

## Contributors to College English “Water Courses”

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### Abstract

**The present paper is a detailed analysis of the contributors to college English “water courses”. Respective contributors of teachers, students and administrators are analyzed, and corresponding solutions are offered to improve the situation.**

### Keywords

**Contributors, college English “water courses”, teachers, students, administrators.**

### 1. Introduction

From the perspective of teaching objects, “water courses” are cell phone-playing courses in which students can easily get high marks without putting much effort into their studies.[1] “Water courses” can be divided into two categories: courses which serve as media for students to earn the academic credits they need and courses towards which teachers take causal attitudes despite their importance.[2] Some college English courses are also denounced by many, both teachers and students alike, as “water courses”. Indeed, it is not uncommon for students to muddle through English classes by playing with their cell phones, talking with their peers or even being absent from class. Therefore, it is quite necessary to analyze the causes of the college English “water courses” problem and come up with corresponding solutions.

### 2. Body

#### 2.1. Contributor 1: Teachers

A special occupation of cultivating the soul of students, teaching requires teachers’ complete devotion. But a small proportion of the teaching faculty consider teaching merely as a way of making a living. In their views, as long as they stand on the podium lecturing and finish the class, they have fulfilled their duties. This casual attitude towards teaching, coupled with the uncaring attitude towards students, contributes considerably to college English “water courses”. To improve the situation, students may be asked to supervise the teachers and evaluate them on a regular basis. What is more important is to impose pressure on the teachers and offer them intensive training, especially morality training if necessary.

The majority of the college English teachers love their jobs and show their very commitments, but they are still forced to muddle through for the external factors. College English teachers in many universities have to undertake heavy load of work. There are just too many classes per week for them to be sustainably energetic through the work days. The situation is even worsened if taken into consideration the situation of a female-dominated teaching faculty who tend to be more physically and emotionally drained than male teachers. To ensure effective teaching and the overall health of college English teachers, various measures should be taken to reduce the teaching hours to the minimum. In addition, many college English teachers face the pressure of fulfilling scientific research goals set by their schools. The solution to this problem is to shift the research-based mode to teaching-based and student-centered one.

Teaching a foreign language is no easy job. English teaching requires teachers to have a wide range of knowledge and a good command of the target language and source language as well. Unluckily, many teachers have trouble expressing their views freely in the target language---

English. In this situation, if teachers do not make full preparations for their classes in advance, they just cannot give impressive lectures that will capture students' attention and benefit them. Therefore, college English teachers should be highly self-disciplined. They have to listen to or read English news every day, and they have to write and do translations often. In a word, they have to keep in touch with English almost every day all their lives, otherwise they may even lag behind their students. Teachers within the same school and across universities should hold conferences on a regular basis and conduct discussions on teaching in English. By the way, a weird phenomenon is that almost all conferences for college English teachers are conducted in Chinese rather than the teaching language---English. An English environment and atmosphere are urgently needed for sustaining and improving teachers' language abilities.

## 2.2. Contributor 2: Students

Some students exhibit incorrect attitudes towards English studies, which contributes to "water courses". Some are over-confident about their English abilities, thinking college English learning is nothing but a piece of cake. In their opinion, with their solid language foundation built in the past years, they can pass CET 4 or even CET 6 upon being admitted to university. On the contrary, other unconfident students think that they just cannot keep up with the courses and give up. In either case, teachers should communicate with students in private to help cultivate their correct attitudes towards English studies. For the over-confident students, teachers should provide them with medium or high-level difficulty learning tasks and educate them in terms of learning attitudes. For the unconfident students, teachers should inspire them to work harder and come up with practical ways to offer all forms of assistance they need.

Students' lack of interaction or inactivity is another contributor to college English "water courses". The core of a language class is interaction, and mutual communication in an English class is of uttermost importance. The nature of a language class requires that students must speak out both in and after class. However, many Chinese students are quite conservative, showing their reluctance to be interactive. Teachers can do something to change the situation for the better. First of all, teachers have to be active themselves, as the active atmosphere created by teachers is of great importance to stimulate students to be equally active. Students can never be expected to be active if teachers have not set a good example. Besides, to motivate students, teachers may design abundant appealing and useful teaching activities such as role-play, dubbing or video-clip making. Teachers should pay attention that they must try to clue students in step by step. For example, related language and grammar points should be provided to students so that they will not be at a loss linguistically.

Class size is the third contributor from the perspective of students. Strictly speaking, class size is not a problem created by students, but it really is a problem presented by students. Too large a class makes most students, especially those below the average, unable to interact effectively with teachers, while interaction is most important in a language class as has been mentioned above. Obviously smaller classes are desired. In a small-sized class, teachers can further and better communicate with students in the form of group discussions, presentations, debates, etc. Teachers may also better check and correct students' homework assignments for their small quantities.

## 2.3. Contributor 3: Administrators

Administrators may also be responsible for the occurrence of "water courses". Top administrators in some universities, especially province-level universities and technical colleges, attach importance to "form" rather than the real "content". In appearance, everything goes well, with students obtaining high marks. In essence, the seemingly all's well condition is created by the unqualified testing system. Students can easily pass the English final examination without putting much effort into their studies. Not worrying to pass the examination, some students in class never stay focused and inspired. Therefore, to some

universities, the revolution on their testing systems has become a top priority. The testing system should be challenging enough to stimulate students to work hard in their daily studies. To some extent, to fail several lazy or unqualified students from one class each term should become the norm.

On the national level, administrators and experts from all departments and universities have not come up with a relatively perfect plan of resolving the college English “water courses” problem. For example, many teaching competitions are held every year, aiming to exhibit and improve college English teachers’ teaching abilities so that the model teachers can set good examples for other teachers to follow, but it does not seem to have worked as to resolving the “water courses” problem. It is high time that we gave up these “shows” that have little to do with practical teaching. Administrators and experts should continue to seek the perfect strategies to combat “water courses”. Meanwhile, they should constantly thinking of and evaluating better ways to change the forms of various competitions for the purpose of truly benefiting students.

### 3. Conclusion

After introducing the term “water courses”, the paper continues to analyze the following three contributors to college English “water courses”: teachers, students and administrators. Teachers’ contributing factors may include their casual and uncaring attitudes, external factors of heavy load work and some teachers’ disqualifications. The three conditions can be respectively improved by 1. students’ supervision and training opportunities offered, 2. reduction of teachers’ teaching hours and scientific research pressure, and 3. lifelong learning and English environment provided. Students’ contributing factors may include their incorrect attitudes towards the subject, their inactivity in class and a large class size. The three conditions can be respectively improved by 1. teachers’ guidance in private, 2. teachers’ setting examples and designing proper class activities and 3. providing smaller classes. Administrators’ contributing factors may include the unqualified testing systems set by them and failure to come up with effective strategies. The two conditions can be respectively improved by 1. revolutionizing the testing systems and 2. continuing to seek proper strategies and changing the form of teachers’ teaching competitions. With all the measures taken, the college English “water course” problem is sure to be resolved in the near future.

### References

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