

Study on the English Course Setting for the Non-Common Languages Majors in Shandong Province

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ABSTRACT

This study selects nine colleges and universities in Shandong Province that offer non-common language as the research object. Through detailed data, it analyzes the current status of colleges and universities that have offered non-common language majors in the province in terms of English curriculum setting, English ability cultivation and online classroom construction. In view of the existing problems, this paper puts forward some feasible suggestions on the English curriculum setting, talent training requirements and network classroom construction of non-common language majors, and hopes to make some beneficial exploration on the rationalization of English curriculum setting of colleges and universities in the province.

Keywords: non-common language majors, college English, course setting

I. INTRODUCTION

English has been widely recognized as a universal language. In a broad sense, non-common language majors refers to majors other than English, such as Japanese, Korean, German, Arabic and so on. Non-common language, in its narrow sense, refers to languages other than the working languages prescribed by the United Nations (Jingsheng Lu, 2012) [1]. Non-common language in this article refers to non-common language in a broad sense. At present, many colleges and universities in the province have set up non-common languages majors. In terms of curriculum setting, teaching requirements and talent training, various methods are adopted by colleges and universities. However, in general, the teaching mode of “non-common languages + English” is currently a popular teaching mode. This teaching mode is to offer English courses for non-common language majors, so that when students graduate, their English ability will reach CET-4 or higher levels. For example, since Shandong University opened its undergraduate major in Russian in 1951, it has successively opened Japanese, Korean, French, German, Spanish and other languages. As a compulsory course of general education, English is an indispensable part of the undergraduate talent training program. Other key universities in the province, such as Ocean University of China, China

University of Petroleum and Shandong Normal University, have also adopted this mode.

In Shandong province, most of the colleges and universities open up English courses for students majoring in non-common languages majors, but the current English curriculum still faces big problems in the course requirements, curriculum setting, the use of network resources and the flipped classroom. Thus it is necessary to explore and reform the settings of English courses. This article begins the discussion from the three aspects of English course requirements, English teachers' improvement and the use of network resources to build flipped classroom, in the hope of enlightening the reform of English courses for the non-common languages majors as well as providing some helpful suggestions for the future development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

With the development of the society and the popularization of English education, the English level of Chinese students is generally improved than before, so the English requirements for graduates are getting higher and higher. Jiang Dan (2018:96) pointed out that the development of non-common languages in China needs to be reformed from the aspects of professional layout, training mode and teacher structure [2]. It is the fact that the talent cultivation system of the non-common languages majors is not well-developed. There are a few colleges and universities in the province that set up the non-common languages majors and these majors share great similarity among these higher

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institutions. For example, most colleges and universities have the major of Japanese, yet very few have set up non-common languages, such as Thai and Vietnamese, which are the languages used by East-Asian countries. Some other languages that are used by countries along the “The Road and Belt” are also rare in the colleges and universities in Shandong Province. The lack of curriculum also reflects the insufficient attention paid to non-common language majors. Zheng Liming (2019: 242) proposed that to strengthen the building up of non-common language majors, the first step is to improve the treatment of teachers. In order to stimulate their teaching enthusiasm, it is necessary to expand the exchanging and training between universities’ faculties, holding regular academic lectures, and changing teachers’ teaching philosophy [3]. In addition, the past talent cultivation mode of non-common language specialty has not adapted to the development of the current economic situation, so it is necessary to cultivate compound foreign language talents. Wang Xuemei (2011: 9) points out that “from the perspective of social demand, there is a large demand for foreign language talents who can combine English with Non-common languages. In a word, the cultivation of international talents is a development trend [4]. Therefore, Shanghai International Studies University requires some non-common language majors, such as Portuguese, to graduate with “a solid foundation of Portuguese and English languages and proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation.” Beijing Foreign Studies University is the university with the largest number of non-common language programs in China, offering 37 non-common language majors. Among colleges and universities in Shandong Province, there are many schools providing non-

common languages majors besides Shandong University, Shandong Normal University and Qufu Normal University, etc. However, the English proficiency requirements of these colleges and universities for students of non-common languages are not very specific. It can be seen that colleges and universities in the province pay little attention to the cultivation of non-common language students’ English ability. These institutions have low requirements on English teaching, and unreasonable English courses, which needs to be reformed in the future.

III. METHOD

Among the 67 colleges and universities in Shandong Province, many of them offer non-common language majors. The author sorts out the number of non-common language majors according to the official website information (college profile/college overview) of the foreign language schools of each college. Nine universities with four or more non-lingua majors were selected as research objects, namely Shandong University, Shandong Normal University, Jinan University, Qufu Normal University, Ocean University of China, China University of Petroleum, Qingdao University of Science and Technology, Qingdao University and Linyi University. By exploring the non-common language majors’ English curriculum and talent training programs of these nine institutions through the information uploaded on their official websites, the class hours and course requirements of English curriculum were investigated. The data collection deadline was December 2018. The specific information is shown in “Table I”.

TABLE I. THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SETTING UP NON-COMMON LANGUAGE MAJORS IN SHANDONG PROVINCE

The number of non-common languages majors	The number of institutions setting up non-common languages majors	The list of the colleges and universities
7 non-common languages majors	1	Shandong Normal University
6 non-common languages majors	1	Shandong University
5 non-common languages majors	5	China University of Petroleum, University of Jinan, Linyi University, Qingdao University, Qufu Normal University
4 non-common languages majors	2	Ocean university of China, Qingdao University of Science and Technology,
3 non-common languages majors	7	Qingdao University of Technology, Shandong University of Finance and Economics, Ludong University and 4 other higher institutions
2 non-common languages majors	15	Qingdao Agricultural University, Shandong University of Technology, Yantai University and 12 other higher institutions
1 non-common languages majors	8	Shandong Jianzhu University, Qilu University of Technology and 6 other higher educational institutions
0 non-common languages majors	28	Binzhou Medical University, Jining Medical University and other 25 colleges and universities

IV. THE EXISTING PROBLEMS AND FEASIBLE ADVICE

A. The existing problems

Through looking up the information of the official websites of the nine colleges and universities, we find that there are two main problems in the English curriculum of non-common language majors. First, the personnel training plan for non-common language majors does not clearly stipulate the requirements of English courses; Second, the English curriculum is shortening the class hours, and the courses are relatively simple, unable to meet students' need.

First of all, the above nine colleges and universities did not make clear provisions on English level when formulating the talent training requirements for non-common language majors, such as whether they need to pass CET-4 upon graduating. The requirement of English level is not mentioned in the talent training program of Russian major in Shandong Normal University, while the training program for Japanese majors mentions that students need to master basic computer knowledge and another foreign language, but does not specify what level of English proficiency they need to reach. Ocean University of China, when formulating the talent training program for Japanese majors, proposed that graduates should have other interdisciplinary knowledge of Chinese language and literature, foreign trade, second foreign language, computer science and so on. It can be seen that the above universities do not have clear English requirements for non-common language majors, and do not specify the degree of English proficiency that graduates should have. However, with the development of the society, the job markets require the graduates of non-common languages to improve their English level, and the current training requirements are far from enough to meet the needs of the society for the non-common language talents with the ability to speak fluent English.

Secondly, it is difficult to meet students' demand for English study due to the shortening English class hours. For example, in the Russian language talent training program formulated by Shandong University in 2016, English is only arranged in the third and fourth semesters, and the teaching period is only 128 hours. In the talent training program for French majors developed by Linyi University, the teaching hours of four semesters of English are only 128 hours. For non-common language students, learning English is also very important. According to a survey by Liu Ying (2011) of Communication University of China, most non-common language students hope to learn English well while studying their major [5]. At present, the problem is that there are fewer English teaching hours, but learning a language requires a lot of time and

energy. Without the large quantity of input and output, it is very difficult to make a breakthrough in English. Therefore, in the case of limited class hours, some elective courses can be opened to extend the time of English learning and expand the scope of English learning, so as to help students improve their English ability and provide help for their future career development or further study. Shandong Normal University, for example, offers compulsory English courses for non-common language majors in the first and second semesters, and advanced English elective courses in the fifth and sixth semesters to help students with their postgraduate entrance exams.

B. Feasible advice

In order to improve the quality of English teaching for non-common language majors, it is necessary to establish appropriate English level requirements according to students' English foundation and language ability. The rapid development of global economy has put forward higher requirements for the language ability of talents. The implementation summarized the necessary qualities of international talents, which mentioned that they need to have global view and multilingual ability. Non-common language students who master their own language and use English fluently will be welcomed in the job market. As the scope of job opportunities for non-common language students is relatively narrow, in order to compete for a place in the fierce job market, it is necessary to have a high level of English capacity. In order to improve the English level of non-common language majors, it is necessary to reform the existing English curriculum. The current curriculum is relatively underdeveloped, with non-common language students usually having only two English classes a week. During these two English classes, it is not easy for teachers to cultivate students' English ability all-roundly. Besides the students have different demands for English learning, so the college English teachers should fully take into account the students' actual needs and the curriculum setting should also be diversified, providing the freshman and sophomore with some training on the English capacity and thrusting deep into the English teaching of foreign culture, economy and politics. However, due to the division of students in the third year, some students who want to take the postgraduate entrance examination have the urgent hope of learning English. Therefore, advanced English class should be set up for these students to help them fully prepare for the postgraduate entrance examination, as well as to improve the admission rate of graduate schools. It contributes to the improvement of the comprehensive level of the school at the same time.

In order to cultivate the ability of non-common language majors, the improvement of teachers' quality should be emphasized. The improvement of English

teachers' professional ability is an important guarantee to promote the improvement of non-common language students' English proficiency. The improvement of teachers' professional ability is reflected in many aspects, and the priority is to continue to promote teachers' academic education and in-service education. At present, most of the English teachers in Shandong Province have master's degree, yet few have doctor's degree. Take Shandong Technology and Business University as an example. There are 92 English teachers in the School of Foreign Languages, among whom only 2 have doctor's degree on English literature, accounting for 2.2% of the total English teachers. The increase rate in the number of teachers with doctor's degree is an important basis for the development of English discipline. As a result, many English teachers also need to improve their academic qualifications, and Shandong University of Business and Economics has developed a package of measures to meet teachers' desire for further study. Secondly, we should change the teaching concept of teachers. For non-common language students, English is a second foreign language and not a working language for their future careers. In view of this, the English teachers will usually lower the standards when formulating the curriculum requirements and objectives of English for non-common language majors, while they pay more attention to the consolidation of students' basic skills. What's more, they seldom use the cutting-edge language teaching theories to guide students' learning process. Therefore, the English teachers need to change their teaching concepts, which not only attaches importance to the teaching practice, but also attaches importance to the theoretical guidance, helping the English teachers form good teaching habits, and contributing to the improvement of their professional ability.

For non-common language students, we should also pay attention to the combination of online education and the traditional classroom. With the development of network, it has a great impact on the traditional English classroom. As English learning requires a large amount of language input and output, it has also spawned various English learning platforms, providing English learners with rich audio-visual resources and English reading materials. In 2020, following the outbreak of the new epidemic, China's Ministry of Education opened the first 22 online teaching platforms, including icourse, xuetang, zhihuishu, etc., on which there are many well-made English courses for students to learn independently. But in order to better urge students to learn, teachers can also make use of the existing courses of these teaching platforms and build their own spoc courses. As the class hours of college English are shortened, it is far from enough to rely on the class time to learn English. Therefore, the establishment of a mixed online and offline teaching mode is the best way

to solve the shortage of English classes for non-common language majors. Through online learning, students can experience different teachers' teaching methods and styles, so as to learn from others and master the knowledge. Online learning has incomparable advantages over traditional classroom learning. For example, in correcting homework and exercises, online platform can give scores and corresponding modification suggestions in the first time, which greatly reduces the workload of teachers and improves the teaching efficiency. In addition, as most of the English teachers in China are non-native language teachers, it is true that the way of English speaking and writing of these teachers is not like the native language teachers. Through some online learning platforms, students can have direct access to English classes in foreign universities and even have conversations with teachers in English-speaking countries to improve their English skills. Therefore, the combination of online teaching and traditional classroom can effectively make up for the shortage of traditional classroom, so as to promote the development of non-common language students' English ability.

V. CONCLUSION

English plays a very important role in non-common language teaching. The cultivation of English ability is an important part of the cultivation of non-common language talents. Because in some non-common language countries, English is also used as the language of communication. Wang Hui (2016) proposed that English is used in many countries along "One Belt and One Road," and English plays an important role in many Asian, southeast Asian and south Asian countries as an official language [6]. Along with the further deepening of the communication between these countries, it is believed that the status of English as a world language will be further enhanced. Therefore it is very important for the colleges and universities to set up the English curriculum. And at the same time, it is urgent for these universities and colleges to formulate and implement specific English curriculum. There is still room for further discussion.

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