Exploring the Ways to Improve the Comprehensive Quality of College English Teachers on the Basis of Analyzing Students' Response to College English Follow-up Courses

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Abstract. Most colleges and universities have offered four-semester college English courses for non-English majors for a long time. At present, China is in a critical period of social transformation and development of higher education, college English teaching reform has once again become a social concern. English for general purpose (EGP) is not helpful for the students to improve their comprehensive language ability and now the students’ recognition towards EGP is getting lower and lower. It is high time that each university should set up appropriate follow-up courses for students of different English levels and different majors. Although some universities has tried to offered such courses, the students are not very satisfied with the current courses. The teaching effect is not ideal. One of the key influential factor is the teachers who are the main performers of teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to take measures to help the college English teachers to improve their overall quality so as to provide the students with more and high-quality follow-up courses. By analyzing the students’ need for follow-up courses under the new situation, this paper combs the abilities and qualities that college English teachers lack in teaching follow-up courses, and then discusses the ways to improve the comprehensive qualities of college English teachers, which is of great significance in promoting college English reform and teachers’ professional development.

Introduction

College English is an important compulsory course for college students. As an important part of higher education, college English plays a crucial role in the cultivation of talents in China. Most colleges and universities have offered four-semester college English courses for non-English majors for a long time. It is good for the students to improve their English proficiency. With the development of society, technology and the improvement of the students’ English level, the students are not satisfied with the current college English and they are not interested in it. According to National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), “Improving quality is the core task of higher education development.”[1] Many domestic experts are increasingly calling for the reform of College English teaching and then “College English Curriculum Requirements” was published in 2017. The objective of College English is to develop students’ ability to use English in a well-rounded way, especially in listening and speaking, so that in their future studies and careers as well as social interactions they will be able to communicate effectively, and at the same time enhance their ability to study independently and improve their general cultural awareness so as to meet the needs of China’s social development and international exchanges.[2] Later, in order to meet the demand of students and society, many colleges and universities in China set up appropriate follow-up courses for students of different English levels and different majors. Although a lot of follow-up courses could be provided for the non-English major students to learn, the teaching effects of these courses are not satisfactory. One of the key factor is the teachers’ comprehensive ability. The high-quality teaching faculty is the prerequisite for the successful implementation of college English teaching, and it is the guarantee for the development and construction of college English follow-up courses. At present, the researches on college English follow-up courses in China are still immature, and teachers’ education is still
lagging behind. Therefore, it is necessary to take measures to help college English teachers to improve their comprehensive quality and promote their professional development to meet the new demands.

**Investigation on the Students’ Response to College English Follow-up Courses**

In order to know about the college students response to college English follow-up courses, a semi-structure questionnaire was conducted among 209 undergraduates of Tonghua Normal University who have passed CET 4 and took the college English follow-up courses in 2017. There are 9 college English follow-up courses which can be classified into three parts, as shown in Table 1. The questionnaire mainly involves the students’ attitudes and suggestions for the follow-up courses they took. The purpose of the survey is to investigate the students’ need for college English follow-up courses and the effect of these courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names Classifications</th>
<th>Language skills</th>
<th>English for practical uses</th>
<th>Language and culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dubbing and appreciation of original English movies</td>
<td>Listening and reading in CET4</td>
<td>American cultural journey</td>
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<td>English Speech Techniques</td>
<td>English writing for postgraduate entrance examination</td>
<td>Intercultural communication skills</td>
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<td>English pronunciation and reading</td>
<td>English for Workplace</td>
<td>Language and culture</td>
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According to the survey, 53% of the students think that they are interested in the follow-up courses, which can help them improve their English ability and broaden their horizons. They have chances to learn something new. But many students still express their own opinions on some problems existing in these elective courses. And the problems can be concluded as follows:

1. The number of follow-up courses is limited. The demand of the students from different majors is different. And the school cannot offer them diversified courses. Besides there are only 16 hours for the follow-up courses. The students feel that it is not enough for them to learn. Or they can just learn some superficial knowledge of the subject.

2. There are no textbooks for these follow-up courses. Many teachers only find something from internet or give the students some teaching materials. The content of the courses is not rich enough for the students to learn. As for teaching methods, many teachers still talk too much in class, and the students listen and take notes for most of time, which is not good for the students to cultivate their practical skills.

3. The class management is not very strict, so some students do not pay enough attention to these elective courses. The main purpose of having the follow-up courses is to get credits rather than learning.

To sum up, we can see that the key factor contributing to these problems is teachers’ comprehensive ability. Teachers play a vital role in education. They decides the opening of the courses, the teaching content, the classroom activities, class management and so on. However, many college teachers are not very qualified for teaching following-up courses. Firstly, most college English teachers are English major students. They have little knowledge of other majors. Secondly, many teachers have no time to learn new teaching techniques, innovate their teaching method and write textbooks because of heavy workload. Therefore, it is necessary to improve EGP teachers’ comprehensive abilities.
Ways to Improve College English Teachers’ Comprehensive Abilities

From the Aspect of Teachers Themselves

**Being Conscious of Initiative Development.** Consciousness of initiative development means that the teachers are conscious of career planning.[3] It is a prerequisite for teachers’ professional growth. Internal factor is the most important for changing. External factors play a role through internal factor, that means all the external factors of teachers’ development must be transformed into individual internal drive, so as to promote the teachers’ professional development. Motivation to change comes from teachers themselves. The change of teachers’ concepts and role orientation is the first and foremost condition for the effective implementation of college English follow-up courses. College English teachers should be fully aware of the importance of college English teaching reform for students’ future development in new times and realize that their own comprehensive qualities have an effect on teaching quality. So they should establish positive occupational emotions, find out their important value in college English teaching reform and improve their sense of professional responsibility. As the guide of students’ English learning, the college English teachers must raise the awareness of professional development and constantly take initiative to improve their comprehensive abilities to provide high-quality courses for the students.

**Cultivating Autonomic Learning Ability.** To be good teachers need lifelong learning, especially in the information age. The teachers are supposed to accumulate updated professional knowledge and improve professional ability. Therefore, College English teachers must establish the concept of autonomous development and get the habit of active learning. They should take initiative to learn new things and new technology in order to catch up with the development of society and innovate the teaching method. In addition, in the process of study and teaching, teachers should always pay attention to putting their classroom learning into practical experience, constructing their own unique knowledge structure, entering into the society and constantly grasping every opportunity to promote their professional development.

**Improving Professional Quality.** Teachers’ professional quality is an important guarantee for effective implementation of college English follow-up courses. The teachers should carry out effective professional development planning according to their own interests, specialties, personality, advantages. At first, being English teachers, they should not only have a solid basic skill in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, but also a all-round understanding of English language, e.g. semantics, pragmatics, culture. Besides, college English teachers need to constantly expand their knowledge. In order to serve the professional development of non-English major students well, they should know and learn the relevant professional knowledge of law, computer, tourism, secretarial, foreign trade, accounting, medicine and so on. They should also actively participate in professional training, find opportunities to exercise themselves, and strive to open up their own professional space. For example, they can study professional courses online, participate in professional practice, take the relevant professional qualification examination, use the resources of the various departments in the university to observe and learn from the peers’ classes or cooperate with professional teachers, choose to study actively or take part in training and retraining to construct a unique knowledge structure conducive to our professional development.

**Paying Attention to Reflection.** The process of teacher professional development is a process from novice to mature teacher through continuous learning and exploration and practice. We must also think deeply about experience while gaining experience. Teaching reflection is an important way for teachers’ progress. Through teaching reflection, teachers’ self-monitoring ability, professional quality can be gradually improved. Therefore, College English teachers should analyze and reflect on all aspects of their teaching activities, concluding the lessons, analyzing the problems with relevant theories and exploring the ways to solve them. In the process of reflection, teachers’ professional development is inevitable.

From the Aspect of Administrative Management

**Attaching Great Importance to Teachers’ Professional Development.** In order to push the college English teaching reform, the relevant departments and schools should realize that college
English follow-up courses are very important for the students to improve their English ability and give support to the teachers’ professional development. They should make up policies and provide financial support for college English follow-up courses construction and learning chances for college English teachers.

Making a Plan for Teachers’ Training. The schools should establish an effective mechanism to ensure that every teacher has the opportunity to learn and improve. The departments can make a plan to send teachers out for training, so that teachers can learn advanced theories or technologies from experts through going abroad, attending meetings and observation. However, in recent years, college English teachers are confronted with such problems as the imbalance of teacher-student ratio, heavy teaching tasks, few opportunities for further study, and little time to participate in training outside the school. So it is necessary to invite some experts and excellent teachers to give lectures to help the teachers learn and develop.

Establishing Teachers’ Professional Community. It is an good way to set up a teachers’ professional community and a teaching or research team, which will build an effective platform for the professional development of college English teachers. The departments can encourage teachers to set up different professional development teams according to their curricula, interests and development directions. Team members can cooperate with each other, discussing and sharing teaching and research experience, solving teaching and professional development problems together. Teams can also orientate development goals, establish internal management systems and operational mechanisms, formulate evaluation systems and optimize the resources in terms of professional theoretical knowledge, teaching practical knowledge and research capabilities. What’s more, the professional community can also offer excellent courses and set up a famous teacher’s studio so that teachers can benefit from cooperation and grow up quickly.

Summary

College English follow-up courses construction requires the college English teachers to improve their comprehensive abilities, including compiling textbooks, studying some specialized knowledge and exploring new teaching methods. These exploration and efforts are worthwhile and beneficial to their professional development. Thus, it is a good opportunity for college English teachers to promote and help them find a joint point between teaching and research.

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