

Research Overview on the Second Foreign Language Courses under the Perspective of the Postgraduates' Education in Engineering Universities

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Abstract. Firstly, the author reviews the present situation of the opening of the second foreign language courses under the perspective of the graduate student training in in engineering colleges and universities. This article makes investigation, analysis and induction on the present situation of the second foreign language courses in our university and puts forward strategies to improve the second foreign language teaching for postgraduates.

Introduction

With the rapid development of China's economy and foreign trade, the talents of small languages are urgently needed. However, the professional teaching of small languages cannot meet the urgent needs of the times. Therefore, the teaching of second foreign language courses in colleges and universities becomes the necessary supplement. However, the result of the teaching of second foreign language courses is not ideal and satisfactory enough, since it didn't get much attention and class time in universities and colleges. In view of this, it is imperative to strengthen the construction of the second foreign language curriculum for English major postgraduates. Based on the actual situation of the university where the author works, this paper aims to make a survey and analysis on the second foreign language courses of postgraduates majoring in foreign languages, and put forward strategies to improve the teaching of the second foreign language courses of them.

Our university offers a second foreign language course for foreign language majors and it is arranged on the first semester for the first-year postgraduates. For this course, there are 60 classes in all, with 3 credits. With times going, society puts forward higher requirements for postgraduates in the second foreign languages. So it must advance with the times, complying with the requirements of the times and society, and facing constant challenges. Then the reform becomes imperative and imminent. It is also very important and necessary for the cultivation of our postgraduates of foreign language majors.

We did the survey with a questionnaire for the students of the first, second, and the third year of foreign linguistics and applied linguistics in the School of Foreign Languages of the University. The goal was to collect data that would provide an effective reference for the postgraduates teaching in the second foreign language in the future.

Teaching Status of Postgraduates' Second Language Courses

The survey mainly adopts an online questionnaire to investigate and analyze the status quo of English major postgraduates' second language courses. The targets students of this survey are the postgraduates of English majors of the first, second, and the third year. And 40 questionnaires are collected. This online questionnaire is used to investigate the status quo of the second foreign language teaching of the postgraduates, which mainly includes the teaching environment of the second foreign language, the purpose of the second foreign language learning, the teacher's lecture style, teaching materials, teaching progress, learning objectives, and so on, with the aim to investigate the status quo in this field further.

Analysis of the Survey Results on the Postgraduates' Second Language Teaching

According to the result of the questionnaires, main findings are as follows:

1. Traditional teaching method was still used by teachers in the classroom, 72% teachers adopt teacher-centered teaching method. 24% teachers use practical teaching model in the classroom. The findings reveal that although it is the second foreign language, teacher-centered teaching mode plays a predominant role in the most of the second language courses. The percentage of practical teaching mode, or teaching combined with practice, is not high.

2. For the opinion on the above-mentioned modes, 24% students were satisfied, 68% students were partially satisfied, and 2% students were not satisfied at all. In the original questionnaire analysis, those students who are not satisfied most study under the traditional teaching mode. So the finding shows that practical teaching mode should be used in the second language classroom.

3. With regard to the teaching materials of second language, 52% students argue that materials what they used are easy, nevertheless, they can learn some new knowledge, to a certain extent. At the same time, 44% students consider that these books are relatively difficult, so they have to fully prepare before class and review after class. Otherwise, 1% students think that the teaching materials are very difficult, and these materials are beyond their current level of the second foreign language learning. As a result, they cannot keep up in class. It is not difficult to indicate that different students hold different opinions to materials based on different foreign languages and the level of second foreign languages. The findings reveal that the selection of materials of the second foreign language courses should be further standardized. Besides, teachers should teach students in accordance with their aptitude.

4. When it comes to the teaching factors that are required to be improved in the second foreign language classroom, 24% students thought that the teaching materials were required to improve, 28% students considered that it was teaching mode and 44% students selected the classroom atmosphere and interaction. Consequently, the findings reveal that, in addition to the issues of teaching materials, there are some issues, such as, multi-media software teaching and the classroom atmosphere and interaction. These issues should be taken more seriously in the teaching of second foreign languages of graduate students in the future.

5. For the key factor of a reasonable second foreign language teaching, 28% students showed that the key factor was the appropriate teaching materials, 24% students considered it was the teacher's teaching competence, 28% students thought it was the reasonable curriculum and teaching schedule and 20% students argued that it was the fully extracurricular extended learning. The findings indicate that teachers' teaching competence and teaching schedules, extracurricular development and other aspects should be further strengthened.

6. In terms of the view on the course hours of the second foreign language, 68% students considered that they were satisfied with sufficient class hours. 16% students deemed that they were not satisfied with it at all on account of too few hours. The findings indicate that most of students are satisfied with the class hours of the second foreign language in the current training program, but some students suppose that the class hours are insufficient.

7. For the item of the abilities what should be focused on in the second foreign language courses, 40% students argued that it was the verbal expressions, 52 % students selected listening, and speaking, reading and writing abilities and 8% students held that they were literature reading and writing skills. Hence, the findings manifest that the communicative ability training of the second foreign language should be emphasized in the classroom in the future.

8. When are the current level of students' second foreign language, 56% students thought that their second foreign languages were at the primary. Students at this level have grasped basically the second foreign language knowledge and can try to use these words and grammars. In the meantime, they can consciously learn relevant culture of the second foreign language. 36% students considered that their second foreign language were at intermediate level. Students at this level have met graduate entrance exam requirements and had mastered all the important grammatical knowledge. In addition, their vocabularies were relatively larger. They can have basic communication ability, carry out autonomous learning ability with the learning software and know about some culture of

the second foreign language. By the way, 2% students selected the entry level. Students at this level has mastered basic reading and writing rules, a certain amount of vocabularies and grammars and they have a strong interest for the second foreign language culture. Therefore, the findings indicate that student's level of the second foreign language is different so that teacher should teach students in accordance with their aptitude.

9. As for the learning plan and implementation of the second foreign language, 48% students had short-term goals in mind on how to improve their target language skills. For instances, the students planned to obtain certain certificates by taking some tests, to take part in the competition and so on. They can try their best to achieve these goals. 48% students didn't have their own learning plans, but they would actively keep up with the teacher's teaching process and found problems and proactively resolved them in the learning progress. Moreover, 4% students didn't have any goals and were unable to complete learning tasks. Besides, they thought that the second foreign language was not important, at the same time; they only hoped that they can end lessons well. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that students' planning and implementation of the second foreign language learning are less optimistic. More than half of the students lack learning plans, so a guide should be given by teachers in the teaching progress.

10. In terms of the main goals of the second foreign language learning, 68% students considered that they would need to obtain a second foreign language certificate to verify their abilities of the target language. 16% students argued that it would depend on the situation. They would focus on their first foreign language learning, and the second foreign language was only used to expand knowledge. Besides, 8% students made strict demands on themselves by obtaining certificates of minority language majors. 8% students wanted to take the compulsory course arranged by school, they were only interested in the second foreign language, and however, they didn't have any requirements for their second foreign language abilities. Consequently, the findings show that most of students have clear goals in the second foreign language learning. Hence, appropriate content should be designed, and relevant teaching modules should be arranged in the teaching progress.

11. For the question on the achievements on the second foreign language learning, 44% students supposed that they only needed to complete second foreign language school course requirements step by step and achieve excellence grade in final examination. 28% students suggested that the second foreign language was so difficult that more effort should be put into learning. Otherwise, 20% students held that they wanted to improve the listening and reading abilities for reading some literature and watching some films. 8% students already obtained the relevant second foreign language certificates. Thus, the findings suggest that many students are content with things as they are. They only take the second foreign language as a subject to learn, ignoring the practical characteristics of language learning.

12. When it comes to difficulties in the process of learning second foreign language, 36% students didn't know how to improve self-learning ability and were unable to absorb the second foreign language knowledge outside the classroom. 28% students thought that the number of books and films related to the second foreign language were limited, and they did not have the minor language-speaking environment after class. In addition, 24% students considered that obtaining the relevant certificate was difficult, and there were some gaps between relevant examinations and knowledge what they learned. 12% students argued that the school curriculum was difficult so that there were often some problems to consult teachers and classmates. As a result, the findings show that there are some differences in learning ability, teaching effects and student's expectation among different students.

13. For the item of weekly average time to learn a second foreign language, 52% students said that they spent about three hours, only learning the second foreign language during the lesson. 28% students spent about three to ten hours, including studied in class and review and preview after class. However, 20% student spent around there hours because they would also learn other objects during the second foreign language class. Therefore, the findings reveal that student's learning attitudes. Lacking of time is also a important problem for learning the second foreign language. Clear guidance should be given in the teaching progress by teachers.

14. In term of the effective method of learning second foreign language, 56% students thought that they need to make preview and review so as to ensure the effective learning in the class. 32% students considered that the effective method is to organize some exchange programs with foreign students and watch more films, television and literature to create a language environment. Moreover, 12% students believed that the effective method was to solve the problems that they met in class by asking the teacher for help after class. Finally, the findings indicate that most of students are active learner and focus on the classroom learning. Besides, they can improve the level of the second foreign language by communicating with overseas students.

15. For the opinions and views of the second language learning, some suggestions were raised by students:

- 1) They hoped that teachers can focus on developing their practical ability and create opportunities for them to practice;
- 2) Interest was very important in the second foreign language learning;
- 3) Teachers had better focus on developing listening and speaking ability when they helped students lay a good foundation for the target language learning;
- 4) Students wished that teachers can help them consolidate their language foundation;
- 5) Students hoped that they can improve the ability to retrieve a second foreign language literature, so they wished that teachers can recommend second foreign learning books;
- 6) Teacher can explain some important grammars in the classroom;
- 7) Students hoped that they can learn more about culture of target language countries and focused on exercising their oral English.

Strategies for Improving Teaching Effect of Postgraduates' Second Foreign Language Courses

Change the Traditional Teaching Mode for the Second Foreign Language

To change the traditional teaching mode, teachers should not only pay attention to interaction with students and the improvement of the quality and quantity of students' language output, but also should pay attention to the cultivation of students' intercultural communicative competence. The class should be students oriented and students should participate in the interaction actively. Teachers should communicate with students equally and integrate teaching tasks with the learning environment to improve students' comprehensive ability in language application.

Choose Teaching Materials Reasonably

Teaching materials are very important for a course and the suitability of the teaching materials directly affect the teaching effect. Through the research on the teaching materials of second foreign language courses in other colleges and universities, we should pay attention to the choice of the second foreign language materials and choose the materials that are close to syllabus, life and spoken language, rich in content, and easy to practice.

Design Multimedia Courseware and Improve Teaching Resources

Teachers should continue to complement and beautify the multimedia courseware according to the syllabus of the second foreign language course. This process should combine students' cognition level, curriculum characteristics, and teaching conditions so as to optimize the teaching effect and improve the teaching level. At the same time, it is necessary to combine the characteristics of teaching materials and collect teaching resources from internet and books so as to enrich the content of the courses.

In conclusion, according to the research, the present situation of postgraduate teaching in the second foreign language is not optimistic. A variety of problems cause the bad effect in the second foreign language teaching for postgraduates. Therefore, the reform and improvement of each link in the course should be emphasized.

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