

Problems of Current College English Curriculum Reform

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Abstract: During the promotion of the college English teaching reform and the process of implementation of the new teaching model, many colleges and universities in the country do some curriculum reform accordingly and have some effects. But the road to reform is still long. This paper aims to find out some existing problems, such as dislocation of course function, absence of curriculum needs analysis, atomized curriculum structure and alienation of examination and so on so forth, to enhance current curriculum reform.

1. Introduction

In recent years, during the promotion of the college English teaching reform and the process of implementation of the new teaching model, many colleges and universities in the country do some curriculum reform accordingly. And it does have some effects.

Generally speaking, these reforms focus on students' basic English knowledge, which enables students to master the solid language skills to increase their English proficiency correspondingly.

In order to constantly consolidate students' English skills during the four years, some universities open some elective courses within the school, such as, spoken English, pronunciation, listening, translation and literature appreciation and so on. Thus, on the one hand, it can stimulate the students' enthusiasm; on the other hand, it can also strengthen students' listening and speaking ability.

After English teaching reform under the humanism, the teaching model of teacher-centered and simple delivery of language knowledge and skills are being transformed into that of student-oriented which puts more emphasis on students' language proficiency and self-learning ability. What's more, the reform approaches have been modified. Multimedia technology has been used in the classroom to further improve English teaching quality.

In addition, what the subject covers is closely associated with the formation and development of college students' personality and the life journey of participation in society and self-realization. Along this main line, the subject guides learners bringing English learning activities into the process of individual growth and development. And finally, the acquisition of English proficiency, the individual personality and quality cultivation can both be achieved synchronously. All these major points are in line with the principle in Curriculum Requirements that college English course should be both instrumental and humane.

In this paper some key problems will be manifested.

2. Problems of Current College English Curriculum Reform

Curriculum reform is an important part in the reform of college English teaching and is an efficient way to improve its quality at the same time. However, the current college English reform exists many problems, which can be manifested in the following areas. The concrete problems are as follows.

2.1 Dislocation of Course Function

Communication is the main function for a language. However, after the analysis of the four college English syllabus revised by China's education ministry, the author finds that college English teaching put much emphasis on the basic language knowledge, such as, vocabulary, grammar...

The first *College English Syllabus (Arts and Sciences Outline)* was enforced in the year of 1985, which proposed that the foundation stage of college English teaching must focus on the basic language knowledge. And in the year of 1999, the revised version also proposed that the college English teaching should help students lay a solid language foundation. Obviously, this kind of emphasis not only deviates from the language use and communication capabilities but also ignores the association between curriculum and society and the world at the same time, which separates the systematic relationship between society and professional disciplines. After that, in the year of 2004 and the year of 2007, the *Curriculum Requirements* and the revised version were carried out respectively. Although both of them proposed that college English teaching should cultivate students' English proficiency, especially in listening and speaking skills, so that they can use English to communicate effectively in their future work and social interaction. However, after graduating from the university, student's future work is of uncertainty, so this kind of positioning is also considered vague, inefficient and distant. The language use and communication loss in the College English Syllabus may directly result in the curriculum function dislocation. Therefore, students can not get a vivid perception of the world through the university English course and also can not get the real experience about life.

2.2 Absence of Curriculum Needs Analysis

Needs analysis, in the field of education, usually refers to the process of understanding and analyzing the needs of learners (Richards et al, 1992). And it is an essential step to develop a personalized syllabus. In order to narrow the distance between curriculum and students and keep the ecological balance of curriculum, courses really need the timely needs analysis to adapt to individual student needs and their needs changes.

Curriculum Requirements also puts clearly that in view of the fact that different teaching resources, student enrollment levels and social needs in colleges and universities nationwide, all colleges and universities need to develop scientific, systematic and individualized College English Syllabus. However, unfortunately, needs analysis in our foreign language circle has not been given due attention, even if implemented by a number of colleges and universities, there are no comprehensive analysis for it, still possessing issues like incompleteness and deviations.

According to scholars' (Chen Bingbing and Wang Huan) survey in the year of 2009, there were only three researches in college English studies involving needs analysis during the four years, from the implementation of Curriculum Requirements in the year of 2004 to the year of 2009, in which the complete needs analysis study could not be found. Of course, this kind of phenomenon faces some fundamental difficulties. For the country has more than 19 million college students studying college English with varying needs and different social and educational goals in different schools, all these uncertain factors form great difficulties in making college English needs analysis.

In this case, the design and implementation of the college English curriculum are actually antagonistic to the needs of society and the students' their own. Therefore, this kind of curriculum needs analysis actually does not have the unity quality.

2.3 Atomized Curriculum Structure

Language itself is a systematic entirety which can not be dismantled. Language use is also a whole concept which is a unity of sound, form and meaning. The daily communication, listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation are an organic combination. They are in harmony with each other, and they induce and intertwine with each other, finally, constituting a lively language use.

Thus, language learning can not be isolated, and can only be acquired during the process you experience the whole world. During the 20 years, there has always been the phenomenon of atomized curriculum structure in our college English teaching and the reason can also be directly traced back to the previous syllabuses. Arts and Science Outline in 1986 provided that the purpose of college English teaching is to train students with strong reading skills, the certain ability of listening and interpreting and the initial writing and speaking skills; College English Syllabus in 1999 focused on reading as the most important requirement and put listening, speaking, writing and

translation skills as the less important requirements; Curriculum Requirements with its revised version in the year of 2004 and 2007 strengthened the listening and speaking skills. Seen college English syllabus in recent decades, college English teaching has been split up into listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation and other fragmented and piecemeal parts. Under this atomized curriculum circumstance, the overall language is being disintegrated into several sub-goals, which are self-righteously expected to be made one by one and finally reach to be as a whole. This self-righteous hope is criticized by many of our scholars now.

John Miller (2001) believes that this kind of “component-whole” curriculum is actually contrary to human nature. On the one hand, separated activities or sub-goals in fact dismember an existing “whole person”; On the other hand, curriculum goals setting before the process separates the organic link between the processes and the preset targets, which will reduce students’ learning subjectivity and even cause the danger of breaking students’ overall life and fragmented personality.

2.4 Alienation of Course Examination

College English Test is a unified national standardized test organized by State Education Commission. Since 1987, it has played a tremendous role in promoting the development of college English course and to some extent, it also improves the college English teaching position. As the CET certificate has become an essential qualification to employ talents for the majority of employers, passing the CET has almost become a primary goal for all college students. However, its negative impacts have been prevalent in the academic discussion. Scholar Qian Guanlian (2003) believes one miss lying in CET owns to the pure analytic questions which makes the language become “fragmented knowledge” like debris, ignoring the use of language and the integration that speech acts need; Scholar Nan Jiwen, Shi Yun and Zhang Yang (2005) considers that the main drawbacks in such an exam with extensive use of objective questions are focusing much on sign, conclusion, memorizing while ignoring expression, process and thinking. What’s more, this kind of college English teaching will cultivate the students with high marks and low capability. And this phenomenon of teaching for examination has been widely occurred in the national language teaching considered by the scholar Liu Runqing (2003).

According to the holistic curriculum, the author believes that the alienation of college English curriculum can mainly be reflected in the following aspects:

First of all, except for the syllabus, the CET dismembers the integrity of the language once more. And in order to meet this kind of “fragmented language points” assessment, in the daily teaching activities, teachers will break down the whole linguistic knowledge into a number of grammatical knowledge points and language points and start the explanation and display from these “points” separately. While the students will do a lot of exercises to repeat such mechanical drills like reciting practice, the same as the items in the test. Therefore, college English course has become a disguise tool serving for the test. And the students seem to become machines to answer questions and to take exams. The knowledge the students mastered are just “parts” collection which cannot be used and revitalized flexibly.

What’s more, the teaching objective to pass the CET has occupied students’ learning motivation, making the original flexible and fun language learning experience become a mechanical and boring training, which inhibits the normal function of students learning ability and mental activities and distorts the development of students’ creative capability. Furthermore, at the same time, the proliferation of this kind of examination alienates the teacher’s role. The teacher virtually lost the right to choose and would be forced to be a classroom puppet to explain and analyze questions.

Finally, CET neglects students’ real learning process, ignoring their growth and achievements in experiencing and building their inner minds. And student’s individual development potential becomes a blind spot in teachers’ vision, which goes against the most basic and vital outline of holistic education, i.e. “teaching for man’s development”.

3. Conclusion

Curriculum is a key link between teaching concept and teaching practice. Curriculum reform is

an important part in the reform of college English teaching and is an efficient way to improve its quality at the same time. Traditional curriculum system is a learning-center curriculum theory based on the worldview of dualism (material and consciousness), which advocates scientific curriculum model and regards accumulative knowledge of the quantity as the sign of progress. This courses lack creative inspiration in the curriculum study. Under this circumstance, the humanism is in vogue, and many of its views are roughly in accordance with the College English Curriculum Requirements (hereinafter referred to as Curriculum Requirements) issued by the Ministry of Education of China in 2007. To some extent, it plays an improving role to guide the college English curriculum reform. However, from the above analysis, there are still many problems, such as objective uncertainty in college curriculum, difficulty in shaking off exam-oriented education, inadaptation of the requirements of social development, especially the lack of integrity. It's urgent to explore some approaches to reform the current College English.

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