



Curriculum Design for College English Teaching Based on Needs Analysis Approach

Yanan Ye

School of Economics and Management, Hunan Institute of Science and Technology, Yueyang, Hunan, China

Email: 853210510@qq.com

Abstract. The education of College English(CE) faces both opportunities and challenges in terms of the national development strategies, foreign language learning and many other aspects. It is important to investigate the new changes of the non-English major undergraduates' needs and their satisfaction to CE curriculum since CE course has undertaken the major task of foreign languages teaching in higher education. This paper conducts a series of investigations and interviews to the non-English major undergraduates and graduates of the application-oriented undergraduate universities, analyses the undergraduates' English level and their needs to CE course, explores the differences and imbalance between the present curriculum design of CE course and the undergraduates' study needs and development needs, and then proposes a curriculum design from the types, content, teaching methods of CE course based on needs Analysis theory.

Keywords: College English, curriculum design, needs analysis.

1 Introduction

As a compulsory public basic course, College English is an indispensable part of the curriculum system for cultivating application-oriented undergraduate talents, and its teaching quality plays an important role in improving the English skill, the application ability, the intercultural communicative competence and the humanistic quality. Most of the universities neglect the real needs of the students when designing the CE curriculum, which lead to the out of touch between the target orientation, content implementation and evaluating methods of the CE curriculum and the actual demands of the undergraduates, and it is commonly to see the problems in the CE class such as high absenteeism, poor communicative competence in English, and so on.

Needs analysis is an important theory of analyzing the individual and social needs, understanding the target needs by gathering and analyzing information. According to the needs analysis, a reasonable teaching target and curriculum design is based on the satisfaction of the social demands to the talents and the undergraduates' needs.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is two-fold: to illustrate and find feasible ways to the formulation of the CE syllabus, the curriculum design and practical teaching of the application-oriented undergraduate universities in terms of students' needs; to build

up and raise the undergraduates' awareness of their study and development needs, and then enhance their learning initiative and motivation.

2 Literature review

The CE curriculum has undertaken the main task of providing foreign education for a large group of non-English majors for a long time, and it never stop its steps of curriculum reform and construction to meet the development demands of national economy, high education and the undergraduates themselves. In 2007, *the college English curriculum requirement* issued by the Department of National Education put forward a new demand, which requires each institution of higher learning has to formulate a scientific, systematic syllabus of CE curriculum with its own characteristics based on the *curriculum requirement* and its actual condition. It indicated a direction and way for the curriculum development of the early and follow-up stage in college.

However, most of the CE curriculum in the college shows the disadvantages such as the single curriculum type, low interests in learning, few courses to choose for the undergraduates of high grades, lacking in compatibility between the CE curriculum and the professional curriculum, and low applicability in daily life. As early as 2009, the scholars in China have conducted a satisfaction survey of 1000 undergraduates of 6 colleges within 5 provinces and cities, and the result showed that 60% undergraduates hold that their English level is getting worse without any improvement. In addition, most of the undergraduates believe that their motivation for learning CE is to pass the CET-4, CET-6 and other examination in college. Inevitably, exam-oriented learning leads to the lower practical applied ability and learning effects of English. Regarding the above situation, the colleges are required to design and set up the CE curriculum flexibly to meet the graduates' learning needs and enhance their English level in a reasonable and persistent way.

Needs analysis refers to the data collection and analysis to enable the curriculum design meet the learners' needs in the process of second language teaching[1]. Needs analysis lays the foundation for a series of teaching activities such as formulating syllabus, developing textbook, designing course, which plays an important role in each aspect of second language teaching. The study of needs analysis has gone through four stages: target situation analysis, TSA, by Munby in 1978[2], present situation analysis, PSA, by West in 1994[3], analysis by Hutchinson and Water in 1987[4], analysis by Dudley-Evans & St John[5]. After the 1990s, Chinese scholars in educational circles carried on many beneficial explorations in domestic English curriculum reform and design, by using needs analysis abroad for reference. Chinese scholar Chen Bingbing build up the students personal needs analysis model based on previous research, which consist of four dimensions: learning ability gap, learners' personal desire, needs for learning process, and needs for learning circumstance[6].

In terms of the students' needs, this study selects the undergraduates and graduates as the survey object, and investigate the English learning situation and the needs to CE course of the non-English major undergraduates with the methods of questionnaire and interview, and explore the workable approach of curriculum design and reform of the

CE curriculum. Meanwhile, this study helps the undergraduates know more about their learning needs and improve their English learning initiative and enthusiasm, promoting CE curriculum better satisfy the undergraduates’ individual development and the social development.

3 Research design and methodology

The study surveyed 200 undergraduates, and collected 187 Effective Questionnaires, including 57.4% undergraduates of liberal arts and 42.6% undergraduates of science from application-oriented undergraduate universities in Hunan province. All the Investigators covered different majors and grades, which presented a high reliability of the survey results (Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability analysis of the surveys

Cronbach's alpha	Reliability statistics	
	Cronbach's alpha based on standard term	Item number
.862	.913	37

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, which combined the questionnaire and interview, and completed the design, distribution and recycling of the questionnaire on a online evaluation platform named *Sojump* with the reference of the needs analysis mode of Long[7]. To ensure the reliability and effectiveness, the study modified and double-check each question according to the data and results of Reliability Analysis. With the aid of the professional statistical software SPSS18.0, the study used the frequency statistics analysis and difference analysis to find the overall features and differences of the data, and made a conclusion for the survey.

3.1 Frequence statistics analysis of the survey

3.1.1 Survey on the non-English major undergraduates’ English study condition.

The survey conducted the questionnaires and interviews from the following aspects: the general condition of the non-English major undergraduates’ English study , the level of English skill, the difficulty of English study, the learning motivation and objective and so on. The results of the general condition of the undergraduates’ English study (Table 2) revealed that most of the undergraduates take interests in English study, but manifested their dissatisfaction with the present type of the CE course, teaching methods and the learning effect. The data of the questionnaires demonstrated that the undergraduates are dissatisfied with the CE curriculum.

Table 2. the general condition of the undergraduates' English study

Item	Question	Sample number	Completely agree	Neither agree	Completely disagree
			Somewhat agree	nor disagree	Somewhat disagree
1	You are interested in English	187	60.6%	3.8%	35.6%
2	You are satisfied with your English level	187	15.7%	22.6%	61.7%
3	You are satisfied with CE curriculum type	187	13.1%	30.3%	56.6%
4	You are satisfied with the teaching method of CE	187	20.8%	7.4%	71.8%
5	You are satisfied with the learning effect of CE	187	6.1%	13.8%	80.1%
6	You will continue study English in senior grades	187	62.1%	16.5%	21.4%

According to the results of Questionnaire 2 (the level of English skill), the majority of the undergraduates hold that they were better at reading instead of listening, speaking and writing. 64.7% respondents to the questionnaire expressed agreement or strong agreement in the item of “proficiency in listening and speaking” when asked that which English skill they want to improve most.

Concerning the results of the survey of the learning motivation and objective (Table 3), 80.3% respondents to this questionnaire expressed agreement or strong agreement in the item of “language demand and interpersonal communication”, 74.6% respondents was to pass the CET-4 and CET-6, 69.5% and 60.2% respondents' motivation was to get a promotion in the career and help with professional study. As for the interview, most undergraduates of high grades hoped to expand the professional vocabulary and terminology reserve, and be more proficient in reading and communicating in their professional studying fields by learning the English related to their majors, which enabled them to gain more potential and competitiveness in the future.

Table 3. the learning motivation and objective of CE course

Item	Question	Sample number	Completely agree	Neither agree	Completely disagree
			Somewhat agree	nor disagree	Somewhat disagree
12	Pass CET-4/CET-6	187	74.6%	3.7%	21.7%
13	Study abroad	187	18.2%	20.3%	61.5%
14	Prepare for the postgraduate Entrance Examination	187	51.3%	17.6%	31.1%
15	Promoting the professional study	187	60.2%	17.9%	21.9%
16	Career promotion	187	69.5%	22.9%	7.6%
17	Language learning and interpersonal communication	187	80.3%	6.1%	13.6%

3.1.2 Survey on the non-English major undergraduates' needs to CE course.

The survey conducted the questionnaires and interviews for the undergraduates from the following aspects: the offering duration (questionnaire 5), needs to the teacher, (questionnaire 6) textbook (questionnaire 7), teaching method (questionnaire 8) and teaching evaluation (questionnaire 9) of the CE course. 71% respondents to the questionnaire 5 agreed to set up the CE course for more than 6 semesters. In terms of the expected course type of the CE curriculum, 40.5% respondents choose the language skill course, especially for the listening and speaking skill, 25.3% respondents chose the language application course, and 34.2% respondents chose the English for specific purpose. According to the interview with the undergraduates in high grades, the interviewee considered that there were many professional courses related to the foreign theory and paper in high grades, which required the students a higher English reading ability and translation ability. In this case, some English course for specific purpose should be offered by the university in an appropriate way.

As for the needs to the teacher, it was obviously that the undergraduates preferred the foreign teacher or professional English teacher to teach related CE courses, and expressed strong agreement to the item of “the CE teacher in authentic accent and with fluent oral English”.

Regarding the questionnaire of teaching method, 42.5% respondents were inclined to choose the Situation Teaching Method, expected study in the multi-media language lab or the training center of the universities to practice and promote their listening and speaking skill, and hoped the teacher recommend some online study resource. According to the data and results of the needs to teaching evaluation, the graduates appreciated the mixed evaluation method, which combined the written examination, oral examination, daily presentation and performance, showing a consistent dissenting tendency to the evaluation method of single examination.

3.1.3 Survey of the non-English major graduates' needs to CE course.

The study surveyed 100 graduates of 2018 to 2022, and collected 73 effective questionnaires, which including the profession of civil servant, bank clerk, foreign trade clerk, teacher and postgraduate. 41.3% postgraduates considered that they often use English when asked the frequency of using English at work, and 33.6% postgraduates showed that they rarely use English since the outbreak of Covid-19. 60% postgraduates indicated that the CE curriculum could hardly satisfy the practical needs at work, only 12.8% postgraduates thought what they learned in CE class were useful and helpful to meet their work needs.

The study also carried on telephone interviews with 10 postgraduates. Based on the content and results of the interviews, the study found that the most practical and useful skills at work were listening and speaking, and reading skill came in the next place since some job were required to read and comprehend English documents and files. There were a wide range of knowledge and skills imparted in the CE course, however, lack of refined knowledge led to the poor skill of listening and speaking, and lower practicability and learning effect.

3.2 correlational analysis

The study illustrated the correlational analysis between the graduates' needs and the learning effect of CE course, including the needs for the offering duration, teacher, teaching method and teaching evaluation of CE course. The result of Table 4 showed the correlation between the needs of the above four aspects and the learning effect, especially the coefficient between the teaching method and the learning effect of the CE course was close to 1, indicating a strongest correlation.

Table 4. Correlational analysis

Correlational analysis	
Item	Correlational coefficient R square
offering duration of CE course	.63
CE teacher	.77
Teaching method	.96

According to the above data and result of the correlation analysis, the study compared the variance analysis (Table 5) of the teaching method between undergraduates of liberal arts and science from four aspects: traditional exam-oriented teaching method, case study method, situational teaching method and project teaching method. Remarkable differences were found since the undergraduates of liberal arts were more inclined towards situational teaching method, and the undergraduates of science preferred the situational teaching method as well as the project teaching method, which was conducive to cultivating and developing the ability to analyse and solve problems.

Table 5. variance analysis

	Chihi-square test		
	value	Degree of freedom	asympt.sig.
Pearson'schi-square	8.179a	2	0.017
Pseudo-random ratio	8.203	2	0.017
linear correlation	6.792	1	0.008
Valid cases	12		

4 Findings and discussion

4.1 Quantitative findings

Concerning the result of the survey on the non-English major undergraduates' English study condition, the survey on the undergraduates' needs to CE curriculum and the survey of the graduates' needs to CE curriculum, it comes to a conclusion that there is no prominent improvement and fulfillment on the undergraduates' English skills and English learning initiative, resulting in the low satisfaction of the students in application-oriented undergraduate universities to the CE course.

4.2 Qualitative findings

Regarding the results of the survey on the non-English major undergraduates' and graduates' needs to CE curriculum, the purpose of some students not interested in English is to cope with the examination and graduation demands, inevitably resulting in poor English skills in practical terms. For those students long for studying English, whose learning purpose is for self-development, profession improvement and employment demands, however, are unable to be satisfied with their own needs from the CE curriculum. In this case, most of the non-English major undergraduates suggest a better combination between English skill training and career development in the future, designing effective English curriculum to enhance such practical English skill as listening and speaking, and providing more suitable and professional course modules to choose in terms of their career planing.

4.3 Feasible suggestions

Firstly, the curriculum design of CE course should take the following factors into consideration: the undergraduates' diverse and personal needs for CE curriculum in different majors and the social development needs. The optimization of the CE curriculum system should be based on the needs of the undergraduates, teaching, society and universities, contributing to building up a dynamic and open curriculum system.

Secondly, in terms of the teaching and offering duration, CE curriculum should give priority to the fundamental English knowledge, and focus on the improvement of English listening and speaking during the freshman year. The universities ought to offer more courses of English for specific purpose, satisfy the students' needs for both profession and English improvement with the combination of required course and elective course.

Thirdly, In terms of the content and teaching material, it is important to give priority to those rich in content, close to life, and with strong applicability. At the same time, the teacher can recommend some useful e-materials and website to the students as supplementary learning resource. To set up and perfect the follow-up system of CE curriculum, it is feasible for the universities to set some online platform and uploading various electronic book, PowerPoint presentation for the students in higher grades to learn by themselves.

Fourthly, in terms of the teacher and teaching method, the CE teacher, as the guide and collaborator, should create the training center and simulate the situation, and apply a range of modern information technology, teaching software and online teaching platform in a mixed-mode method.

Fifthly, in terms of the CE teacher, students prefer foreign teacher or the teacher proficiency in language and skill. Under the circumstance, the CE teachers are required to improve themselves, set up some English course related closely to their discipline and major. At the same time, the universities should lay emphasis on the formative assessment to enable the teacher to provide stratified teaching, online tutoring and online assessment, and to help the students with self-study, self-assessment or mutual assessment.

5 Conclusion

The paper presents a curriculum design of CE curriculum by conducting a series of survey and interview based on the theory of needs analysis. With a series of investigations related to learner's needs to CE curriculum, the paper analyses the non-English major undergraduates' English study condition, the non-English major undergraduates' needs to CE course, and the non-English major graduates' needs to CE curriculum, explores the differences and imbalance between curriculum design of CE course and the undergraduates' study needs and development needs by quantitative and qualitative analysis, and finds how they influence the learning effect of the undergraduates, and finally proposes some feasible ways to design from the types, content, teaching methods of CE curriculum.

The paper concludes that the undergraduates are dissatisfied with the CE course, and their learning motivation is to get a promotion in the career and help with professional study. In order to meet the needs of the undergraduates, teaching, society and universities, the design and optimization of CE curriculum should take the teaching content, offering duration, teacher, teaching method and teaching assessment into consideration, achieving the teaching goal of the overall improvement of the undergraduates' English level. The paper also acknowledged the limitations resulted in the complication and subjectivity of the respondent for the surveys, and expected to contribute to the advancement to education of college English and others' study in the future.

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