

College English Curriculum Reform in the Context of New Engineering Education: Taking Wuhan University of Technology as an Example

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With the introduction of “new engineering, new medical science, new agricultural science, and new liberal arts” construction, the reform of college English teaching is also imperative. Scholars nationwide have conducted attempts in different aspects of college English teaching and produced fruitful results. Yet, more efforts should be made. This paper discusses the reforms made by Wuhan University of Technology, focusing on the reformation of curriculum.

Keywords: new engineering construction, curriculum, specialized purpose courses

Reform Background

In April 2019, the Ministry of Education and 13 departments, jointly and officially launched the “Six Excellence and One Top” Plan 2.0, which calls for comprehensively promoting the construction of “New Engineering, New Medical Science, New agricultural science, and New liberal arts”. In 2021, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the promotion of “Four New Disciplines” during his visit to Tsinghua University. In more than four years, domestic universities have made a lot of achievements in the construction of the “Four New Disciplines”. The construction of “Four New Disciplines” has caused a significant change in the talent training mode, provided the adjustment and optimization for professional structure and enhanced its connotation, promoted teaching reform and the construction of “Gold Majors”, and brought some other influences.

Previous Studies

Under the background of “Four New Disciplines” construction, the reform of college English teaching is also imperative, and has already achieved relatively fruitful results. According to CNKI, there are 33 studies on the theme of college English teaching reform under the background of “new engineering education” and more than 200 related studies at present. These studies can be categorized into the following aspects: overall discussion on college English reform under the background of new engineering education (Xiang, 2020; Xue, 2019; Xie, 2019); the reform of talent training mode under the background of new engineering education (Shu, 2020; Ye,

2020); college English curriculum reform (Xiang, 2019; Cai, 2019), the reform of college English teaching mode (Rao, 2021; Li, 2020).

Although these current studies have made certain achievements, there still exist many problems. First, the discussions and studies on the intersection and integration of “new engineering education” and “new liberal arts education” are scarce. Second, studies on foreign language teaching and learning under the background of the intersection and integration of “new engineering education” and “new liberal arts education” are also quite limited. Third, despite a large number of studies, there is a lack of high-quality studies, core journal papers, and leading studies. Fourth, these studies present the tendency of homogenization and generalization, lacking innovation and focus.

Questionnaire Survey

The subject of this survey is mainly the students of the School of Materials Science and Engineering of Wuhan University of Technology, and its purpose is to investigate their views on the course system and curriculum of college English teaching, with a total of 35 questions covering the course system, course categories, course objectives, and so on. And 142 valid questionnaires are totally collected.

The survey revealed some problems existing. Nearly 50% of subjects report a lack of follow-up courses for expansion, with another 25% noting a high degree of content homogenization and close to 20% deeming that the curriculum is simple, while very few students mention a lack of courses provided to meet individual needs. When it comes to the most desired English course, 45% of these respondents have a preference for language skills courses, as well as approximately 30% of them favor English for Academic Purpose courses. Students preferring cultural literacy courses, training courses for language tests, or literature appreciation courses, however, are relatively fewer, accounting for 11%, 7%, and 8% respectively. When asked if they consider it is necessary for the university to offer English practical courses, 75% of students surveyed confirm this demand, including 45 students who think such practical courses are extremely needed. Besides, around 22% of these respondents hold an indifferent attitude towards this issue and only 3 students think there is no need for English practical courses.

Reform of Wuhan University of Technology

To meet the requirements of training all-round talents, and also the requirements of the construction of New Engineering, Wuhan University of Technology has conducted comprehensive reforms on college English teaching and curriculum. First, reform has been made in the curriculum. College English teaching is composed with three stages: basic English, follow-up courses and practice courses. In the stage of basic English, English courses mainly train students' language skills, humanistic qualities, and world views. English for general purpose section offer six courses, focusing on the training of language skills: Basic English Series, Advanced English Listening, Culture and Translation, E-C and C-E Translation, Advanced English Vocabulary, and Interpretation. The follow-up courses attempts to cultivate students' cultural competence and the abilities to use English. Nine courses are included in the section of Intercultural Communication Course: Western Culture and Communication, Appreciation and Criticism of English Movies, Introduction to English-speaking Countries, American History and Culture, Chinese Traditional Culture and Classics, Introduction to Western Classical Literature, Culture and Translation, Intercultural Communication Movies, Listening and Speaking, Introduction to American National

Condition. Practice courses emphasize the cultivation of students' ability for specialized purposes. More courses are open for students' individual needs and interests. As many as twelve courses are offered for the students who are interested in English for Specialized Purpose: English for General Academic Purposes, Practical EST Translation, Practical English Basic Interpreting, English for International Trade and Economics, Business English, English Public Speaking, Academic Speaking, Academic Reading and Thinking, Academic Writing, Academic Conference Exchange, Practical Journalistic English, and English proficiency test skills and practical training.

Second, the teaching of "College English" consists of the first classroom, the second classroom and online teaching. The first classroom teaching focuses on developing students' language skills, cultural knowledge, academic literacy and professional qualities. In addition to emphasizing content learning, the second classroom extends classroom teaching and stimulates students' enthusiasm for extracurricular learning through well-designed, lively and varied comprehensive exercises and interactive activities. And in online teaching, teachers effectively utilize online platforms and digital resources, set up learning contents, assign exercises and practices, and conduct after-class tests and online monitoring to cultivate students' independent learning abilities and habits.

The current round of college English teaching reform still retains the existing level-based teaching mode, in which Level A is the improvement level and Level B is the general level. Students entering the A-level take the common compulsory courses in the first and second semesters, and the characteristic elective courses in the third and fourth semesters. The courses are divided into three categories, namely, English for General Purpose course, English for Specialized Purpose course and Intercultural Communication course, which correspond to the basic objectives, improvement objectives and development objectives of college English teaching respectively. Besides, in order to satisfy students' individual needs, the course, IELTS Test Skills, is offered to undergraduates in the first to sixth semesters.

Summary

The New Engineering Education has put forward new requirements on the talent training mode. College English teaching should take reforms to help fulfil the requirements. The reform conducted by Wuhan University of Technology has taken the requirements of New Engineering requirements into consideration, clearly stating that college English teaching should train students' language competence, cultural competence and academic English competence as well.

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