

Research on the General Education-Based Innovation of College English Teaching

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Abstract

Cultivating the high-qualified and versatile personnel of College English should be based on the General Education. This article elaborates that only College English be reformed on integration of course, teaching methods, construction of teaching faculty and evaluation system, can College English of General Education be truly achieved, as well as the Innovation of College English Teaching.

Key words: General Education; College English; Innovation of College English Teaching

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INTRODUCTION

As an English discipline oriented to the non-English majors, College English boasts the largest scale nationwide, consumes the longest time, and at the same time excites the heated controversy among educators, scholars and students. Along with the deepening reform in College English education, College English is capturing more and more attention. Recent years, the detailed curriculum of the English course assumes enormous importance, which, to some extent, impels the reform in return. However, it can be found that if we are content with a superficial and partial reform, it can only result in a passive and exterior

one in the teaching of College English, to little effect. As College English teaching is a component of the college General Education, so if we infuse the idea of General Education into the language teaching, it will enable us to probe into the College English teaching reform in another perspective and generate new insight and novel methods so as to forge ahead the reform.

1. LAY STRESS ON GENERAL EDUCATION AND INNOVATE THE REFORM IN ENGLISH TEACHING

1.1 The Connotation and Category of General Education

General Education, also known as liberal education, originated from the Liberal Education in the ancient Greece. Upon its connotation many scholars across the world give different expressions. The Education Committee of Harvard University used to compose and publish a special report “General Education in a Liberal Society”. The report illustrated the significance of General Education in college education, indicating only General Education can bless people with the endowments like knowledge, capabilities and refinement that are requisite to people’s life, with which before setting foot in the society, university students can take possession of the “critical capabilities” -- communication capability, problem-solving capability, cooperative capability and information-applying capability. After integrating all sorts of expressions of the concepts and connotations of General Education, the Chinese scholar Li Manli further made a tentative construction in perspective of nature, purposes and content. In terms of nature, General Education refers specially to “non-professional and non-vocational education”, “education compulsory to all”; in terms of purposes, it “should be education features top civilization and comprehensive humanity, aiming to culti-

vate far-sighted and well-informed talents with a learned head and refined heart”; with regard to teaching content, “it belongs to an educational type to acquaint students with the facts and ideologies within the main domain of knowledge, such as natural science, literature, history and other social science, language and art”, “instead of inculcating the mere profession-related knowledge, it lays a common basis for all”. From the generalizations of its nature and objects by the scholars, it can be seen that General Education is directed to all people, all college students, and it is based on the educational concept that students constitute the principal part, whose all-around development should be given full consideration.

Therefore, it can be apparently seen that College English is an integral part of General Education, in other words, College English is an essential approach to materialize General Education. Nevertheless, the current study on College English mainly confine to “considering it as it stands”, i. e. studying College English on the merits of College English. Consequently, the study is often restricted to the superficial level of theoretical research and applied linguistic practice, hardly delving deep into the reform of College English teaching.

1.2 The reform of College English Teaching in Perspective of General Education

In order to probe into the reform of College English teaching in perspective of the General Education, the goal of College English teaching must be made clear. The analysis of General Education’s subjects can be generalized into four aspects: (1) train up the students to be qualified “human beings” and competent “citizens”, not just to secure them a future job; (2) improve their intellectual and cultural levels in an all-around manner so as to enable them to possess a sound knowledge structure; (3) train the students to basic capacity to make them acquire a reasonable ability structure; (4) cultivate their diverse and elegant interests. As far as General Education is concerned, the basic capacities include the following items: capacity of logical reasoning, capacity of clear spoken and written expression of words and languages, capacity of quantitative and qualitative analysis, capacity to comprehend and appreciate the native cultural heritage and foreign culture and history, capacity to identify and judge ethical value.

The current instructive objective of College English education gives great prominence to the self-directed learning ability to conduct information exchanges in English, which is not contradictory to that of General Education. Therefore, such a conclusion can be drawn: on the basis of the reform in College English teaching objectives, we should give full consideration to General Education and the characteristics of College English teaching in order to cultivate high-quality citizens featured by highbrow culture, a wide range of knowledge, superb presentation skills in both speaking and writing, cross-culture communication capacity and self-learning

capacity.

2. THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OF COLLEGE ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT OF GENERAL EDUCATION

As an organic component of General Education, College English must undergo the following reforms in several aspects in order to press forward the teaching reform in College English.

2.1 Subjects Integration

In terms of curriculum, we should abandon the conventional concepts. Though our curriculum system still needs to be perfected, we can never achieve the teaching aim by simply adding or eliminating a certain subject. Instead, what we should do is to make efforts on the current courses. For instance, we can set up different features to expand the teaching content. Also, we should advocate such a concept- “listening and speaking come before reading and writing”. Only in this way can students attach great importance on listening and speaking all along and complete the advanced training and exercise on reading and writing at the same time according to a level-to-level teaching steps and in a step-by-step manner to achieve an organic integration between specialized English and comprehensive English and to attain the objective of General Education.

2.2 Improving and Enriching Ways and Means of Teaching

Fundamentally, General Education aims to achieve the ultimate goal of cultivating talents. However, the training of inter-disciplinarian talents does not depend merely on improving the current curriculum, rather, it requires us to undertake reforms in the current teaching methods as well. Conventional teaching methods can no longer satisfy the current talent cultivation. Reforms can be carried out in the following aspects. For instance, during the General Education of College English, knowledge of various disciplines should be supplemented so that when they appreciate the knowledge, their vision could be broadened, taste refined, overall quality enhanced. Also, we initiate their enthusiasm in learning and stimulate the students to learn to cooperate and conduct in the English environment. Besides, we should also make full use of the Internet to carry out the College English training. The traditional “chalk+blackboard” pattern should be changed and the multimedia and Internet-based College English represents the future trend. In this manner, along with the increased interest among the students, the efficiency of the class can be increased enormously, making College English shine brighter in the context of the informatized education.

2.3 Strengthening the Construction of Ranks of Teachers

Ranks of highly-qualified foreign language teachers should possess not only proficient language skills, a wide scope of knowledge, a particular background of literal and scientific information, but also advanced nationalized teaching philosophy. They should endeavor to enhance their capacity for information and reinforce the integration of IT and teaching practices. Cultivation of the talents,, the objective of teaching, raises a higher demand for the teachers, so when imparting knowledge, teachers should nurture a fair outlook on life, value, world in the students. Besides, teachers should make full use of General Education in College Education, repeatedly ponder upon the teaching content and give prominence to the nurturing of sound personality in the students to achieve the purpose of education.

2.4 Reform in the College English Teaching Evaluation System

The Evaluation system plays a decisive role in directing the College English teaching. In order to reform the College English teaching and make it an organic fraction of General Education, we must start with the evaluation system. Some scholars proposed to adopt the approach of combing “terminal evaluation” and “formative evaluation”, which has attained salutary effect. All the classes I teach have seen the effective combination of the two evaluations and practice has echoed that it may well be regarded an effective evaluation system. However, the problem within the system resides in lack of detailed standards, which, to some extent, causes “the absence of impartiality”. Hereupon, I want to suggest that instead of making a simple and biased evaluation on the basis of vocabulary, grammars, *etc.*. We should enrich the appraisal criterion in order to comprehensively check the students’ intercultural

communicative skills and abilities of language application and to perfect the evaluation system further more.

CONCLUSION

For the time being, the reform in College English teaching in the context of General Education does not move satisfactorily and sometimes it even goes astray from the general trend of General Education. We are a long way from the mature system of the developed countries. This dictates that we, the massive front-line College English teachers, should jointly introspect on the reform in a comprehensive manner, carry out constant exploration in perspectives like the curriculum, teaching methods, self-improvement and evaluation, blaze an unique trail in the General Education in College English in order to truly materialize the objective of training high-qualified compound talents.

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