An In-Depth Interpretation of the Requirements of New Curriculum Standard for Senior High School English

Shao-Jun DUAN
School of Foreign Languages, Kunming University, Kunming, China
duanshaojun2709@126.com

Keywords: New Curriculum Standard, Requirements, Senior High School, English Teaching.

Abstract. New Curriculum Standard for Senior High School English puts forward five requirements for senior high school English teaching and learning, namely, cultivating the comprehensive literacy and promote the overall development, enriching the teaching content and achieve integrated development, innovating the teaching methods to form learning autonomy, exploiting the value of textbook and develop various resources, and using multifarious evaluations and pay attention to the learning process. This paper aims to offer an in-depth interpretation of these requirements so as to help senior high English teachers to teach their class more successfully, and help students to learn their English course more efficiently as well.

Introduction

With the development of education and the changing atmosphere in international and domestic English education field, Chinese Ministry of Education issued the Criterion of English Courses of the Compulsory Education (Experimental Draft) in autumn of the year 2001. Based on this blueprint, the group members of developing high school English curriculum standards of Ministry of Education formulated New Curriculum Standard for Senior High School English. This paper aims to offer an in-depth Interpretation of the requirements put forward in New Curriculum Standard for Senior High School English so as to help senior high English teachers to teach their class more successfully, and help students to learn their English course more efficiently as well.

The Requirements Proposed in the Curriculum

To Cultivate the Comprehensive Literacy and Promote the Overall Development

The Curriculum indicates that the overall goal of high school English curriculum is based on the compulsory education, and further clarifies the purpose of learning English, the ability to develop independent learning and cooperative learning; the formation of effective English learning strategies; the overall ability to use language.[2] As can be seen, the new high school English curriculum changes the double target model which is based on the language knowledge and language skills development and regarded the comprehensive ability as a core high school English curriculum objectives. It is difficult to form a comprehensive ability only by imparting knowledge and accumulation, the formation of comprehensive ability must be based on the integrated development of language skills, language knowledge, affects, learning strategies and cultural awareness. Therefore, imparting knowledge and forming skills are both important in high school English teaching. Only by paying attention to the process and methods to guide the learning, cultivating the students’ positive affects, strengthening the cultural education can the teachers develop all-round students.

To Enrich the Teaching Content and Achieve Integrated Development

Curriculum objectives are achieved through the teaching content and activities. The changes of curriculum goals require more substantial teaching contents, language skills and language knowledge, even including affects, learning strategies, and cultural awareness.
Figure 1. Framework of Objectives in the New National English Curriculum. [3]

As is shown in above figure, Language knowledge and language skills are closely related, which are the primary content of high school English teaching and the basis of comprehensive ability to use language. [1] The traditional foreign language teaching courses are one-sided emphasis on imparting language knowledge but neglecting the language skills, which leads to the result that the students can not apply the language knowledge into listening, speaking, reading and writing skills practice. As a result, it develops the learners with high score and low ability. However, the new course will not only pay attention to teach the basic language knowledge, but also lay emphasis on language skills.

The curriculum points out that according to the senior high school students’ level of communication and cognitive development needs, the English teaching should focus on the following ability aspects: the ability to communicate in English in a decent way; the ability to obtain and process information in English; the ability to analyze and solve the problem in English and critical thinking skills. The listening, speaking, reading and writing training should be based on the development needs of the former aspects.[2] These words shows that the new curriculum makes two demands for high school English language skills training. The one is that we must focus on the Appropriateness of the language usage. Appropriateness is shown when the language users communicate in a particular social situations and communication objects with appropriate selection and use of language. Only the teacher creates a real language situation and the learners have communication needs can they experience the process of how to use the different language structures for different objects to achieve some kind of communicative language functions. The second one is to focus on forming the abilities of analyzing and solving problems and critical thinking. Language is a tool for thinking. According to the linguistic relativity, people who speak different languages have different ways of thinking. [4] Learning a foreign language, in some extent, is to learn a new way of thinking. The teaching activities in language classroom should be linked with personal daily experience and social phenomena, should be conducive to their personal experiences, ideas and a variety of phenomena, and should be helpful for them to analyze and judge the personal experience, views and various phenomena. The teachers should guide them to discover and solve problems in learning process.

In addition, the emotional attitude is an important factor affecting student learning and development. Concerning about the emotional attitude in high school English teaching is not only to
develop all-round development of human needs, but also an effective way to promote students’ language development. Strong motivation and strong interest promote learners to devote more time and effort in language learning, and actively participate in various learning activities; a strong will and a strong self-confidence help students overcome difficulties and be risk-taking. Negative emotional attitude will be significantly hindered to the learner language learning. According to Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, emotional factors act a role as a filter promoting or impeding language learning process. Positive emotions can reduce the filtration and produce the language acquisition under adequate circumstances of comprehensible input. When the language learners’ negative emotion such as too anxious, the received partial comprehensible input will be filtered out, it will lead to fossilization or language acquisition does not occur. [5] Therefore, it is particularly important to pay attention to students’ emotional attitude in high school English teaching; teachers should strive to create a liberal, democratic and harmonious atmosphere of teaching. Only in a relaxed and lively atmosphere, will students be easier to produce positive emotions.

Next, learning strategies is the prerequisites to improve learning efficiency and develop the ability of independent learning. Teaching English in senior high school must focus on training learning strategy and strengthening the study method. The Curriculum explicitly includes the cognition, regulation, communication strategies and resources into the content of the target, aiming to teach students to plan and manage their own learning process, further cultivating students’ ability of self-learning. One of the teachers’ tasks is to help students master effective learning strategies and make full independence to learn, even lifelong learning.

Finally, cultural awareness is an important condition to strive to understand the language and use of language decently, which requires that English teaching in senior high school should strengthen cultural teaching so as to enhance students’ literacy. Language is the carrier of culture, and inseparable with each other. Learning cultural must be the essential part of learning language. The curriculum indicates that cultural awareness includes cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, and cross-cultural communication awareness and skills. According to the characteristics of the student’s age and cognitive ability, the teachers should explain the cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries and the differences between Chinese and the western, so as to deepen students’ understanding of their own national culture and improve their sensibility to cultural differences and the ability to identify, which can develop a good foundation of intercultural communicative competence.

To Innovate the Teaching Methods to Form Learning Autonomy

Achieving course objectives also depends on the teacher’s teaching methods. Under the traditional chalk and talk teaching situation, students can only passively memorize, mechanically train, which is hard to achieve their goals comprehensive language ability. The curriculum required that the teaching of senior high school should change the mode of teacher-centered teaching and book simply teaching, and the teaching should increase open and inquiry-based learning task activity. [2] Only in the open and inquiry learning activities, can the students be possible through observation, experience, and explore to learn, play learning autonomy, from passive learning styles to active, participatory and collaborative learning. Task-based language teaching is a kind of learner-centered teaching methods, emphasizing learning communication through the exchange, using authentic materials and taking into account the language itself and the learning process and focusing on the personal experience of the learner, lesson language within the language learning and social activities combined, [6] which can enable the students actively participate the experiential and inquiry-based learning contexts. As a result, the Curriculum Standards promotes the use of task-based approach in the high school English teaching. But what can be called a task? The Curriculum makes a clear definition: “mission means to help students with a variety of things to do in English language practice.”[2] Clearly, the task is different from the language practice setting to consolidate the knowledge points. Furthermore, inquiry learning and project-based learning can be adopted in the high school English teaching. The basic theory of former two are same as the task-based approach, all they are to provide students with active participation, personal experience

151
and opportunity of learning from the deeds. Broadly speaking, they can be incorporated into the "tasks" concept proposed in the Curriculum. [1]

To Exploit the Value of Textbook and Develop Various Resources

English teaching materials include English textbook and all other study materials and auxiliary facilities which are conducive to the development of students’ comprehensive ability to use language, and the textbook is the core part of the English curriculum resources. The current high school English textbooks are compiled by a lot of domestic and foreign experts, editors and teachers, who spent lots of effort with humanities, fun, practicalness, inquiry, flexibility and evaluation. So they are the most valuable and convenient English courses resources. In the teaching process, the high school English teachers should thoroughly understand the contents in the textbook and understand the spirit of the foundation materials, and then, according to the characteristics of specific groups of students and the level of English language learning, neatly use the textbook with proper way such as deletions, additions, adaptations to deal with the inappropriate content beyond the students’ level, so as to attain the form of teaching with textbook rather than teaching textbook.

The Curriculum also shows that besides the updated, basic, selective, developmental, open, scientific and ideological textbooks, the schools and teachers should actively develop and use other curriculum resources, for instance, radio and television programs, audio, video information, network resources, newspapers and magazines. [2] Hence, on the one hand the schools and teachers should focus on curriculum objectives and the Curriculum, and use the local resources to develop local cultural material within specific characteristics; on the other hand, the students should be encouraged and supported to participate in the development and exchange of curriculum resources, guided to exploit resources independently.

To Use Multifarious Evaluations and Pay Attention to the Learning Process

The Curriculum states that the evaluation of English courses should be based on the Curriculum standards and requirements, and implements the effective monitoring of the whole process of teaching and consequence. Evaluating enables students to experience progress and success in English learning process continuously, and form self-understanding, self-confidence, especially learn to adjust strategies to promote the comprehensive development of overall language ability. Evaluation should enable teachers to get feedback information in English teaching, to reflect and challenge their own teaching behaviors, and continuously improve the level of education and teaching. Evaluation should also enable schools to keep abreast of curriculum standards implementation, improve teaching management and promote the continuous development and improvement programs. [2] To achieve the above function evaluation, a single teacher-based evaluation method is not enough. So it is necessary to form the combination of formative and summative assessment, the combination of students’ self-assessment and teacher evaluation and peer evaluation, the combination of qualitative evaluation and quantitative evaluation, and the combination of comprehensive evaluation and individual evaluation. Evaluating should benefit students’ self-understanding, reflection and regulation of their own learning. What counts is, the formative assessment and qualitative assessments should be the main form more than summative assessment and quantitative assessment.

Conclusion

From above discussion, we can see The Curriculum expounds the nature, basic concepts, curriculum design ideas of the senior high school English courses in a relatively clear and complete way. It does a detailed description of the course objectives and content standards and makes reasonable proposals for the development of education, evaluation, curriculum resources and use. In essence, it is the description of ideal high school English teaching that can be achieved with great efforts.
References


