

# Research on the Teaching Model of English Majors Based on the Cultivation of Critical Thinking Ability

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**Abstract**—In recent years, the cultivation of students' key competencies has become the basis for many countries or regions to formulate educational policies and carry out educational reforms. However, there are still some disadvantages in the teaching model of English majors, such as unadvanced teaching concept, insufficient training of application ability, weak information literacy of teachers, and imperfect teaching evaluation system. Currently, the teaching model and talent training program of English majors in China are shouldering the important task of adjustment and reform. Among them, the development of students' critical thinking ability has become an important way to cultivate innovative talents in the new era. Therefore, the teaching of English majors in colleges and universities should focus on the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability, and we need to explore a new teaching mode combining key competencies and classroom teaching, thus to cultivate high-quality innovative talents in China and effectively improve the international competitiveness of English majors in colleges and universities.

**Keywords**—English majors; Critical thinking ability; English teaching; Talent cultivation

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the talent cultivation model based on key competencies has set off a wave of reforms around the world. With the development of social economy and scientific and technological information, many international organizations and countries have carried out research on students' key competencies and actively developed a framework in order to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century.

In 2014, the Ministry of Education issued the "Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Curriculum Implementation and Implementing the Fundamental Tasks of Strengthening Morality Education", which put forward the important concept of "key competence", requiring the development and construction of students' key competencies system as the key to deepen curriculum reform. After its publication, the hot issues in China's education quickly concentrated on the education reform based on the key competencies of students, and the cultivation of students' key competencies was taken as the basis for the development of educational policies and educational practices in China.

In order to comply with the trend of world education reform development, education and teaching reform in the new era must be subordinated to the service of national strategy to serve

for developing students' key competencies, and to help them form key competence and essential characters in combination with subject content. At present, the teaching model and talent cultivation for English majors has become an opportunity and challenge for all educators. However, there are still some problems in the teaching mode of English majors in colleges and universities in China.

## II. COMPOSITION POTENTIAL PROBLEMS EXISTING IN ENGLISH MAJOR EDUCATION

### A. Educational concept

At present, there are several existing problems in the current teaching educational system for English majors, such as incomplete structure, imperfect system and indefinite objectives.

First of all, there are still many teachers who adhere to the traditional teaching mode. They are accustomed to playing the principal role in classroom teaching, and the whole teaching process is dominated by teachers. In the traditional classroom teaching, the students only passively acquire the knowledge they have learned, which leads to the failure of reflecting students' principal status. As a result, it's not conducive to the cultivation of students' innovative learning ability. Secondly, the teaching objectives of English majors in many colleges and universities are not clear, and they are still limited to different English examinations, and pay inadequate attention to cultivate the practical application ability of students in English. Thirdly, the lack of constantly updated content and advanced methods in the teaching of English majors has greatly influenced the teaching effectiveness. The teaching of language knowledge is still the focus of the teaching content, and the traditional classroom teaching of cramming and instilling teaching methods makes students uninterest in English learning.

### B. Language Application Ability

The cultivation of students' language application ability in English major teaching is not sufficient. With the in-depth development of reform and opening up, the importance of intercultural communication to modern society has become increasingly prominent, and the cultivation of applied and innovative talents has become a hot issue in our society.

However, in the current English major teaching, the cultivation of students' practical ability of language is not paid

enough attention. First of all, vocabulary, grammar, reading and other aspects of knowledge are still the focus of many English majors. It is also an indisputable fact that students listening and speaking skills should be effectively improved. The listening and speaking practice time and practical activities are less allocated and always in a weak position. As a result, students do not have many opportunities to practical exercise, and the so-called dumb English phenomenon is widespread [1]. Second, the transference of cultural knowledge in English major teaching is insufficient. The improvement of intercultural communication ability of English major students is inseparable from the learning and accumulation of English culture. However, the cultural teaching is generally ignored in the present English major teaching, leading students to know little about English culture, and often encounter language and cultural barriers in intercultural communication.

### *C. Teachers' Information Literacy*

In the teaching of English majors in the new era, the information literacy of some teachers are inadequate. The development of modern information technology has changed the way people live and work, and has brought about major changes in the education system. English as an important component of university education aims to cultivate high-quality English talents for the society. With the change of teaching methods, information technology is gradually introduced into English teaching, which provides a new way for English major teaching. Contemporary information science and technology are developing rapidly, and various advanced teaching methods, such as computer networks and multimedia, are gradually introduced into the teaching of English majors. This requires teachers to obtain higher information literacy, adapting to the changes brought about by the network age to perform role transformations, and constantly improving information literacy skills to meet teaching needs.

However, due to age or cognitive limitations, many teachers do not know much about information technology, and most of them are limited to the Internet, making PPT, writing text forms, etc. The overall information literacy is weak, the understanding and application of the latest teaching methods such as micro-courses, flipping classrooms and MOOC, etc. is not enough, which limits the designing of online courses and building an online learning platform. It is unable to fully play the role of information technology and hinder the modern development of English major teaching.

### *D. Teaching Evaluation System*

The current evaluation system of English major teaching is not perfect, and most teachers still use the traditional evaluation method, which mainly based on the final evaluation, paying attention to the students' test scores to assess students' English level, and knowing little about students' learning process.

This teaching evaluation system forces English majors to emphasize on various examinations, but pay less attention to the improvement of English practical ability as well as actively participating in various extracurricular activities. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to fully understand the learning situation outside the classroom teaching of students, and it is

even more difficult to propose an effective targeted strategy. Under the summative evaluation system, students' participation, enthusiasm, performance, and personal level in daily learning and activities cannot be objectively and comprehensively measured, which is not conducive to the improvement of students' comprehensive English ability [2].

## III. STRATEGIES OF THE CULTIVATION OF STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING ABILITY

The teaching model and talent cultivation for university English majors in China are shouldering the significant task of adjustment and reform. Particularly, the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability has become an important way to cultivate innovative talents in the new era. The theme and goal of reform and development is to greatly improve the quality of English majors, and one of the most important indicators to measure English majors' quality is the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability [3]. Therefore, the reform of university English major education and talent-training mode based on the competence of critical thinking plays an important role in improving the international competitiveness of English majors. The essence of language and teaching is in line with the cultivation of critical thinking ability. However, in recent years, English courses often attach importance to language teaching and literary knowledge, and topics for discussion topics are rarely included in classroom teaching. English curriculum teaching should be based on the cultivation of critical thinking ability, reconstructing the teaching mode of objective analysis, rational argument and academic writing.

### *A. Objective Analysis*

The whole process of classroom teaching for English majora should be student-centered, stimulating their interest in learning and self-motivation. The classroom teaching process should include the following procedures, such as the transference of fundamental knowledge, discussion of classroom questions, classroom presentation, representative speech, assignment, etc.. The process of theory teaching combines several issues to guide students to actively think and participate in learning activities. Text content teaching can apply heuristic questioning mode, which can effectively stimulate students' ability to critical thinking and problem solving, thus to inspire students to think deeply about outlooks on the world, life and values.

In the process of teaching, teachers can also use mind map to guide students' hierarchical schema expression of problem reasoning, so as to cultivate their divergent thinking. Mind map is a visual and non-linear thinking tool that promotes students' critical thinking ability, which help them clarify the connotations of themes, plots, characters, and environment in the text. Considering the limited teaching time, teachers can choose to use words to express the deep meaning of the text. Mind maps provide a new type of teaching thinking pattern for teachers and students, which helps students to improving the memory of learning and the cultivation of critical thinking ability.

### B. Rational Debate

English major education should lay emphasis on cultivating students' practical ability of language application. English debate can make students integrate learning skills, and it is considered as an important means of English classroom teaching. It is of great significance for students to improve classroom learning efficiency, strengthen oral expression ability and develop critical thinking ability. In the classroom teaching of English majors, teachers can set up thinking questions in an organized and instructive manner, and introduce English debate into classroom teaching. Teachers can also organize students to fully express their opinions according to some knowledge points or social hotspots in the textbook. When students hold different opinions on the same issue, teachers should effectively guide and encourage them to argue reasonably, providing the opportunity to use the language they have learned, further consolidate and expand the knowledge of textbooks, and at the same time develop critical thinking ability.

In the process of the introduction of debate into classroom teaching, teachers should pay attention to the following issues. When selecting teaching content, on the one hand, we should consider students' learning interest and level, and impart the difficulties to students through blended teaching. On the other hand, we should consider the applicability of knowledge content, and choose the content with complicated content and knowledge point to implement teaching. Secondly, teachers should design and construct the system of curriculum content system. After selecting the appropriate teaching content, we should scientifically design it, determine the teaching objectives, progress, methods, etc., and then design and produce video materials, courseware and other teaching materials, as well as build the teaching platform which ensures the smooth progress of English teaching [4]. First of all, teachers should choose scientific questions, especially hot topics, to stimulate students' learning interest, but they cannot completely break away from the knowledge they have learned. Second, students are encouraged to overcome the oral English language barriers, promote critical thinking and try their best to use terminology to express their opinions scientifically, thus to perform effectively debate. Third, teachers must ensure the overall control of the debating process, pay attention to the process and response, and take the leading role in active guidance.

### C. Applied Writing

Integrating writing practice into the process of English major teaching is the foundation for academic writing. The training and developing of students' writing ability can be carried out through three modes: classroom writing, after-class writing and exam writing.

The writing patterns in the classroom teaching process can be divided into improvisation and quizzes. When teachers organize students to conduct group discussions for some particular questions, they can ask students to conduct a structured analysis based on the questions and improvise their own opinions. Students' impromptu writing on a certain problem can broaden their thinking, improving logical thinking ability and cultivate their independent innovation ability. Classroom tests mainly examine students' generalization

ability and enhance their comprehension, expression and thinking ability. Through the understanding the content of the text, grasping the key points and sorting out the main meanings, students can express their views in a concise language.

After-class writing can be arranged in the form of a book report to the students. Teachers can arrange a well-structured academic paper according to students' different levels, thus to cultivates their academic thinking ability and improve their ability to discover, analyze and solve problems, which finally help to cultivate their critical thinking ability. Based on the dual considerations of the characteristics of English curriculum and the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability, subjective questions can be designed on the final test paper to examine their grasp of concepts and the ability to use theory to analyze texts as well as logical expression.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Many opportunities and challenges coexist for the teaching model and talent cultivation of English majors in China. Although there are still a series of problems such as educational concept, teaching structure system, insufficient application ability training, weak teacher information literacy and imperfect evaluation system, many colleges and universities have begun a new round of adjustment and reform for English curriculum. The focus of English teaching is not only on language and skills, but also on helping students learn how to think independently in English, and to think, deal with and solve problems with sufficient justification and evidence. English teachers should conduct in-depth research on teaching models, establishing a scientific teaching system, as well as continuously improving the quality of English teaching in colleges and universities and cultivating excellent English talents to meet the needs of our society. At the same time, English major education teaching and talent training mode should focus on the cultivation of students' English critical thinking ability, rationally planning the teaching model of developing students' key competencies, and reforming the English teaching around the cultivation of critical thinking ability, thus to effectively improve the international competitiveness of Chinese college students.

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