A study on the Culture Introduction based on College English Curriculum Design in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: The present study aims to find out the degree of culture introduction based on the college English curriculum design and the students' level of cultural knowledge under the influence of this curriculum design. And at the same time the author tries to detect for the approaches to reform the curriculum design so that the effective introduction of culture is helpful in cultivating students' intercultural awareness and enhancing their intercultural communication competence. It is expected that through this study course designers can clearly understand the problems currently existed, and enlighten the future curriculum design.

1. Introduction

With the fast globalization of economy development in China in recent years, more and more frequent exchanges between China and other foreign countries appeared, but along with it, the frequent "culture shock" and "culture conflicts" in international communication appeared too. People get to realize it is insufficient to communicate properly with speakers from various cultural background simply by virtue of their language knowledge. Wolfson (1983)pointed out: The natives often hold the accommodating attitude toward the foreigners' pronunciation and their grammar errors, however, being not aware of the relativity of social Linguistics, the natives often considered words of violation of the conversation rules rude behavior.(citation: Hu wenzhong,1988:11).   Now, a growing number of teachers have realized that it is the cultural quality that plays an important role in students' foreign comprehensive capacities, especially in the college English teaching. Some students have been confused by the cultural conflicts between East and West, which seriously block their second language acquisition process.

The College English Curriculum Requirements published by Higher Education Ministry in 2004 has clearly added the intercultural communicative competence of college students into the main content of college English teaching. Thus, in order to improve the students' cultural awareness, some reforms on the curriculum design should be taken into account. The purpose of the Research is to find out the degree of culture introduction based on the college English curriculum design.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Questions

There are three questions which the research attempts to answer, they are:

1). To what extent does the current curriculum design lack the introduction of culture?   How does this affect the students' English study?

2). What is the students' intercultural level under the influence of the current curriculum design?

3). What are the proper measures and strategies to help to foster the students' intercultural awareness.

2.2. Research Subjects

The subjects in this research cover 200 students who come from five universities in Xi'an, all these second-year students are randomly selected from different departments in Shaan'xi normal

University, Xi'an Technological University, Xi'an University of Technology, Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology and Xi'an Polytechnic University. All of the students are non-English major students who have learned English more than eight years.

2.3. Research Instruments

2.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to mainly investigate the students' intercultural awareness proficiency and to what extent the current curriculum design lack the introduction of culture? How do this affect the students' culture study?

2.3.2. Interview

An interview was taken in Xi'an Polytechnic University. The researcher adopted the face to face way to interview the two students randomly selected from Textile department. The question is: "what do you think of your foreign cultural knowledge level? Are you satisfied with the course design in your university?"

3. Analysis of the Questionnaire

Table 1 Students' Cultural Awareness toward English-Speaking Countries

Serial number	Strongly disagree	uncertainty	Generally agree	Strongly agree
1	58	106	36	0
	29%	53%	18%	0
2	45	121	34	0
	23%	60%	17%	0
3	47	108	44	1
	24%	54%	21.5%	0.5%
4	50	114	36	0
	25%	57%	18%	0
5	92	84	24	0
	46%	42%	12%	0
6	2	107	20	70
	1%	54%	10%	35%
7	0	3	39	58%
	0	2%	19%	79%

Table 2 The Students' Attitude toward the Curriculum Design in Their university

Serial number	Strongly disagree	uncertainty	Generally agree	Strongly agree
8	0	12	98	90
	0	6%	49%	45%
9	64	118	10	8
	32%	59%	5%	4%
10	2	85	99	14
	1%	43%	49%	7%
11	0	9	101	90
	0	5%	51%	44%
12	64	90	20	26
	32%	44%	10%	14%

From the above tables, we can see the first 7 items show the students' cultural awareness toward English-speaking countries, from the item 8 to item12, the result indicates that most students are

not satisfied with the current English curriculum design in their university. This may further be proved by the interview.

4. Measures to Reform the Curriculum Design

4.1. Syllabus Revising

College English syllabus should be a blueprint by which the teachers convert into the reality of classroom interaction. While revising the syllabus, the following four issues should be considered, the content of culture teaching, the goals of culture, the principles of culture teaching and the techniques of culture.

4.2. Course Books' Revising

In short, the revised course book should have following characteristics:
The text materials reflect the culture of English-speaking countries should be typical.
The vocabulary of the texts should have culture features.
The culture difference should be emphasized.
The materials should provide opportunities for the students' communication.
After learning the textbooks, the students should have a clear understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries.

4.3. Teachers' Intercultural Awareness

Helping teachers to expand their potential, better themselves, and grow professionally can be accomplished in a number of ways. Only by promoting the teachers' intercultural awareness, the students' cultural competence is likely to be developed.

4.4. Integrating Culture into the Curriculum Design

In curriculum design, the course objectives of culture should be taken into account first, followed by the course materials and content of culture. According to the actual situation, different universities can refer to the course requirements to make scientific, systematic, individualized college English curriculum, with focus on the cultural problems.

5. Conclusion

The answers to the three research questions are:

1) The current curriculum design really lacks the introduction of culture, although the College English Curriculum Requirements (2004) indicate that "… improve their cultural quality so as to meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges.", in the detailed requirements, no particular words about how to improve the cultural quality could be found.

2) Under the influence of such curriculum design, the students' intercultural knowledge is poor, which is a worrying fact. Cultural quality plays an important role in people's foreign comprehensive capacities, so the low level of the culture knowledge absolutely affects the students' linguistic abilities, because the cultural differences can be the obstacles in learning foreign languages.

3) As culture introduction is affected by exterior and interior factors both from the curriculum design, materials and the teacher's perspectives, in order to help students to foster their intercultural awareness, the revising of the curriculum design, course books and teachers' attitude is necessary.

The survey about the present culture introduction based on the college English curriculum design and its effect on the students' communication competence , will be useful to construct the new college English curriculum design module, which is certainly a supplementary construction to the college English teaching and learning, a practical approach to push the foreign languages teaching and learning reform, thus to improve the whole education qualities in the universities so as to progress the education and society development. And also the experimental data in the research can be the evidence for the future education policy making, and holds referential values for other practitioners.

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