

English Education in Chinese Colleges and Universities from the Perspective of Marxist Philosophy

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Abstract

With the further progress of globalization, English, as the most widely used language in the world, is increasingly prominent in terms of its position. China regards English education as an important part of improving national quality, and also takes English as an important medium for social, economic, trade and Chinese culture to go abroad. The current English education in colleges and universities, however, is inefficient for a long time, and there is still a big gap between the trained talents and the actual needs of society. Therefore, English education in colleges and universities in China should be guided by Marxist philosophy, carry out a series of reforms, and promote the continuous improvement of the quality of English education in China with a reasonable view of curriculum integration, a good view of teachers' education ecology and a scientific view of development.

Keywords

Marxism; philosophy; college English education; theoretical guidance.

1. Introduction

Currently, English has become a compulsory subject since the third grade of primary school throughout China. English education has been offered from the first grade of primary school or even preschool education in places where conditions permit, extending to the doctoral stage. More than 900 colleges and universities in China offer English major program. On the one hand, English education has become an important part of citizens' quality education in China, which has made important contributions to national economic and social development. On the other hand, the long-term inefficiency of English education has aroused widespread concern in society and even been criticized.

The time-consuming and inefficient English education in China should arouse the reflection of education authorities, English education researchers as well as national English educators. The author believes that English education in China should be guided by Marxist theory and carry out a series of reforms to change this backward situation. Guided by a reasonable view of curriculum integration, a good view of teachers' education ecology and a scientific view of development, the continuous improvement of English education quality in China will surely be promoted.

2. Development of English education in Chinese colleges and universities

In 1862, the Qing government established the Tongwenguan in Beijing, and set up three classes of English, French and Russian, aiming at training translators, which marked the official entry of English into China. Since then, English education has gone through more than 160 years in China. During this period, the attitude of Chinese government and the whole nation towards English changed, which also made English education undergo tortuous changes. In 1902, the Qing government promulgated the Constitution of the Imperial Academy, which stipulated that

English was the main foreign language course in primary and secondary schools in China. In 1903, English entered Chinese University and became a subject with a five-year schooling. In 1922, the government of the Republic of China promulgated the “Renxu academic system”, and English was divided into Junior English and Senior English, which was juxtaposed with Chinese. From 1949 to 1953, due to the relationship between China and the Soviet Union, Russian overtook English and became the dominant foreign language in China, and the number of English teaching points in colleges and universities nationwide declined sharply. In 1962, English entered the college entrance examination again. In 1964, the Ministry of Education promulgated the Outline of the Seven-year Plan for Foreign Language Education, which proposed that “English should be determined as the first foreign language in school education, and the proportion of languages offered in colleges and secondary schools should be greatly adjusted”. By 1966, the number of colleges and universities offering English majors rose to 74. During the Cultural Revolution, English teaching was almost canceled, and the whole English education went into a trough again.

After the resumption of College Entrance Examination in 1977, English education began to flourish. Since 1983, English has been officially listed as the main subject of College Entrance Examination, with 100 percent score in total, whose importance has been put on the agenda again. Since then, there has been a nationwide upsurge in English learning, and English has become a compulsory course for academic education.

3. Marxist philosophy in China

Marxist philosophy is a theoretical system formed by inheriting and developing German classical philosophy, British classical political economy and French Utopian socialism, which combines materialism with dialectics, materialistic view of nature and materialistic view of history to form a theoretical system of dialectical materialism and historical materialism. At the same time, it is also a complete and scientific theoretical system with practice as the core. The first and basic viewpoint of Marxist philosophy is the view of practice, and the scientific view of practice is its construction principle and its core content. Without the primary and basic viewpoint of practice, it is impossible to understand the whole ideological system of Marxist philosophy and the spiritual essence of Marxist philosophy.

Materialist dialectics advocates looking at problems from the viewpoint of connection, development and comprehensiveness, and requires people to observe and analyze problems from the perspective of the interrelation and interaction between things. This requires linking the present situation of things with its past and future. One should not only see the changes in time and space, but also see the changes and development of the fundamental nature of things. When analyzing the reasons for the development of things, one should grasp the internal contradictions (internal causes) of the development of things instead of ignoring the external contradictions (external causes) of the development of things.

Marxist philosophy is of universal guiding significance, and there is no exception to English education, which is an interdisciplinary subject under the guidance of linguistics, pedagogy, psychology, learning science, communication, technology, anthropology, sociology and other disciplines. It is inextricably linked with many disciplines, but at the same time it has its own development characteristics. Under the scientific guidance of the holistic view, contact view and development view in Marxist philosophy, combined with the specific practical activities of English subject education, it will effectively promote the development of subject education, improve the quality of English education, and thus improve the overall cultural competencies of Chinese citizens. In the meanwhile, the development and quality improvement of English education practice activities will also facilitate to enrich and develop the theories of related disciplines.

4. English education in colleges and universities from the perspective of Marxist philosophy

4.1. To guide English education with a reasonable concept of curriculum integration

The press conference on the research results of Chinese students' development of core competencies was held in Beijing Normal University, which marked the formal establishment of Chinese students' development of core competencies, which are based on the basic principles of scientificity, modernity and nationality, and centered on cultivating "all-round development people", including three aspects: cultural foundation, independent development and social participation. The comprehensive performance consists of six qualities: humanistic heritage, scientific spirit, learning to learn, healthy life, responsibility and practice innovation. This points out the direction for the formation of talent training framework.

On this basis, Professor Wang Qiang from the School of Foreign Languages of Beijing Normal University, combined with the reality of English, put forward the core competencies of English, namely language ability, learning ability, cultural awareness and thinking quality. Language ability means how to act in language, which requires learners to have language knowledge, language skills and language awareness. In terms of learning ability, learners are required to have the ability to learn, cultivate their metacognition, cognition, social effective strategies and improve their information competencies in the process of English learning. In terms of cultural awareness, learners are required to have the awareness of cultural contrast and tolerance, understand the cultural connotations of different countries, compare the similarities and differences of different cultures, absorb the essence of different cultures, respect the cultural differences of different countries, and comprehensively improve cross-cultural awareness. In the aspect of thinking quality, learners are required to learn how to think and improve their analytical ability, reasoning ability, judgment ability, comprehensive generalization ability and divergent thinking ability.

To cultivate and improve these core qualities of English majors, it is necessary for colleges and universities to make reasonable curriculum plans, set up reasonable curriculum groups and integrate relevant curriculum resources under the guidance of a reasonable concept of curriculum integration. For example, mother tongue, English and second foreign language courses are set up, and through language practice such as skill competition and speech competition, learning is promoted by competition, language input and output are promoted by driving hypothesis, and students' language ability is consciously trained and improved. By integrating the curriculum groups of history, geography, society and culture in China and English-speaking countries, their autonomous learning ability and learning strategies can be cultivated by classroom flipping, and finally improve their learning ability. Through the integration of Chinese and western cultural comparison and appreciation courses, students can experience different cultures, critically inherit and absorb the essence of culture, establish cross-cultural communication awareness and cultivate their cultural character. By integrating the selected reading of classic works with the courses of philosophy and dialectics, the students' thinking quality can be improved. In this way, the current situation of English majors' narrow knowledge, rigid thinking and weak mother tongue culture can be fundamentally changed.

4.2. To guide college English education with a good ecological view of teacher education

In China, English teaching has basically been popularized from Grade Three of primary school, and English courses have been taught from Grade One in places or schools where conditions permit. From primary school to university, from master's degree to doctor's degree, English is a compulsory course, whose duration is the longest among all the courses in national

curriculum. The huge contingent of English teachers shoulders the heavy responsibility of English teaching in China. The overall quality of English teachers directly affects the overall level of national English education. College English teachers undertake the arduous task of cultivating high-level foreign-related talents. The quality and development level of college English teachers determine the quality of personnel training (Wang, 2010). The effectiveness of college English teaching, however, has been questioned by public opinion. The reason is that the lagging development level of college English teachers is an important factor. Teachers' quality is one of the important factors that affect the effect of college English teaching. In the next decade, one of the core issues of college English teaching reform in China is the quality of teachers. This involves how to train college English teachers, how to develop themselves, and how to guide teachers to carry out microscopic, concrete and meticulous research on classroom teaching or students, all of which are fundamental events worthy of discussion and action (Xia, 2002). A good ecological view of teacher education is an important measure to improve English education, which is embodied in establishing a positive development system for college English teachers and an appropriate evaluation mechanism for college English teachers.

In the aspect of college English teacher education, a reasonable knowledge structure and system should be constructed. College English teachers should have conditional knowledge, which consists of education, psychology, linguistics, language teaching theory, sociology and anthropology. Besides, they should have ontology knowledge, which is made up of language knowledge and language skills. Furthermore, they should have the accumulation and integration of practical knowledge teaching experience. Additionally, they should own general knowledge, which is the knowledge structure such as teachers' knowledge breadth and literacy (Li, 2005). In the meanwhile, college English teachers should adjust their mentality and establish the concept of lifelong learning and development.

Compared with teachers of other majors, college English teachers are younger and due to heavy burden of teaching, their scientific research fall behind others. From this, they think that they are in a disadvantaged position in colleges and universities and are not valued, which greatly reduces their sense of self-efficacy and self-identity and hinders their teacher development process. This requires college English teachers to adjust themselves in time and strengthen their own learning and promotion with a positive attitude. In addition, from the national level, it is necessary to establish a reasonable support and guarantee system for college English teachers' continuing education. English subject has its particularity, which needs a certain language environment, so as to really improve language ability and experience the society and culture of English-speaking countries. Therefore, relevant state departments and institutions of higher education should increase investment and send college English teachers abroad in batches to participate in various forms of short-term or long-term training or further study, so as to guide college English teaching practice from an international perspective.

A good ecological view of teacher education should also include scientific evaluation of teachers. At present, "emphasizing scientific research and neglecting teaching" has become the assessment orientation in most colleges and universities. The assessment of teachers often focuses on the scientific research instead of teaching quality. College English teachers mainly undertake basic teaching tasks, and they have a large amount of class hours, heavy teaching burden and relatively limited time and energy to invest in academic research. Generally speaking, the scientific research of college English teachers is weaker than that of other professional teachers. Therefore, the assessment of college English teachers should not only be based on the number of published papers and the level of publications, but also take teaching quality into account.

In fact, the number of college English teachers in China is very large, so it is very difficult to publish articles in core journals in China, especially in journals on foreign languages. According to statistics, if all foreign language teachers in China want to publish papers in foreign language

core journals, they will only have the opportunity to publish a paper every 108 years on average. Therefore, in order to arouse the enthusiasm of English teachers in colleges and universities, it is necessary to establish an appropriate teacher assessment mechanism. Only in this way can a good ecological environment be formed to encourage more college English teachers to devote themselves to teaching, scientific research, social services and give full play to their expertise.

4.3. To guide college English education with the scientific outlook on development

Scientific outlook on development is the guiding ideology stipulated by the Communist Party of China (CPC), the development of Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought, which is an important part of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Its specific contents include the people-oriented development concept, the overall development concept, the concept of coordinated development as well as the concept of sustainable development. This requires that in the teaching practice of college English education, student-oriented should be highlighted, i.e., to teach students in accordance with their aptitude, respect individual differences of students, and cultivate students' expertise under the guidance of the theory of multiple intelligence.

What's more, the students' potential should be valued, integrating theory with practice according to the way of English major plus others, which facilitates to improve their comprehensive ability and cultivate all-round development of compound talents needed by society. Besides, in the teaching practice of college English education, the quality of thinking, cultural character and moral sentiment should be integrated to improve their interpersonal communication, adaptability to the environment through cooperative learning along with practical activities, and cultivate students into people with sound physical and mental health as well as personality. In addition, it is necessary to establish a process-based and summative assessment system to cultivate their autonomous learning ability and comprehensive language use ability in college English learning, so that they can have the ability and consciousness of sustainable learning, that is, the ability and concept of lifelong learning.

5. Conclusion

With the further acceleration of globalization, the society urgently needs high-quality compound talents with international vision. College English education is one of the important approaches to cultivating the necessary qualities of high-level talents in China, which is widely concerned and expected by the society. How to cultivate these talents needed by society is an important topic for English education researchers and English education undertakers. Therefore, under the guidance of Marxist philosophy, cultivating compound talents with international vision scientifically and efficiently is an important measure to realize the steady growth of national economy, business and transmission of Chinese culture.

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