Research on Content-based Instruction Pedagogy

—A Case Study of American History and Culture Course

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Abstract: This paper introduces a liberal education teaching design with the content-based instruction pedagogy. The combination of language and content probes many perspectives of English as a liberal education course, which is of great theoretical and practical significance for the study of liberal education. This paper also points out that content-based instruction pedagogy provides an effective way to solve the long-existing problem of college English teaching (rigid teaching style, boring teaching materials and relatively poor teaching, etc.). Content-based instruction pedagogy not only enhances students’ interest and class participation, but also develops students’ language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with cultivating their critical thinking.

1. Introduction

The Outline of the National Medium-Term and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) states: "China’s education must cultivate a large number of international talents with international vision, international rules, and ability to participate in international affairs and international competitiveness." In 2016, the Ministry of Education issued a new Guide to College English Teaching, which clearly states: “College English should further enhance its academic English or professional English communication skills and intercultural communication skills while focusing on developing students’ common language skills. In order to communicating effectively in English in different fields or contexts such as daily life, professional study and professional positions should meet the development of the country, society, schools and individuals." According to the requirements of social development in different historical periods, the Ministry of Education has revised the "Guide to College English Teaching" for the fifth time. It is not difficult to see that the original purpose of college English teaching is to train students to use English as a tool and obtain professional places. The information needed, that is, college English is a tool discipline. The newly revised "College English Teaching Guide" can also be interpreted as college English has become a subject of instrumental and humanistic education. Wang Zhe proposed "taking the college English + general education curriculum as an important turning point in Chinese foreign language teaching" (Wang Zhe, 2010), and many scholars have proposed English general education. "The market is constantly changing. Instead of prematurely setting the direction, it is better to engage in general education and expand herizon of students, which is more practical" (Hu Zhuanglin, 2002). Therefore, the current college English teaching is an systematic combination of college English and general education, and is the breakthrough point of future college English teaching reform.

2. The Content of Content-Based Instruction and Related Research

How to combine college English and general education? At present, many scholars propose content-based instructional mode, namely Content-based Instruction. This foreign language teaching mode is a combination of language and subject content that is of interest to learners. It is a teaching model that combines target language with meaningful content (eg Yu Mingli, Han Jianxia, 2003; Dai Qingning, Lu Wei, 2006; Yuan Pinghua , 2006). Chinese scholar Wang Shixian published the first paper to introduce content based on the teaching model to create a precedent in China (Wang Shixian, 1994). Later, more scholars published papers on the content-based teaching model.
for multi-level research: First, some scholars have carried out empirical research on the content of English majors relying on teaching mode (such as Chang Yuejun, Dong Hainan, 2008; Wang Shixian, 1994; Chang Yue Jun, Zhao Xiuyan, Li Lili, 2008; Sun Youzhong, Li Liwen, 2011; Xie Yajun, 2011); Secondly, some scholars have studied the teaching mode of Chinese as a foreign language (such as Cao Xianwen, 2005; Xu Dekuan, 2006); again, there are more Many scholars have explored the content based on the training mode of listening, speaking, reading and writing in English (such as Yuan Pinghua, Yu Liming, 2008; Chang Yuejun, Liu Xiaotong, Deng Yaochen, 2009; Gu Feirong, Shi Guizhen, 2009).

Generally speaking, since 1994, many scholars in China have introduced content support theory. Some scholars have conducted empirical research on English majors and English basic skills courses. Then, under the current situation, how to apply the teaching concept into general education course and achieve the expected teaching effect, this will be the focus of this research. Foreign scholars believe that the content-based teaching model can be applied to the regular courses of mathematics, geography, history, etc. that students are interested in. The specific content of the course must be cognitively appealing and demanding to learners, and must transcend the target language and culture (eg Mohan, 1986; Brinton, 1989; Met. M, 1991). In response to the college English content-based teaching model, Peking University Press published the "American History and Culture" textbook edited by Chang Junyue and others, which is the student’s book for the English general course currently used by the author. This study takes this as an example and suggests that students can learn English in interesting historical and cultural knowledge, while using language to learn historical and cultural knowledge, achieve the effect of the integration of language and historical knowledge, and provide reference and reference for the teaching reform of college English general course. I follow the content-based teaching philosophy, and creatively apply the content to the English general education course "American History and Culture" based on the teaching concept, and carry out teaching practice for the second-year college students. The purpose is to explore the content-based teaching mode in the implementation of English general education. Feasibility, discover problems in real teaching practice, and seek the best solution for general education in English.

3. The Teaching Practice

3.1 Teaching Content.

After the introduction of the college English general education concept, some domestic scholars believe that the traditional college English teaching mode will gradually be replaced by general education (such as Wu Dingmin, Han Yajun, 2010; Chai Gaiying, 2010). This study does not aim at studying American history and culture, but helps students improve their understanding and comprehensive application of English language while learning and discussing specific characters and events in American history. At present, under the traditional college English teaching mode, the college English teaching work is mainly for the college English test, which is also the main indicator for the education department to measure the English teaching effect. In the traditional college English teaching classroom, teachers have to carry out a teaching mode based on teacher output to ensure that students understand all the words and sentences in the intensive text, so as to ensure that students pass the exam. The main theoretical basis of the content-based teaching model is the second language acquisition theory. When the information obtained by the learners is interesting, useful and will achieve the desired goals, the second language learning will be more successful (such as Shi Guangxiao, Zhao Dejie, 2011); Compared with the traditional college English teaching mode, the content-based teaching mode pays great attention to the coherence of American historical and cultural knowledge, the interest of historical figures and historical time. It enables students to develop a strong interest in the English language by learning American history and culture.
3.2 Teaching Methods.

As foreign scholars point out, the four basic characteristics of the content-based teaching model are: subject knowledge as the core; the authenticity of language materials; learning new knowledge; adapting to the needs of special student groups (Leaver & Stryker, 1989). Therefore, in the teaching practice, it is necessary to learn the complete knowledge of American history, and to guide and encourage students to think and practice in English. After completing a chapter of learning tasks, and arrange a certain amount of listening, speaking, reading and writing practice tasks. In order to implement content more effectively in classroom teaching, foreign scholars have proposed “6-T” methods, representing themes, texts, topics, clues, tasks, and transitions (Stoller & Grabe, 1997), which is also a scholar who advocates content in China. The main teaching methods adopted by them have important guiding significance for content-based teaching. Corresponding to the three main principles of content support: subject knowledge as the core; the authenticity of language materials; adapt to the needs of special student groups (Shi Guangxiao, Zhao Dejie, 2011).

We can arrange the relevant historical reading materials of the next chapter before class, and students complete the text preparation, and critical questions and keynote speeches. Through teaching practice, most students are very interested in the content of the course, can actively read relevant historical chapters, and remember the English vocabulary and English expression methods. The teacher conducts about 30 minutes of chapter-related lectures, and insists on student output at other times. Wen Qiufang pointed out that language output activities are beneficial for learners to test the vocabulary, grammar and pragmatics of target language, and promote the automation of language use (Wen Qiufang, 2010). Students can ask questions based on historical knowledge acquired before class. Students are required to discuss and express their opinions.

Foreign scholars pointed out that the content-based instruction is to fully mobilize the enthusiasm of students, through various practice methods, using real and meaningful language to enrich and strengthen language learning, so that students understand and respect different cultures, propose goals and conduct continuous self-testing. In order to test the progress of their own learning (Fellag, 2006), the teacher arranges 15 core vocabulary after class, the students use the relevant vocabulary to complete a topic writing, through the writing practice students can flexibly apply the vocabulary they learn, and conform to the English expression habits; At the same time, students need to complete the corresponding exercises after class to improve their language skills.

The flexibility of the content-based teaching model is that it does not stipulate that specific teaching skills must be used, and that teaching activities can be any behavior that is appropriate for teaching (Richards & Roge, 2001). According to different historical chapters, teachers set pre-class reading---classroom discussion---the practice of post-class practice, the purpose is to improve students’ relevant historical knowledge accumulation, students’ pre-class reading will not be restricted by their own English level. Lively and interesting historical knowledge can stimulate students’ interest in learning. On the contrary, a large amount of reading can expand students’ vocabulary and further improve students’ English proficiency. The research shows that through the analysis of the award-winning PPT of the language-related courseware multimedia course competition in colleges and universities, it is found that most of the PPT still reflects the teacher-centered knowledge transfer, but the students’ analysis and application ability are insufficiently emphasized (Li Yanfei, Feng Dezheng, 2017) Therefore, the PPT used in classroom teaching only lists historical clues, and the main output of students is the core of classroom teaching.

3.3 Teaching Design.

Foreign scholars emphasize that the choice of teaching materials should fully consider the needs of learners, language learning goals and individual differences (Cunningsworth, 2002), through a large number of textbooks, and finally select "American History and Culture" edited by Chang Junyue, etc., which is moderately difficult and Students who take into account different English levels will not be too difficult to read before class. Students who have a good command in English can read the extensive reading materials arranged by the teacher. Most colleges and universities will
face such a problem: students’ interest in learning is not high, the classroom is dull, the teaching and practice are out of line, and the teaching efficiency is low. This is also a prominent problem in college English teaching. The key to explaining the subject knowledge of American history is to select the content that students have interest and needs to teach, improve their interest in learning, clarify their learning objectives, and get rid of the single learning mode of English language knowledge.

At present, there is a common problem in traditional college English teaching: The classroom teaching mainly focuses on new words, grammar and texts. There are very few time sessions for group activities. The teacher-student interaction in classroom teaching is mainly about questions and doubts which are mostly about vocabulary and grammar, only a small amount of critical thinking. It can be seen that the college English classroom teaching is basically a classroom teaching mode centered on the teacher’s language output. Systemic functional linguistics suggests that if a language user wants to communicate successfully in a real context, only systematic knowledge of speech, vocabulary and grammar is not enough. It is also necessary to master the three major functions of language, namely, conceptual function and interpersonal relationship. Functional and textual functions are meant to have "multiple abilities" including grammatical abilities, psycholinguistic abilities, sociocultural abilities, and probability of using language (Zhang Delu, 2004). Obviously, most of the traditional college English teaching is limited to the vocabulary usage and grammar knowledge, and emphasizes the language function of the language. Therefore, it is necessary to have new content to rely on the teaching mode and transform into a classroom teaching mode based on student output. The language function of the language is also the communicative function of the language.

According to the 6-T teaching method, the basic teaching process is designed for American in World War I, the ninth lesson of American history and culture:

Pre-class preparation: Students need to read the relevant materials of World War I and complete the following questions
1) To know the situation before the First World War.
2) To learn about the U.S. neutrality and the reason of its entry into World War I.
3) To learn the major consequences of the War.
4) To learn the important words and expressions that describe America in World War I.

Classroom links: Under the guidance of the teacher PPT, learn the historical clues of this chapter; teachers and students discuss the textbook materials and explain the language difficulties; the student group are required to discuss and present PPT.

After-school session: Students complete the corresponding exercises after class and use the following fifteen core vocabulary to complete the 200-word writing with the following words: Onset, provoke, outrage, overthrow, neutrality, erupt, soar, intercept, disarmament, casualty, triumph, epidemic, avert, curb, submit

3.4 Teaching Effect.

First, effectively strengthening general education and expanding students’ horizons will help improve the overall quality of students. College general education surpasses the narrow English language skills of the language, and raises doubts about the practicality and specialization of higher education. College general education cares about people’s rationality, mind and outlook on life, and trains students to become perfect individuals. Hu Zhuanglin proposed an important idea of English education reform: it should expand its horizons from the perspective of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary: Guide the discussion based on the national language policy (Hu Zhuanglin, 2015), learn interdisciplinary American history and culture, and help students obtain a comparative system. The knowledge of American history, taking its essence, discarding its dross, can foster strengths and avoid weaknesses. Content-based mode teaching is a combination of content and language. At the same time, it makes up for the lack of professional knowledge through the study of American history and culture. It is more meaningful for general education and teaching, and truly implements the school motto of our school.
Second, Cai Jigang pointed out that academic English is not only to impart book knowledge, to train students to listen, speak, read, and write language skills, but more importantly to cultivate students’ critical thinking ability for independent thinking (Cai Jigang, 2014). Speculative ability, as a kind of transferability, is a necessary condition for students to be educated rather than a free option (Dobson, 2008). The cultivation of speculative ability as a basic requirement for college education is of great significance to the talent training model in China. The content-based teaching model emphasizes the combination of subject content and language learning, so that students can improve their critical thinking ability and language level while learning the subject content (Kasper, 2000). From traditional viewpoint, we believe that speculative ability includes the ability to recognize hypothesis, induction, deduction, interpretation and evaluation. We can simply understand that first is thinking ability, that is, learning how to treat historical issues dialectically, possessing self-cognitive ability. Second is the ability to discern, based on past historical experience, make the right choices. Therefore, the implementation of content-based teaching mode in English general education is conducive to the cultivation of students’ thinking ability. Change the teaching mode of traditional college English classroom with language skills as the goal. The content-based instruction is to cultivate students’ thinking ability through thematic discussion and student PPT display.

Third, the content-based instruction is to establish language teaching on the teaching of a certain subject or a certain subject content, combine language learning with subject knowledge, improve the knowledge and cognitive ability of students’ subject content, and promote their language level. The content-based instruction to unify language learning and historical knowledge can help students to eliminate the state of artificially dividing language learning and subject knowledge learning, emphasize the ability to improve students’ listening, speaking, reading, writing and other second language applications by learning specific historical content. The content-based language teaching model cultivates students’ English application ability while learning the subject knowledge of interest. The key is to select the content that the college students have interest and needs to learn, improve the interest of learning, and clarify the purpose of learning. Also the content-based instruction changes the single language skill curriculum model of traditional college English teaching, and combines content teaching and language teaching. Using English as a medium, the systematic American history and culture professional content will improve language skills in the process of language use. Content-based teaching philosophy is conducive to stimulating students’ motivation for language learning, and to maintain long-term learning motivation by learning historical knowledge of personal interest. At the same time, the content-based teaching philosophy is flexible in method, and the learning initiative is mobilized through teaching methods such as problem-driven and language output. Through the combination of topical explanations and effective teaching links such as group discussion, student classroom presentation, and task-driven, students’ English language application ability is enhanced and their interest in language learning is stimulated.

3.5 Problems and Reflections in Teaching Practice.

The content-based instruction insists on the output of students’ classrooms. Through the combination of problem-driven and writing practice, the enthusiasm of active learning is mobilized. Through teaching practice, it has achieved gratifying results. For example, students’ English language skills should be improved. It also motivate students’ interest in language learning, accumulate rich historical and cultural knowledge, cultivate students’ ability to think, but at the same time there are problems that need to be solved and considered:

First, the teaching time is obviously insufficient. The total class arrangement has 16 weeks, 32 classroom hours. The first week is a general education course. It introduces the teaching methods, learning objectives, in-class and out-of-class tasks, and course assessment methods. It is designed to help students have a certain level of understanding of the course. Develop students’ interest in history courses and enthusiasm for learning, and guide students to achieve their learning goals and improve their English language skills. Because the students’ historical geography knowledge is
insufficient, and the history teaching involves a wide range of knowledge, it is necessary to longitudinally understand the events in a certain historical stage, but also to compare and think horizontally. Therefore, the teacher’s theme lecture class is obviously not enough, which has led to a lot of meaningful historical events. Due to the fact that there are as many as 60 people in the class and the number of people who can actively participate in class discussions is limited, it is unable to meet the requirements of more students to speak enthusiastically.

Second, the curriculum based on the concept of content should conduct a variety of needs research. First of all, it is necessary to grasp whether the students have relevant backgrounds of subject knowledge and students’ interest subjects, to understand the interests of different students, and to open different courses accordingly. Secondly, the students’ English language ability, the content-based concept teaching mode including teachers and students. Interactive sessions, group discussions, keynote speeches, etc. require students to have a certain level of English skills. At the same time, according to the different English level and language expression ability of students, different content-dependent courses should be selected to ensure the students’ learning effect. However, some students are accustomed to teachers leading the classroom, coupled with the lack of relevant historical knowledge, it is difficult to adapt to the new teaching model; without language ability and a large number of vocabulary, students are faced with great challenges when discussing language history issues, as well as in completing pre-class learning tasks.

Content-based instruction, regarding teaching activities as task teaching, is to focus on cultivating students’ language communication ability. It is a new example of language teaching (Dai Qingning, Lu Wei, 2004). In the teaching design process, teachers should not only focus on historical themes, but also guide students to use the target language to achieve a balance between language skills and historical knowledge. Therefore, Content-based instruction are closely related to the teaching effect. Teachers are required to plan carefully, and students are required to actively prepare before class and actively participate in the classroom. The combination of the two can achieve the expected teaching effect. For various reasons, some students are unable to achieve the expected learning results.

3.6 Teaching Evaluation.

The purpose of this study is to improve the ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing in English through the study of historical knowledge, and to achieve the unity of historical knowledge and language skills. We generally use classroom group discussions, PPT display, after-school vocabulary and grammar exercises, given word topic writing, oral expression and end-of-session closed-book examinations. The usual grades and final exams each account for 50%. Class group discussion and PPT topic explanations are designed to examine students’ understanding of relevant historical knowledge and improve students’ thinking ability. After-school vocabulary and grammar exercises aim to consolidate language knowledge; given word topic writing, subject writing and oral testing can be examined The students’ language application ability and the mastery of historical knowledge; the final exam as a routine teaching content is to test the effect of students’ staged learning.

After the semester of the course, the English General Studies course "American History and Culture" final exam score analysis table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade statistics</th>
<th>Highest score</th>
<th>Lowest score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>excellent (90-100)</td>
<td>good (80-89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people (n)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/N*100%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>medium (70-79)</th>
<th>Pass (60-69)</th>
<th>failed (&lt;60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
4. Conclusion

This study is adapted to the requirements of the National Medium-Term and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020). This study aims to implement the College English Teaching Guide through case studies of teaching models. The study found that students have significantly improved their English language ability by studying American historical and cultural knowledge. The content-based teaching mode first requires the instructors to have good language skills, and at the same time, should have good command of the knowledge system for the course (Chang Yuejun, Dong Hainan, 2008). Content-based instruction teaching mode is to raise higher awareness for teachers in English general education. The requirements, this will be a direction for the future teacher training, will be a major topic to be studied in the future. The study found that we can reform traditional college English according to the content of teaching, and train students into international talents with international vision, international rules, and can participate in international affairs and international competitiveness. We hope that content can be integrated with English based on teaching concepts. Education provides useful inspiration and lessons to learn from.

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