



Necessities for English Majors to Take Multiple Courses

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Abstract. With the change of people's concept towards English over the past few decades, English majors are confronted with some huge challenges. Considerable non-English major students are good at English and even demonstrate higher achievements in a few English related activities than English majors. This special social background and the limitation of the specialized courses reflect the necessities for English majors to broaden their eyes to various courses. This thesis firstly demonstrates the current situation of English majors from the employment rate and the incorrect attitude toward multiple courses. Next, it analyzes the particularity of the major itself through the close relationship with other subjects and the limitation of English major, then explores the benefits of taking multiple courses to English majors' future development, and gives some suggestions for both students and colleges to solve this problem. Besides, this thesis writes from students' standpoint and especially focuses on the necessities for English majors to take multiple courses, such as selective courses and practical courses.

Keywords: necessities; English majors; multiple courses; core competence;

1 Introduction

1.1 The significance of the study

Recently, the future development of English majors has become a hot topic among people. And heated debates about the necessities for English majors to take multiple courses rather than to just concentrate on specialized courses are right on their way. With the change of people's concept towards English over the past few decades, more and more English learners are faced with various changelings. Considerable non-English major students are good at English and even demonstrate higher achievements in a few activities than English majors. However, it is unfavorable for English majors because English as a tool is not a technical subject like science and engineering. With these findings, the importance of comprehensive abilities for English majors is quite evident. English majors are supposed to take multiple courses not only to meet the needs of the society but also to realize their self-improvement. So, this thesis intends to explore the necessities for English majors to take multiple courses (rather than just concentrate on specialized courses). Hopefully, this thesis can be helpful for English majors

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to get out of their predicaments and inspire them to struggle to improve their competitiveness for their future career.

1.2 Previous study on optional courses in colleges

Considerable studies that focused on students' overall development and curriculum system design have been published over the past few decades. According to Gu Fan [5], students are supposed to take more practical courses related to their majors to realize the quality-oriented education. And some other scholars [3]; [9] also expressed their views about the course constitution of colleges. What's more, the diverse phases and activities involved in language teaching are beneficial for developing and implementing a sound, rational, and effective language program [1]; we can find the significant effectiveness for language learning by involved in different related courses and activities. However, although these previous investigations have provided insights into the diverse constitution of courses and call for students' overall development, just a small number of studies are particularly related to English majors. And most of them focus on the weakness of colleges and the teachers but seldom write from the standpoint of students, such as students' mistake in taking a selective course. So, this thesis intends to explore the necessities for English majors to take multiple courses.

2 Necessities for English majors to take multiple courses

2.1 Current situation

In recent years, the overall employment condition for college graduates has been worsening in China as higher education has entered the popular education stage. College students are faced with growing pressure of employment along with sustained expanding enrollment of the higher education in successive years. With the altered requirements of companies, the employment situation tends to be more serious, especially for several majors such as English. However, massive colleges and English majors don't take this problem seriously and hold an incorrect attitude towards it. And the current situation of English majors is going to be illustrated in detail from the following two aspects.

Employment rate

It is difficult for college students to get a job in recent few years. When it comes to English majors, the situation is much worse.

Firstly, we can notice that there is an imbalance between the supply and demand for English major graduates. The number of the English graduates is excessive. Due to the enrollment expansion policy in recent years, the apparent increasing trend in terms of the number of English graduates can be witnessed. However, the total demand for English graduates is far less than that of the supply. As a result, the employment rate of this major is relatively low compared with other majors [10]. It is obvious that the employment situation of English major is not optimistic. What's more, according to the

statistics of the Ministry of Education in China, some majors are classified into high-risk majors. And among this datum, English major was included in recent years.

Secondly, the society and companies set a higher demand for students' comprehensive abilities nowadays. They require not only the specialized ability but also knowledge in other fields. One of the Chinese managers in a well-known international corporation said, "Now, the recruited English professional college students can only do ordinary translation. They need at least two years' professional training to meet the requirements of the present post. But an enterprise wants to have a direct economic benefit, so it is not willing to do so" [6]. Of course, companies would like to get high production and remarkable interests with as less investment as possible. However, the syllabi revision for most of the courses in English is based on mere assumptions rather than actual English language needs of the employment sector [7]. Thus, the reality is that most of the English majors can't meet the requirements. A great number of English graduates know nothing related to other subjects, such as finance, computer and science. As a result, they find that different with other majors' students, it is difficult for them to do a job unrelated with their major. What's more, with the change of people's concept towards English over the past few decades, more and more non-English major students show fantastic language ability. Thus, English major students are confronted with fierce competition.

We are supposed to attach great importance to this hard employment situation of English majors. It may be true that English major was a hot major with handsome salary and high employment rate in the past few years. But now, things are different. In order to improve the rough job situation of English majors, it is of great importance for students to acquire more skills while strengthen their language ability.

Attitude towards multiple courses.

In the first place, English majors themselves hold an inappropriate attitude towards multiple courses. Most of the college students nowadays study to satisfy their utilitarian aim rather than to meet the demands of the society, which leads to a narrow range of college students [2]. Students are indifferent to various courses that are not associated with their specialized courses. It can be noticed that during the selective courses, some students are sleeping, some are doing the tasks related to their specialized courses and some even skip the class and ask someone to reply the teacher when he/she checks the total number of the students. This phenomenon finally results in the shortage of compound abilities, although the academic achievements of their specialized courses are pretty good.

In the second place, colleges and teachers hold an inappropriate attitude toward multiple courses such as selective courses. In recent years, many universities pay more attention to the specialized knowledge of English majors and ignore the compound qualities of students. And universities have the tendency to attach importance to the capacity for scientific research of professors. As a result, a great number of teachers are busy with their researches and countless theses, spending little time on the preparation of courses, especially the optional courses.

Due to the two reasons mentioned above, most of the English majors might be specialized in terms of language abilities, foreign cultures and history. However, when

these students apply for a job, they may find that their core competitiveness is not that high compared with other major students who are also good at English. Considering the fierce competition of the job market and the incorrect attitude toward multiple courses, it would be better for the colleges as well as the English majors to take some actions to solve the employment issue and adapt to the changing society.

2.2 Particularity of the major itself

Close relationship with other subjects.

We can't deny that taking multiple courses can have a positive effect on English study. Optional courses enable English major students to explore long-held interests and brand-new curiosities across a range of disciplines and aid in the construction of a relevant and coherent program of English study [4]. Some selective courses could help English majors to enlarge and enrich their vocabulary as well as enhance their listening skill, such as musicianship and movie appreciation; some courses could help English majors to learn foreign history and economics, such as the comprehensive history of the world and the modern international economy and politics; some could help English majors to learn more about the customs and cultures of diverse countries. For example, aesthetic culture is one of the optional courses in most of the colleges. It seems that this major has nothing to do with English. However, through this course, we can get a better understanding of various aesthetic standard and judgments in different countries and areas, contributing to the English study. English majors could deepen their sight into the cultures of other countries.

In terms of getting a job, taking multiple courses is also significant. It can be noticed that a great number of English related jobs request not only the language itself but also other skills. It would be better to learn something related to economics to apply for a job in international business field; to be a tour guide, it is better to learn something related to tourism; to be a translator, students are supposed to have a profound knowledge in massive areas, including finance, science, literature and so on to meet the demands of the accurate translation.

Limitation of English major.

The knowledge structure of English majors leads to the limitation of this major to some extent. The number of the specialized courses far outweighs that of the selective courses in lots of universities. Besides, the credits portion for selective courses is too low compared with the compulsory courses. As a result, a great number of students are pay less attention on these courses. So, it's no wonder that English majors, who are specialized in English listening, reading and writing show an unsatisfactory performance in activities requiring other skills. For English majors, they may have the opportunities to learn finance, economics, science, computers and mechanics. However, they prefer to spend most of their time on linguistics and literature. They don't realize that English is not a technical-oriented subject like accounting and engineering. It is more like a tool to communicate with others.

Besides, the characteristic of English education in China also has something to do with the limitation of this major. Most of the colleges teach this major through endless exercises and remembering the vocabularies over again and again. As we all know, girls tend to have a better memory and most of the English majors are girls. Thus, the majority of the girls achieve a higher academic level than that of the boys. However, in China, vast of companies prefer boys due to several reasons, which leads to the gap between English graduates and the companies. What's more, English majors tend to be similar when it comes to their abilities. We can find that most of the universities set almost the same curriculum system including the courses and teaching methods. The opportunities for English majors to get access to the society are quite alike. Thus, all these factors contribute to the similarity of the abilities, intelligence, knowledge and world view, which can't meet the demands of the companies for various English talents.

As the two facets mentioned above, English is a particular major not only because of its close relationship with other subjects but also due to its limitation, which requires us to extend our knowledge and read widely to meet the demands of the society.

2.3 Future development

Opportunities to get a good job.

First of all, as a job hunter, the more skills and knowledge you acquire the more chances you can get. For most of the human resource managers, they would like to choose someone who has comprehensive abilities. However, for English majors, most of them only acquire language skill and can be replaced by talents in other fields who are also good at English. For instance, English teachers can be replaced by someone who majors in teaching; foreign trade specialist can be replaced by someone who majors in international business; international lawyer can be replaced by someone who majors in law. Thus, in order to increase the irreplaceability and core competence of ourselves, English majors should take multiple courses and master several different skills. And only in this way can the deficiency be fixed.

Furthermore, some courses are beneficial to students in pursuing jobs, such as the career planning and development of college students. These courses provide us suggestions on the planning of our future occupation and teach us how to choose jobs on the basis of our own interests and personalities. By taking these courses, English majors can get a better understanding of our tough employment situation and drive ourselves not be limited within the specialized courses. There is no denying that various courses such as formal logistics, principles of management, music and microeconomics play a crucial role in offering us more possibilities.

A way to deal with interpersonal problems.

Various courses can also be helpful to deal with the interpersonal problems for English majors to a certain degree. As we all know, most of the English majors are girls, causing the unbalanced gender ratio. And we can find that during the class, most of the boys are not active. What's more, because there are few boys, the girls seldom communicate with other boys and tend to be shy and behave unnatural when talking with

boys. However, by taking multiple selective courses, girls get the opportunities to communicate with more boys, which helps them to solve their interpersonal problems to a certain degree.

Some selective courses are particularly designed to help students with their interpersonal problems, such as the art of interpersonal communication classes. College is just like a society, students are come from diverse provinces and areas with different lifestyles, hobbies and personalities. Students have to meet and contact a variety of people every day. During this process, students is unconsciously studying another complicated course, that is, how to interact with people. And this ability is especially important for English majors, because most of the English-related jobs need to be skillful in interpersonal interaction, such as the international business and teachers. Thus, the various courses which teach us how to solve interpersonal problems are indispensable and can't be ignored by English majors.

Chances for students to develop interests and find out their potential.

Learning various courses enables students to explore new world and during this process they may discovery their potential and develop interests in other fields, which can change the whole life of the students. The students will lose the possibilities to excavate their potential and develop interests if they don't take courses related to other subjects. A dancer may never know that he can be so skillful moving his body around with the rhythm before he gets the opportunity to learn dance; a fantastic artist may never know that he can draw picturesque sceneries before he paints the first picture successfully; an outstanding economist may never know that he can analyze the economic situation of a company and even the whole country before he gets access to the confusing economic formulas. Colleges, as a vital part for students, should take the responsibility to set up various courses to promote the overall development of students. As for English majors, it is particular important for them to take multiple courses and activities due to the limitation of the major. It is a chance for them to expand their skills and strengthen their competence in the job market.

Based on the statements above, we can see that it is necessary and essential for English majors to take multiple courses. They could be advantageous for English graduates to achieve career success, to find out interests and to build excellent interpersonal relationship.

3 Suggestions

3.1 For colleges

In terms of course design, increasing the number and diversity of courses is important. In most of the universities, the number of compulsory courses far outnumbered that of the optional courses. These universities ignored the benefits and necessity of major-unrelated courses. However, college plays a key role in shaping the minds and thoughts of the future. And it should reform the curriculum system and keep pace with the needs of the society. It should offer more selective and practical courses for students to

support students' overall development to adapt to the current society. Thus, the combination of specialized courses with multiple selective and practical courses is indispensable, "combine the specialized education and humanistic education, widespread humanistic spirits" [8]. Besides, colleges can encourage students to take part in various activities, such as exchange programs or take a part time job in a company. And during these practical procedures, students can gradually realize their shortcomings and improve themselves initiatively.

It would be better for colleges to attach more importance to the teaching quality of the professors rather than their achievements in scientific research. Teachers should be set free from the endless researches and thesis. After all, the main purpose of colleges is general education rather than a battlefield of academic between professors. And given more free time, teachers could spend more time on the preparation of courses, including optional courses, which could benefit the students.

3.2 For students

For students, it is of great importance for us to change our attitude towards multiple courses. We are supposed to realize that taking multiple courses and activities is not a waste of time. And it is a chance to improve ourselves rather than a time for sleeping or recreations. With the increasing popularization of English, English learners don't have evident advantages over other major students. As a result, English majors ourselves should realize that it's necessary for us to keep pace with the changed job market and adapt to the society, taking part in various courses and struggling to master different abilities and skills to enhance our core competence and irreplaceability. For instance, we can learn a double major or take a few training courses of a subject. But what's most important is to make most use of the multiple courses and activities in school. Now that we have the chance to obtain a new skill, why we waste our time sleeping and texting messages during these classes.

In summary, overcoming the tough situation is not only the responsibility of colleges, but also related to the students themselves. The course design in lots of colleges is improper. What's more, colleges as well as the students themselves hold an incorrect attitude toward multiple courses. This is a cruel and changing world filled with fierce competitions and challenges. And universities should carry their responsibilities to shape the minds of the future and attach more importance to multiple courses to meet the demands of enterprises. Besides, it would be better for students to recognize the importance of multiple courses and change their attitude toward them.

4 Conclusion

This thesis mainly analyzes the necessities for English majors to take multiple courses. English majors are supposed to take multiple courses not only to meet the needs of the society but also to realize their self-improvement. By analyzing the current situation of English majors, the particularity of this major and the merits of taking multiple courses for long-term development in detail, it can be noticed that diverse multiple courses are

rewarding for English majors to achieve career success, to find out interests and to build excellent interpersonal relationship.

Besides, in order to help English majors to get out of their predicaments, colleges as well as students should take some actions. Although English as a tool is not a technical subject like science and engineering, English majors themselves can struggle to acquire more skills and improve our core competence through taking multiple courses and acquiring diverse skills. Hopefully, this thesis can be helpful for English majors to get out of their predicaments to a certain degree and inspire them to struggle to improve their competitiveness for their future career.

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