

Research on the Teaching and Learning of the English Double Major in China

Based on a Sample Survey of China West Normal University English Double Major Students

Chunli Huang

School of Foreign Languages
China West Normal University
Nanchong, P. R. China
E-mail: 1090992804@qq.com

Abstract—The intercollegiate and Inter-disciplinary study a second major is increasingly popular in Chinese higher education. The development of English double major is in the constructive and tentative period. At present, the main problems for the English double major consist in several aspects: outmoded teaching methods and thoughts, students' inactive learning attitude, and the imperfect management, etc. In order to find better solutions to these problems, based on a sample survey of English double major students in China West Normal University, this paper attempts to explore and research on the effective methods to improve the English learning and teaching for English double major

Keywords—English double major; questionnaires; cultivation scheme; sustainable development

I. INTRODUCTION

With the urgent need of versatile talents with "deep foundation, broad caliber, high quality" in the society, the mutual penetration and mutual cross is a new trend in Chinese higher education. China West Normal University (hereinafter referred to as "our school") adopts a variety of measures to advocate students intercollegiate and Inter-disciplinary study a second major adapting to the changing market and demand of the society. our school sets different available double majors for students to choose. So students can make full use of the multidisciplinary education resources to expand their knowledge and broaden their interests[1].

The School of Foreign Languages of China West Normal University sets up curriculum for English double major students at weekends. The students must complete 75 credits in two years. Up to now more and more students are registered to study English double major.

Based on a sample survey of English double major students in China West Normal University, this paper attempts to explore and research on the effective rules and methods to improve the English learning and teaching for English double major.

II. THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF THE ENGLISH DOUBLE MAJOR AND ITS RESULT ANALYSIS

The research team had conducted a sample survey of three grades of students who learn English double major. The team sent out 170 questionnaires and took back 130 valid papers. The questionnaire involves 10 items (The answer is one-choice question or multiple-choice question).

TABLE I. WHAT'S YOUR CHANNEL TO SIGN UP?

Options:	Your teacher	Foreign Language College Web	Propagandizing Publicity boards	Classmates Recommendation	Yoursell
Percentage:	14%	15%	20%	25%	26%

TABLE II. WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MAJOR?

Options:	Liberal Arts	Sciences	Economics	Management	Law	Engineering	Art	PE
Percentage:	11%	27%	18%	13%	10%	13%	6%	2%

TABLE III. WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE TO CHOOSE ENGLISH DOUBLE MAJOR?

Options	To improve English	Be interested in English	Prepare for the postgraduate entrance exams.	Make good language foundation for going abroad	Easily find a better job
Percentage:	35%	28%	17%	2%	18%

From "Table I", "Table II" and "Table III", we can make a conclusion that most students sign up voluntarily and the main purpose of making English as their second degree is that they are interested in English and want to improve their English, which are the internal motivations obviously higher than the external motivations(such as going abroad or easily find a

better job). It shows that most of the students choose English as double degree to study just because of the internal needs rather than external stimulus. It is also observed that the students whose first major is science, engineering and management are more willing to learn English double major, which manifests the feature of mutual penetration and mutual cross in college education [2][3].

TABLE IV. AMONG THE COURSES OFFERED, WHICH COURSES DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST INTERESTING OR VALUABLE FOR THE ENGLISH DOUBLE MAJOR STUDENTS?

Graduation thesis	3%
Thesis writing instruction	2%
Lexicology	
Tourism English	11%
literature	1%
Advanced English	3%
Translation	6%
Japanese	
Writing	14%
Secretarial English	10%
European Cultures	
Listening	17%
Oral English	22%
Linguistics	2%
Audio-visual-oral teaching	3%
Teaching methodology	1%
Grammar	5%
Options	Percent:

Most students choose oral English and listening as their interesting courses. It reflects that the English double major students give more focus on the improvement of their English skills, such as listening and speaking which maybe be the vulnerable part for the non-English majors. besides, some students regard Secretarial English or Tourism English as the most valuable subjects based on an assumption that these courses is directly accessible to the social demand and market economy[4].

TABLE V. WHICH IMPROVE FASTER THAN THE OTHERS IN YOUR DOUBLE DEGREE STUDYING?

Options	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Translation	Communicative competence
Percent:	26%	3%	45%	4%	5%	17%

According to the survey, the students' listening and reading are generally improved a lot. Most of the students in Grade two and three universally thought their oral English and writing didn't get improved, although the main trend is that the level of their oral English should be improved with the increase of their grades. They strongly hope that it would be better if foreign teachers can participate in the oral class. For the writing part, the course of writing are generally arranged in the first semester, but in the following two terms they have little chance to practice writing. The thesis writing becomes a

big annoying task not only for students to finish but also for teachers to instruct in the last semester. Thus, Improving the intensity of oral English training and extending writing courses in junior grades can be taken into consideration, which may be beneficial to the enhancement of students' English levels.

TABLE VI. WHAT'S YOUR EVALUATION OF THE OFFERED TEACHING MATERIALS?

Options:	Satisfied	Almost satisfied	Have no idea	Not satisfied	not satisfied at all
Percent:	70%	17%	13%		

Students' satisfaction rate about teaching materials has reached 70%. These textbooks for English double major students are all national planning materials or national excellent teaching materials published by the authority publishers, such as FLTRP, Shanghai International Studies University Press, and Higher Education Press. Besides, these textbooks have already been used by teachers and students for years and have optimistic influence in the field of the English double major education [3].

TABLE VII. WHAT'S YOUR EVALUATION OF TESTING CONTENTS, FORMS AND QUANTITIES?

Options:	Satisfied	Almost satisfied	Have no idea	Not satisfied	not satisfied at all
Percent:	28%	50%	20%	2%	

In our school, the testing forms are mainly presented as closed-book exam, open-book exam or writing course paper. To take written or oral test according to different curricular characteristics. According to the survey, 78% students are satisfied with the test contents, forms and quantities. Only the first grade students answered they have no idea with the tests, just because they do not really face the exams in the first semester before the survey is conducted.

TABLE VIII. WHAT'S YOUR EVALUATION OF WRITING GRADUATION THESIS?

Options	very necessary	Necessary	Have no idea	Not necessary	Not necessary at all
Percent:	19%	55%	20%	4%	2%

The graduation thesis writing arranged for English double major students is set up in the last semester. The students of the three grades do not have the real feeling for writing graduation thesis, but the number of those who think it is necessary to write accounts for 74%. It reflects some students' positive learning attitudes and expectations.

TABLE IX. WHAT'S YOUR EVALUATION OF ALL THE TEACHER'S TEACHING QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS?

Options	Satisfied	Almost satisfied	Have no idea	Not satisfied	not satisfied at all
Percent:	43%	50%	3%	4%	

From "Table IX", we can see that the students think highly of the teachers' teaching quality in our school as well as their effectiveness. Totally about 93% of students are content with that. The teachers are strictly selected from The School of Foreign Languages of China West Normal University. These popular teachers are not good at teaching but also responsible people. Most of them are the young core instructors with masters degree or doctors degree. But we also can see a few students are not satisfied with individual teacher's teaching method or often absence from class because of personal business. So there also needs teachers to cultivate themselves from different aspects.

TABLE X. WHAT'S YOUR EVALUATION OF SATISFACTION IN TEACHING MANAGEMENT?

Options	Satisfied	Almost satisfied	Have no idea	Not satisfied	not satisfied at all
Percent:	22%	30%	28%	20%	

Students' satisfaction in teaching management was 52%. To some extent, the teachers' management work and service are recognized by the students. But due to the double major students are centrally taught at weekends, the supervisors have little contact with the students. Thus there inevitably exist some problems in the teaching management and supervision. For example, we can't inspect the students' attendance of class in time sometimes. Another thing is some students complain that they can not get the first-hand information about TEM 4 adequately.

III. THE PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH DOUBLE MAJOR AND THE SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

A. The Existing Problems

1) *The students problems.* On one hand, English double major students spend little time and energy on study English although most of them voluntarily sign up the English double major. They come from different departments in their second or third year and are mainly occupied with their professional first major courses. It is not enough for them to improve their English level by only attending the weekends' classes. On the other, some students' self-control is so relatively poor that they often tend to be late for class, leave early or be absent from class. Furthermore, the relationship between students and teachers is not so close to some extent. It is difficult for teachers to supervise the students just because teachers and students little communicate face to face after class. So students don't cooperate actively and tacitly in the teaching process

and the learning effects for the English double major students are not obvious as expected.

2) *The teachers problems.* Firstly, some professional English teachers have little enthusiasm with teaching double major students. Because all the lessons are arranged at weekends, some English teachers are reluctant to take these teaching tasks. Some individual teacher may adjust or delete curriculum schedule personally without authorization. Secondly, some partial English teachers' professional knowledge is insecure and capacity for scientific research is weak. Their teaching tasks are so heavy that they don't have enough time to learn and digest the newest research results of English professional field. Therefore, these make their professional knowledge gradually aging and can't follow the needs of the education development. Hence they don't care how to improve their professional knowledge, they can't take their professional knowledge into teaching well. Thirdly, the teaching philosophy and teaching methods are outmoded. The class mode is still based on the teacher-centered. Some teachers give little thoughts on how to build a good atmosphere in class, how to cultivate students' interest in learning English, or how to organize students to discuss, practice and performance. Fourthly, the relationship between teachers and students is somewhat indifferent. Teachers and students rarely contact and communicate with each others after class. The teacher's supervisions on the study and life of students are relatively loose. There is no systematic guidance to guide the students to study [5].

3) *The curriculum design problems.* In our school, the students can sign up the English double major just in the second or third year and all the courses must be finished in two years, which make the students feel the learning task is a little tough for them. The total credit 75 is also set a little higher than that in some other universities. They have to complete about 16 courses in three semesters and finish the graduation thesis in the last semester. According to above survey, some courses are not popular among students. They strongly wanted our school would design more practical and useful curriculum for them, which may really enhance their English skills, such as speaking and writing or may be closely related to their first major and help them apply in the future society[6].

4) *Management problems.* The general management system for English double major is not wholly standard and perfect. At present, there are still many insufficient points in the teaching and learning management: students absenteeism and individual teacher absenteeism are still serious; the test arrangement, examination forms and the paper marking process are not most optimized; there are no best tracking management to track the graduates employment status; even some manuals, rules and regulations are not sound, etc.

B. The Suggested Solutions

1) *Improvement of teachers' integrated qualities.* On account of English double major students having their special features, there lies in higher demand for English teachers' teaching and guiding. Accordingly, a good English teacher ought to possess the following qualities at least.

To begin with, the teacher who teaches the English double major should strengthen their professional knowledge consciously in order to improve quality of teaching. They should spend much time on carrying out teaching and scientific research and join in some teaching activities to develop their professional ethics. They are also supposed to possess wide scope of knowledge besides solid professional knowledge. Learning and mastering some elementary knowledge about economy, philosophy, history and computer are also required. English teachers can combine English with other knowledge to inspire students' learning interest and it can make students understand teaching contents fluently and use them flexibly [5].

Furthermore, to create a harmonious and active class atmosphere is also a necessary part for the English teachers. Teachers should make the students centered in the class teaching. For example, to divide the students into several groups and the teacher gives each group the discussion topics. Then, each team elects a representative to speak in class. Last, the teacher makes a summary. Through this activity, all the students can participate and practice. More useful teaching methods and aids can be employed in the class teaching in order to arouse the students' interesting and enthusiasm such as music, video, game, PPT, role play and so on.

Finally, it is important to establish a good teacher-student relationship. Teachers should take the implementation of regular visit system and communicate with students forwardly after class to understand what the students are thinking before and now. Teachers should deepen their friendship through getting to know their family environment, living conditions, and their personalities etc. Besides, teachers should respect and treat each student in an equal way with the spirit of democracy. Teachers can give students regular ideological education to let them know the importance of studying so that they can obey the disciplines willingly. Teachers should understand the students' learning motivation and to inspire students to study actively so that teachers can receive the positive feedback from their students [4] [7].

2) *Improvement of curriculum designing.* We should explore effective approaches and strategies to implement of the curriculum system through a case study, questionnaire, deep interview, experiment research. We should set more practical and useful curriculum to meet with the demands of the English double major students. For example, to set some courses helping them to enhance their English skills like speaking and writing. To give guiding lectures about teaching practice combined with their first major knowledge. To invite more experienced teachers and foreign teachers to participate the teaching process for the English double major students [6].

3) *Improvement of teaching management and service work.* It is an important and long-term task to improve the management team's responsibility and work. At present, the standardization of teaching management work becomes more mature gradually in our school and the duty allocation becomes increasingly clearer in the management work.

We form the hierarchical management system in according with the actual situation of double major: that is, head of the teaching secretary, head of class committee, teaching secretary,

class committee, etc. We also use various channels to strengthen information communication (such as QQ group).

To strengthen the teaching quality monitoring and supervision, we should pay much attention to the detailed work on the employment of teachers, teacher attendance, the arrangement of tests, examination paper printing and correcting, results input etc. We also should set personal student's information management from the student handbook, the classroom record to the homework's assignment. Thus, we can guarantee the teaching management work carry out smoothly and effectively. What' more, we should give some lectures on how to cultivate students' eagerness to study and invite students to attend to learn some methods. We should be strict with the study discipline of the class, especially the students attendance management. With all the teachers' dedicated work, we believe that the management can be strengthened and improved a lot.

4) *Improvement of the cultivation scheme.* The talent cultivation scheme is still needed to modified and adjusted combined with four years of practical experience for English double major. It should conform to the actual needs in line with the requirements of the national teacher education reform. It is an urgent trend to have revised meetings about the cultivation program and organize experts and teachers to discuss the optimization of the English double major training program. For example, the current English double major professional credits (75) can be adjusted to 50-65 credits, which are more reasonable and can leave more time for students do the practical work.

To carry out training activities and the implementation of aided teaching system is an essential part for the English double students. For example, Organizing graduate students do teaching practice in the primary and middle school. Summarizing the teaching practice introspection and assessing excellent trainer.

It is also necessary to set and improve the graduates tracking system. We should know whether the second degree has played a role in their looking for jobs and the degree of recognition of the double major in the labor market. We should get more information about their employment situation such as their salary pay. Based on the first-hand feedback information, we can continually modify and revise our cultivation programs [6][7][8].

IV. CONCLUSION

It is a long and complicated task for construction of the English double major. The orientation for its development should be meeting with the demand of market and the demand of students. Based on the teaching experience, we adjust and modify the cultivation program and optimize curriculum structure. The teaching mode should be students-centered and make students participate the class activities enthusiastically. We hope that under the systematic management, with the professional teaching of qualified teachers, through the students' own devoting learning, the development of English double major would be improved and promoted sustainably and efficiently.

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