learning method, video teaching method to teach PE classes bilingually. They can also create more opportunities for students to interact with international students by holding some sports events to stimulate their interest and improve their communication skills. Hopefully, by taking bilingual PE classes students with sports majors can have better job prospects.

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