

Research on the Teaching of College English Courses in Higher Education Based on Career Skills Development

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Abstract: With the integration of the global economy and the increasing demand for high-skilled talent in the labor market, traditional English teaching models in higher education are facing significant challenges. To enhance students' practical English application skills, English teaching in higher education needs to shift from a focus on isolated language skills training to the cultivation of comprehensive professional skills, better aligning with the development trends of contemporary society and the economy. This paper analyzes the current issues in college English teaching at universities, including unclear teaching objectives, homogenized content, outdated teaching methods, and insufficient teaching staff. It proposes strategies such as establishing professional course teaching objectives, selecting appropriate teaching content, employing diverse teaching methods, and strengthening the dual-teacher model in faculty development to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of college English teaching, paving the way for students' career skill enhancement and professional development.

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization and the information age, the importance of English as an international lingua franca is increasingly recognized, which places new demands on English language teaching in higher education. Universities bear the mission and responsibility of cultivating applied and technical talents for the nation and society, making the enhancement of vocational skills highly valuable[1,2]. On one hand, the cultivation of vocational skills meets the employment needs of university students. Against the backdrop of rapid economic development in our country, various employers have raised higher requirements for the comprehensive qualities and abilities of talents, necessitating not only mastery of professional knowledge and skills but also proficiency in English communication. English vocational competence is a crucial component of university students' overall abilities and has far-reaching implications for their employment practices. Therefore, reforms in college English teaching at universities, based on the cultivation of vocational skills, can further expand students' professional knowledge and enhance their English vocational capabilities, laying a solid foundation for their future employment and meeting the job market demands of university students[3]. On the other hand, the cultivation of vocational skills can improve the effectiveness of college English teaching in universities. For a long time, the college English teaching process in universities has emphasized knowledge-based approaches and teacher-led instruction, focusing excessively on the output of college English knowledge while

neglecting the cultivation of students' pragmatic and vocational skills. Reforms in college English teaching that are grounded in vocational skill development can clarify teaching objectives, highlight practical and professional characteristics, stimulate students' initiative and enthusiasm for learning, and address many shortcomings of traditional college English teaching models[4].

Therefore, English teaching should not only focus on the transmission of language knowledge but also emphasize the cultivation of students' vocational skills. Currently, there are prevalent issues in higher education English teaching, such as course content not aligning with vocational realities, a lack of diverse teaching methods, and insufficient practical components, all of which limit the development of students' vocational skills. Consequently, reforms in university English teaching from the perspective of vocational skill cultivation are particularly urgent. This paper aims to explore effective reform strategies to promote the advancement of higher education English teaching, better aligning it with the needs of social and economic development.

2. Current Situation of College English Teaching in Higher Education

2.1 Unclear Teaching Objectives

Vocational relevance is the most fundamental attribute of higher education, and the teaching objectives of various courses need to be set around vocational characteristics. However, in the current teaching of college English courses in higher education, there exists the issue of unclear teaching objectives, with insufficient recognition of the significant value of vocational relevance to college English teaching. The lack of clear and defined teaching objectives for college English courses makes it difficult to cultivate students' practical skills and professional abilities, leading to numerous real-world challenges and obstacles in teaching. Under traditional educational concepts, universities generally view college English course instruction as a means to develop students' basic qualities and English proficiency. Some institutions even consider the offering of college English courses unnecessary, improperly utilizing college English course time for professional course instruction. This unreasonable phenomenon fundamentally stems from the belief that college English courses cannot contribute to the cultivation of vocational talent in higher education, and that professional course instruction is the effective path to achieving talent development goals. Under the influence of misaligned educational concepts and objectives, universities regard examination results as the sole indicator of the value of college English courses, neglecting the training and development of students' English language proficiency during college English instruction. The excessive focus on imparting theoretical knowledge of college English, combined with a rote teaching model, has led to a gradual decline in students' interest in learning English. As a result, the English proficiency of university students is often incompatible with the needs of social development, which is detrimental to their employment and career advancement [5].

2.2 Homogenization of Teaching Content

The fundamental goal of college English course instruction in higher education institutions is to enhance students' overall quality and professional capabilities. This requires that teaching practices be oriented towards professional competencies and not overly confined to theoretical knowledge from textbooks. Currently, the homogenization of teaching content in college English courses at universities is quite severe, as it fails to incorporate the specific characteristics and specialties of students' majors, leading to a situation where the English knowledge acquired by students is difficult to apply in professional practice. This disconnect results in a lack of interest in learning English among students. The main reason for this issue is that the content of college English teaching in universities is out of sync with the times and lacks strong professional characteristics. Students from various majors are often required to use a "one-size-fits-all" English textbook,

meaning that students with different professional paths and directions are all learning the same college English content[6]. This uniform textbook system and teaching content struggle to cultivate students' professional abilities effectively, making it difficult for them to understand industry trends and employer demands, thereby increasing the challenges they face in job hunting and employment. Furthermore, there is a lack of school-based textbooks with distinct professional characteristics, and insufficient financial investment in the development of college English teaching materials has led to a lag in textbook development. As a result, there has yet to be a college English textbook that integrates with specific majors, leaving course instruction without strong textbook support.

2.3 Lagging Teaching Methods

The fundamental purpose of college students learning English knowledge and skills is to be able to flexibly use the English language for communication in their future work, thereby enhancing their professional competence and competitiveness. However, the adoption of lagging teaching models and methods in higher education institutions has become the greatest constraint on the effectiveness of college English teaching. In recent years, colleges and universities in our country have generally expanded their scale of operations, but the funding input has been relatively insufficient. Most of the funding is allocated to professional development, while the investment in specialized English teaching classrooms and multimedia teaching equipment is noticeably lacking, resulting in a deficiency of necessary hardware and software support for college English teaching. Additionally, the teaching staff in higher education institutions is somewhat inadequate, lacking a high-quality faculty team. Teachers tend to focus more on obtaining professional titles and conducting research, neglecting the innovation of teaching models and methods in college English instruction, which has led to the continued use of traditional and outdated teaching methods.

2.4 Need for Improvement in Faculty Strength

At present, the faculty strength in college English teaching in higher education institutions is insufficient, lacking high-quality dual-qualified teachers, which significantly affects teaching effectiveness. Most English teachers in colleges and universities come from English majors, translation majors, and English education programs in normal universities. These teachers generally enter higher education to engage in teaching after graduation, possessing a solid foundation in the English language. However, their knowledge structure is relatively narrow, and they lack sufficient practical teaching experience. They do not have a clear understanding of the importance of college English teaching and its educational objectives, and they fail to recognize the service function and role of college English teaching in cultivating professional talent in higher education. During the process of college English instruction, teachers do not actively engage in communication and interaction with students, resulting in insufficient alignment and integration of the college English teaching content with students' majors, making it difficult to realize the intended purpose of the college English curriculum. Meanwhile, most college English teachers hold outdated teaching philosophies, emphasizing the impartation of language knowledge and the cultivation of language skills, while neglecting the requirements for English proficiency in professional job positions. This leads to a serious lack of relevance and professionalism in teaching, making it challenging to enhance students' English proficiency for their careers. Furthermore, higher education institutions have weak training efforts for English teachers, and teachers lack opportunities for external learning and further education, making it difficult for them to understand the current requirements for students' English professional abilities in the job market, and they do not possess the basic qualities and competencies of dual-qualified teachers.

3. Strategies For Reforming College English Teaching

3.1 Establishing Professional Course Teaching Objectives

To highlight the practicality of college English teaching in higher education, it is essential to integrate professional knowledge into English instruction. The teaching objectives should be clearly defined, focusing on cultivating vocational skills and serving the future career development of university students. college English teaching should emphasize the development of students' professional and practical abilities, continuously advancing the deepening reform of college English education. University English teachers need to recognize that in the implementation of college English classroom instruction, it is not only necessary to impart relevant English knowledge and complete teaching tasks but also to cultivate professional skills, enabling students to master and apply them flexibly. Universities should reasonably structure college English courses, dividing them into foundational courses, specialized technical courses, and communication courses, while expanding the proportion of college English courses. Additionally, they should reconstruct the objectives of college English teaching, avoiding a blind pursuit of improving students' pass rates in English proficiency exams and their exam scores. Instead, the focus should be on the characteristics of students' majors, with the core aim of cultivating comprehensive vocational abilities. Each major's college English teaching should establish distinct and characteristic course teaching objectives[7]. For example, in business management and service-related majors, there is an emphasis on developing students' communication and management skills, while manufacturing-related majors stress English reading and translation skills, enabling students to understand foreign literature and materials. Various majors in higher education should establish professional course teaching objectives based on their unique characteristics, optimizing course content and teaching methods on this foundation, thereby fostering students' vocational abilities and professional qualities through college English course instruction.

3.2 Focused Selection of Teaching Content

For a long time, college students have placed low importance on college English course instruction and have not fully recognized the significance of English for their future career development. In today's context, English language skills are indispensable for college students' employment and long-term career advancement. Therefore, during the implementation of college English courses in higher education, it is essential to emphasize the close relationship between English skills and students' career development. This will help students shift their misconceptions and align their professional capabilities with future job requirements, clarifying their focus in learning college English and recognizing its importance.

College English teachers should prioritize cultivating students' foundational skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation while highlighting the unique characteristics of their respective majors. With a wide range of academic programs available, different fields have distinct training objectives and career paths, necessitating a targeted selection of college English teaching content. For instance, the college English curriculum for English majors should primarily focus on grammar, translation, and speaking skills. In contrast, the college English content for tourism management majors should emphasize information presentation and interpersonal communication.

In summary, while teaching college English courses in higher education, it is crucial not to overlook the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. Building on this foundation, educators should cultivate students' English language proficiency in alignment with their professional characteristics and future career directions. For example, in journalism programs, college English instruction should focus on developing English communication skills, written expression, and expanding students' professional English vocabulary, all centered around

career-related content. Additionally, strengthening the development of school-based teaching materials tailored to the career development needs of various majors will help create a college English curriculum system that fosters students' professional capabilities, enabling them to progressively enhance their English application skills and career competencies.

3.3 Diversified Teaching Methods for English Courses

Due to the relatively weak English foundation of college students, a lack of sufficient interest in learning, and the long-standing use of outdated teaching models and methods in public classrooms, it is challenging to cultivate good English learning habits among students, which undermines the effectiveness of classroom instruction. In the context of cultivating vocational abilities, college English teachers in higher education need to innovate their teaching methods, integrating the professional characteristics and career development directions of students to conduct targeted college English course instruction. The content of college English teaching should be modularized, allowing for the reasonable selection of teaching methods based on the module content. Firstly, during the teaching of the listening module, it is essential not only for students to understand the listening materials but also, under the guidance and encouragement of the teacher, to be able to independently paraphrase and translate English listening materials, thereby cultivating a good sense of language[8]. Teachers should promptly correct students' language expression errors without undermining their confidence in learning English, focusing on nurturing their English expression and listening abilities. Secondly, in the reading module, it is important to ensure that students understand the meanings of words in specific contexts, as well as to place the same words and phrases in different pragmatic situations to guide students to re-understand them. For key sentences in reading articles that are difficult or important, teachers can encourage students to take notes and record them, allowing for a deep understanding of the usage of these sentences before practicing them in different contexts. Teachers can create authentic language situations for students, taking into account their majors and future work environments, enabling students to develop English vocational skills through repeated practice and enhancing their competitiveness in the job market. Furthermore, in the knowledge application module, teachers can employ group cooperative learning and role-playing methods. Each group can be assigned specific situational tasks, with group members taking on different roles to engage in practical English dialogue exercises, thereby cultivating students' teamwork, language expression, and interpersonal communication skills. Finally, in higher education English teaching, it is essential to emphasize the integration of education and modern technology. For example, online courses and AI multimedia tools can enhance the effectiveness and appeal of teaching. Online courses offer a more flexible learning approach, allowing students to study according to their own schedules. AI multimedia tools, such as videos, animations, and interactive software, can also increase the attractiveness and comprehensibility of the teaching content. The combination of these two not only boosts students' interest and engagement in learning but also improves their practical skills and professional competencies.

3.4 Strengthening the Construction of a Dual-Qualified Teaching Staff

The reform of college English teaching in higher education institutions, based on vocational competency development, places higher demands on the professional abilities and vocational qualities of the teaching staff. Chinese universities need to enhance the construction of a dual-qualified college English teaching team, ensuring that college English teachers not only possess solid theoretical knowledge but also demonstrate outstanding professional abilities and qualities. This enables them to impart knowledge and cultivate vocational skills in students during college English courses, transforming university students into comprehensive English talents that

meet job requirements and possess strong professional competencies.

On the one hand, universities should strengthen the recruitment of dual-qualified teachers, setting reasonable entry standards for college English teachers and focusing on assessing their dual-qualified attributes. By introducing dual-qualified English teachers, the entire teaching staff can be enriched, injecting fresh perspectives into college English instruction. On the other hand, it is essential to enhance the professional development of existing college English teachers by providing opportunities for external study, further education, and training. Additionally, universities can strengthen cooperation with enterprises, offering college English teachers opportunities for practical experience within companies. This will help teachers gain a deeper understanding of the talent needs of enterprises and the application of college English in professional fields, thereby improving their teaching capabilities and relevance. It will also encourage them to shift outdated mindsets and actively enhance their overall quality and teaching abilities in real work environments and tasks, laying a solid foundation for the reform of college English teaching.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the reform of college English teaching models from the perspective of vocational competency development is a systematic project that not only needs to align with the real demands of society and the job market but also highlight the characteristics of vocational English education. Therefore, college English teaching based on vocational competency development is a necessary path for curriculum reform and development. In this regard, colleges and universities must gain a deep understanding of the English competency requirements for various professional positions, continuously deepen the reform of college English course teaching, enhance students' interest and enthusiasm for learning English, enable students to apply their English knowledge in practice, and strengthen their employability and competitiveness, thereby laying a solid foundation for their career development. In the future, the reform of college English teaching models should continue to pay attention to the dynamics of the job market, constantly adjusting and optimizing teaching strategies to meet the developmental needs of the economy and society.

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