

Research on the Characteristic Construction of College English Teaching System Based on Demand Analysis

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Keywords: demand analysis, College English, characteristic teaching system

Abstract: Nowadays, there are still disputes about the objectives, contents and methods of College English teaching in China. Based on the Demand Analysis Theory, this paper agrees that the fundamental factor determining the existence and development direction of a certain curriculum is “demand”, namely the integration of national interests, social needs, personal wishes and career development needs with college conditions and objectives. After analyzing the connotations of these three demands, this paper holds that it is urgent for curriculum decision makers and English teachers to work hard on how to break the bondage of inherent concepts and to promote college English teaching system reforms with bottom-up individuality, diversification and pertinence based on the core of “demand”. This system with characteristics will be in line with the language educational planning and college conditions and positions.

1. Introduction

College English, based on foreign language teaching theory and mainly covering English language knowledge and applied skills, learning strategies and cross-cultural communication, is an important basic compulsory course for undergraduates. [1] It is a teaching system that integrates various teaching modes and means. In the west, scholars like Hutchinson and Waters applied demand analysis of learners to foreign language curriculum design as early in the 1980s.[2] They analyzed learners’ needs by means of introspection, interviews, observation and questionnaires, which became the focus of foreign language curriculum design as a technical means of curriculum development. Influenced by the idea of curriculum development, researchers further distinguished different levels of needs from individual and social perspectives (Munby 1978; Allwright 1982; Hutchinson & Waters 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John 1998).

At home, many researchers have made useful explorations on the curriculum design of College English. Liu Yanmei, Zhu Huimin (2013) and Liu Rui (2014) took students of different majors as subjects. They pointed out that they urgently needed a language course from general English to professional English to help them learn and understand their professional knowledge in English. It is obvious that this is a noteworthy phenomenon. [3] It is generally accepted that curriculum design is the core issue of school education and College English plays an important role in the national talent training and reserve strategy. Then, do they meet the requirements of the new era and students? What should be the basis of scientific College English curriculum? In view of this, this paper attempts to make a preliminary discussion on College English curriculum design based on the demand analysis of learner.

2. The Demand Analysis Theory

Since the 1960s, demand analysis has become the theoretical basis and important contents of curriculum design and research of College English. James Brown, a British applied linguist, believes that the premise of all English teaching activities is curriculum design of demand analysis.[4] In the field of College English teaching, demand analysis has gradually been applied to the field of teaching, and become an important part of domestic College English curriculum design.

At present, there are two main objectives for the analysis of college students' learning needs. One is to reform and innovate current college English curriculum system.[5] The other is to optimize the existing curriculum system. As for students' needs in learning English, they can be divided into goal needs and learning needs. Goal needs refer to the necessary skills that college students have to master in order to better participate in work or life in the future. Learning needs refer to learning conditions, motivation and expectations of College students. In this way, the demand analysis theory of college students' English provides a theoretical basis for the study of College English curriculum in China.

3. Research on the Construction of College English Teaching System Based on Demand Analysis

Demand analysis is the core of College English curriculum design. When formulating training plans, college decision makers have the right to modify the credits and curriculum design of College English. As each school has a deeper and more targeted understanding of the social needs, subject needs and individual needs of foreign languages in its related fields, it is necessary for School of Foreign Language to communicate with them and respect their needs, and accordingly to offer relevant college English courses. Thus, we should break the habit of thinking which is centered on foreign language. We should realize that the setting of foreign language courses serves the development of the country, society and individuals. At the same time, the management should take the needs of many parties, the focus, principles and methods into consideration and accordingly provide personalized and diversified curriculum teaching to meet different needs. (As shown in Figure 1)

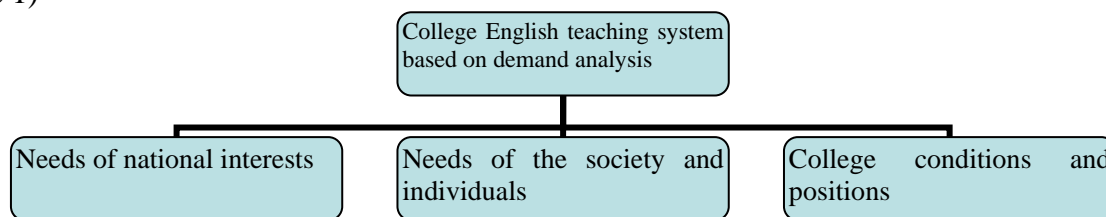


Fig. 1 Research on the Construction of College English Teaching System Based on Demand Analysis

3.1 Needs of national interests

In the demand analysis of foreign language teaching, we firstly need to clarify what kind of talents the country and the society need, whether everyone needs to learn foreign languages, and whether the current foreign language curriculum meets the needs of the society and individual learners. The needs of national interests are mainly divided into macro-strategic interests, such as national political, cultural and educational, and micro-needs of specific areas in a specific period. For political and cultural interests, in the process of rapid globalization, we need to strengthen students' global cultural perspective, Cultural Self-identity and dissemination from curriculum planning and teaching. We should never lose our mother tongue, cultural foundation and identity. In the latest course *College English Teaching Guide*, it sets cross-culture communication as one of the three major curriculum systems. Hence, in the perspective of national interests, it is obvious that the curriculum setting of foreign languages should realize the goals like helping students master basic language skills, develop cross-cultural quality, broaden global cultural perspective, improve national cultural identity and communication ability and so on.

3.2 Needs of the society and individuals

This paper holds that social needs mainly refer to the economic and market needs in certain fields of a country or region. Usually, social needs and personal wishes in different regions and fields are quite different. That means, the use of foreign languages should be in line with regions and fields. Only when we know the actual situation of foreign language application in various fields, and predict the change of future demand according to the development of various fields, can we

make a reasonable plan. In terms of field, the demand for foreign languages varies greatly in different fields. In terms of region, the political, economic and cultural levels of different regions are quite different, and the social needs will naturally be different. For colleges in different regions and in different fields, the collection of school-based social demand data is more convincing in feasibility, pertinence and accuracy. As for students' personal wishes and career development needs, they will show different stresses since different students have great differences in English proficiency, learning interests and career development plans. For example, for those students who are good at English and intended to go abroad or attend graduate school, it is necessary to set up the course of academic English.

3.3 College conditions and positions

In addition to social needs and personal wishes, the geographical location, target orientation, professional characteristics, teachers' status and students' proficiency of different universities are also different, which has a great impact on College English teaching. Even in engineering colleges in the same place, the teaching mode is different between research universities and teaching universities. For example, the English curriculum and teaching content of Tsinghua University are different from those of other general engineering universities in Beijing. There are more than 1000 colleges in China. Their specifications and requirements of personnel training are different. And accordingly, their requirements for English proficiency and competence are completely different. And the orientation and emphasis of College English teaching should be totally different. College English should serve its characteristics, levels, and special talents training.

4. Principles of College English Teaching Reform based on Demand Analysis

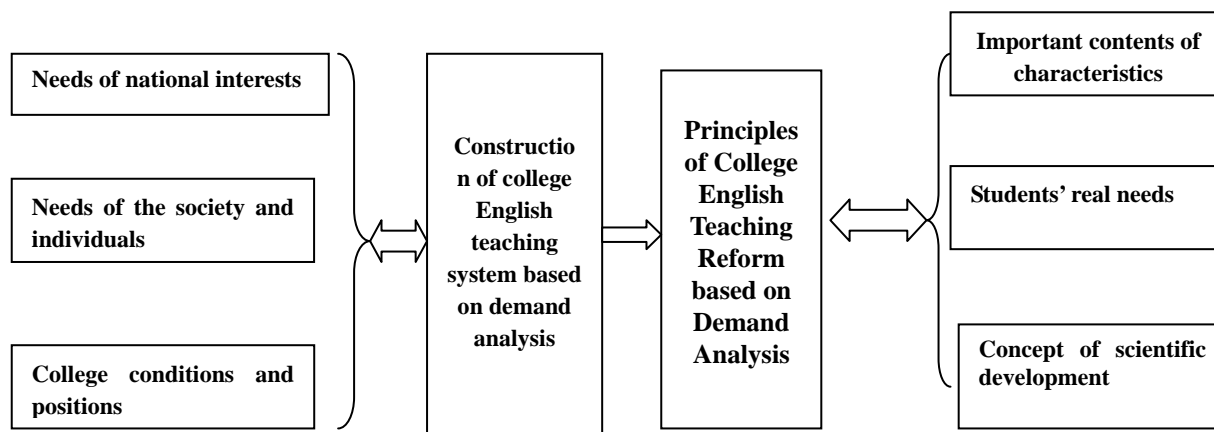


Fig. 2 Principles of College English Teaching Reform based on Demand Analysis

4.1 The characteristic construction of College English plays an important role in the construction of characteristic colleges

The construction of characteristic college is the core of college construction. As a compulsory course for almost all college students, College English is required to be in line with it. We should recognize the characteristic construction of College English from the perspective of characteristic college. Recently, the guiding document of College English teaching in China is updated from *College English Curriculum Requirements* to *Teaching Guidelines*, which conveys the idea of advocating diversified and classified high-quality college English teaching.

4.2 The characteristic construction of College English should be consistent with college characteristic and students' needs

As for colleges, in the construction of characteristic college, colleges have formed their own school-running ideas, orientation, subject characteristics, culture characteristics and personnel training characteristics. As for students, because of their various personal interests, professional

requirements, career planning and so on, they have quite different learning needs. Thus, College English should establish teaching objectives and select teaching contents consistent with college characteristic and students' individual needs

4.3 The characteristic construction of College English should follow the concept of scientific development

The characteristic construction of college shows the features of “uniqueness”, “foundation” and “development”. It is the same with the characteristic construction of College English. Firstly, the school-based College English teaching program should not only meet the common requirements of the *Teaching Guide*, but also highlight their own characteristics, so as to make it stand out among most colleges. It is well acknowledged that college construction should take characteristics and social recognition into account. Secondly, a successful college English teaching program should not only conform to the general rules of foreign language teaching, but also accord with school long-formed teaching ideas and traditions. Finally, the characteristic construction of College English should promote the sustainable development of College English teaching and the society. Therefore, College English teaching should not only pay attention to the current conditions and needs, but also adapt to the changing external world, so as to meet the changing needs of students and colleges.

5. Conclusion

The situation of colleges in different regions and fields varies greatly, which makes it impossible for College English teaching to establish a universal development direction. National demand and government requirements can be implemented in colleges through top-level design in the form of documents and policies. As a link between the state, society and individuals, college on one hand attaches importance to the cultivation of students' humanistic literacy and national cultural identity. On the other hand, it should focus on social needs and individual wishes, and adopt its own orientation, professional characteristics, geographical location and teachers' conditions, which accordingly carry out college English curriculum and teaching reform. In fact, for certain colleges, it will be relatively easy and more targeted to conduct various needs surveys. In a word, under the situation of greater autonomy, it is urgent for decision-makers and front-line teachers to work hard on how to construct a pertinent, diversified and personalized College English teaching system from bottom to top around the three needs above and combining with colleges' conditions and development orientations.

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