

Research on the Development of University-based College Foreign Language Curriculum

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Abstract: *University-based college foreign language curriculum is a trend to improve quality of higher education and the quality of talents' cultivation. Focusing on curriculum development, this paper points out a mode of "1+X" to show the university-based curriculum construction. And the languages involved in the foreign language curriculum are English and another two non-English foreign languages-Thai and Laotian. In this paper, we try to explore the development of curriculum under the guidelines of ideological and political education and unified framework of foreign language course, facilitate career development of teachers and focus on improving the quality of talents form the perspective of participating foreign competitions and preparing for certifications.*

Keywords: *curriculum development; Foreign language course integrated with ideological and political education; non-English Foreign Language; competitions and certifications*

1. Introduction

Higher education is a leading force in the way of strengthening the nation through education. And being an essential part of China's higher education, College foreign language education plays an essential role and should take the responsibility to think about a historical proposition that what higher education can contribute in the service of strengthening the nation and what foreign language can contribute in the service of strengthening the nation with higher education (Shixin Wu, 2023)^[8]. That is to say, being one of the general education courses that almost non-English majors will take, it's incumbent upon our college foreign language education to shoulder the responsibility to think about the above historical proposition and takes actions to achieve the construction of strengthening the nation. In college foreign language education and teaching, curriculum development is definitely a key part to improve the quality of talents' cultivation and the quality of higher education.

In college foreign language curriculum development, it is a must to follow the guidelines of ideological and political education and College English Teaching. And only under the guidelines, can we achieve the development of foreign language education and complete our mission as foreign languages. Developing and improving college foreign language curriculum and teaching integrated with ideological and political education is an essential way to implement the fundamental task of cultivating virtue and fostering talents.

And according to the university English teaching guide (2020)^[5], it is of great importance to have a elaborate research and design on the construction of foreign language courses for each university. Universities should construct their own college English courses distinctively in service of achieving their specific mission and objectives, talent cultivation objectives for each departments and schools and meet the needs of talents' personalized development. At the mean while, in the process of constructing university-based foreign language courses, the career development of foreign language teachers is also an important aspect to consider and think about.^[6]

2. Developing the University-based College Foreign Language Courses

College foreign language education is an important part of China's higher education, and plays an essential role in promoting balanced development of talents' capacities, qualities and literacy. As a key component of foreign language education in universities, college foreign language curriculum, one of the core general education courses, is required to be taken by all the non-English majors during their undergraduate education in our university. As for the course, it is learning plans designed for achieving

some learning objectives (Taba, 1962)^[2], and it contains the objectives and content of teaching and learning arranged in a specific manner (Walker, 2023)^[3]. Introduced from the perspective of Nation and Macalister (2009)^[1], the process of course designing contains factors like Need, Principle, and Environment. So we should construct and develop our own Foreign Language Curriculum to conform to our educational orientation, achieve quality standards for talent cultivation and meet students' leaning conditions and the needs of learning and professional development.

2.1. Hierarchical Teaching Based on the Mode of “1+X”

West Yunnan University of Applied Sciences, located in the west of Yunnan province, is an applied undergraduate university and mainly dedicated to cultivate application-oriented high-level technical and skilled talents urgently needed for regional economic and social development. And because it is located in west Yunnan that we are highlighting the advantages of characteristic industries and enjoy the unique geographical advantage of Yunnan Province as the center of South Asia and Southeast Asia to radiate and drive the surrounding areas.

It is undoubted that in order to achieve our objectives and characteristics in cultivating talents, university-based foreign language course is a tendency. That is to say, we should take other foreign languages in South Asia and Southeast Asia into consideration. Besides, the development of curriculum should not only conform to talents' leaning fundamentals and features, but also should meet their diverse needs in language learning. In this context, we are gradually dedicated to construct a special foreign language curriculum system including English, Japanese, Thai, Laotian and Burmese. So the mode of “1+X” in construction of foreign language curriculum means the main language in our system is English (representing “1”) and other languages like Japanese, Thai, Laotian and Burmese represent “X” and will be more in the future if possible and necessary.

Since the development of college English curriculum system is relatively mature and comprehensive and no matter which above language is chosen by students, the construction of foreign language curriculum should be unified and consistent to gradually form a more scientific curriculum system that can better meet the needs of society and students and reflects our cultivating characteristics.

2.1.1. Complement of hierarchical teaching

Having fully considered educational orientation of our university, achieve quality standards for talent cultivation and meet students' leaning conditions and the needs of learning and professional development, we have completed hierarchical teaching. Under the foreign language system, all the students can choose any one of the above language. As for the students who choose English as their learning language, they will be classified into different classes based on their English levels and the English classes are mainly divided into Level A and Level B. And for some of the students whose English capacity is a little bit poor, they can choose other language such as Thai or Laotian to take their Foreign Language Curriculum.

2.1.2. Unified curriculum development

The construction of the university-based foreign language curriculum system is very significant. Constructing college foreign language curriculum needs consider coordination and arrangement in a macro way. And we should also carefully design and develop the curriculum framework (Shouren Wang, 2012)^[7]. If we fail to plan it in a rational and macro way and the foreign language courses fail to reflect students' diverse needs, the function of our foreign language curriculum cannot be fully achieved, especially there are at least three foreign language involved in the whole curriculum. No matter it is English, Thai or Laotian, all of them belong to one branch of foreign language. So it is necessary to design and complete the course of Southeast Asian languages just the same as English courses in uniformly. In order to achieve unified curriculum development, and we should share the same “framework”, “curriculum structure and content” and “curriculum design based on teaching objectives”. And in the part of “curriculum design”, we should fully consider the following three aspects and they are teaching objectives, teaching contents and course type (Mingyou Xiang, 2020:31)^[9].

2.2. Integration of Ideological and Political Education

Considering the requirement of implement the cultivation of moral talents and the nurturing of talents and in the service of national strategy, it is essential to integrate ideological and political education into foreign language curriculum (Ji Qian, 2024)^[4]. There are various ways to integrate

ideological and political education in foreign language courses including English, Thai and Laotian.

Firstly, we should clarify the teaching objectives of ideological and political education in curriculum. Based on the unit and teaching relevant materials, we should add and clarify the moral objective rather than focusing on improving students' knowledge, ability and comprehensive quality and specific language skills around listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. Instead, we should focus more on the improvements of students' competence, quality and literacy. And for one thing, the objectives of ideological and political education can be achieved and measured in the way of writing, translating and encouraging students to share their ideas. For another, students are encouraged to behave correctly and well in the daily life, which is crucial to measure whether the objectives of ideological and political education well achieved.

Secondly, we should reconstruct the teaching contents based on ideological and political education. There are various teaching and learning materials in our text books and other relative materials. Based on the requirements of ideological and political education, we can discover and reconstruct and rearrange the learning contents. Besides, exploring more relevant teaching and learning resources matters a lot. For example, we should find out the materials about excellent traditional Chinese culture, guide students to have cultural awareness and ability and cultivate cultural confidence and be prepares to tell Chinese stories well.

Thirdly, we should relate curriculum assessments based on ideological and political education. In order to adapt to the construction of the university-based foreign language curriculum system, the establishment and improvement of the curriculum assessment system should be taken into consideration. Generally, the assessment can be divided into formative and summative assessments. And the formative assessment system should not be limited in classroom teaching and learning, but should pay more attention to students' behaviors. That is to say, ideological and political education can not be shown on the text learning, but should be more encouraged to be shown from the aspects of language abilities to spread the voice of China.

2.3. Integration of Courses and Certifications and Competitions

College students' foreign language abilities and quality can be embodied in various language certifications and competitions. During the process of preparing for competitions, students can learn and practice their specific skills like speaking skills, writing skills and reading skills. And when it come to the acquisition for a foreign language certification, vocabulary, especially those integrated with ideological and political elements will be included. So it is significantly important to develop our university-based foreign language curriculum combining the relevant competitions and certificates, which is a perfect way to encourage students to learn and in turn, it will be considered as an evaluation of effectiveness of learning.

On the one hand, acquiring various foreign language certifications can contribute to improving comprehensive language skills and abilities. Take College English Test band 4 as an example. Students' writing, listening, reading and translating skills will be practiced and improved. And especially in the part of translation, the translating materials range from society, economy and education in China to the Chinese cultures. So, involving the materials of certifications into foreign language curriculum is essential to develop curriculum and also reflect ideological and political education as well. And there are also specific certifications for non-English foreign languages, Thai and Laotian are included. In Yunnan Province, there is a specific certificate, Southeast Asian Non-Commonly Used Language Professional Competence Examination, is designed for college students from different majors who take Thai and Laotian as their language learning to prepare and prove their language competence.

In order to help students improve their abilities and increase the chance of passing the examination and get the certificates successfully, we have designed specific training courses. In the course of CET-4, teachers introduce the exam systematically to let students have a general idea of the exam and make individual plans based on their own English levels. And then, teacher guide students to acquire knowledge and practice skills from writing, listening, reading and translation. Systematic and planned learning and practice help students get to know the exam quickly and prepare for it fully and confidentially. Besides, the same type of training course aiming to improving students language abilities in Thai and Laotian is provided.

On the other hand, preparing for the foreign competitions can contribute to improving specific language skills and abilities. And the most common competitions are speaking, writing, reading and vocabulary competitions. Besides, in order to encourage students to improve both of their quality and

literacy, all of the competitions are combined closely with ideological and political education and designed to cultivate talents' ability to tell Chinese story and spread the voice of China.

And under the whole system of College Foreign Language Curriculum, we provide language proficiency improvement courses, such as English speech, reading and vocabulary, to enhance their corresponding abilities and have a better performance in various competitions. In the courses, students can have a targeted learning for specific knowledge and skills. With the help of the teacher, students can acquire knowledge of delivering a speech, reading and writing; with the cooperation with partners, they can practice their speaking, reading and writing abilities and during the process, their abilities and skills will be improved gradually and lay a foundation for them to have a better performance in the competitions.

3. Career Development of Foreign Language Teachers

In the process of constructing university-based foreign language curriculum and improving foreign language teaching in our university, we should attach great importance to the career development of foreign language teachers and try to build a high-quality, professional team of foreign language teachers, which determines the achievements of curriculum constructing objectives (2020). Foreign language proficiency, academic performance and computer skills are three common required teaching abilities (Shouren Wang, 2012)^[7]. And the digital literacy and proficiency is becoming more and more important in the modern world. A well and carefully designed career development in a macro way plays an important part. And there are some ways to facilitate the career development of foreign language teachers.

Firstly, the career development of different foreign language teachers should be designed and arranged in a unified way, especially for the teachers of Thai and Laotian. There are many experiences in English teacher development can be drawn from. So the career development of the teachers of Thai and Laotian can be taken into consideration the the whole framework of foreign language development. Besides, it is necessary to create a positive, pioneering and enterprising working atmosphere.

Secondly, attending regular professional training is very important. In order to be equipped with the professional abilities that university teachers should acquire, we should attend regular professional training focusing on different abilities, such as training about teaching ability improving, academic performance improving and digital literacy improving and so on. More specifically, training about teaching writing, listening, reading and translating skills based on CET-4 or NETEM should be offered. Besides, we should not only make active efforts to introduce and organize some training focusing on the ways to design our university-based curriculum system, but also the ways to construct and develop one specific course in great details, and course design and teaching implementation and the like involved.

Thirdly, constructing curriculum team is an effective way to improve teachers' abilities. In order to develop foreign language curriculum system that serve our goals, the needs of the professional construction of the faculties, and the personalized development needs of students, it's necessary to develop and design the framework of curriculum system and build specific and well-curated curriculum teams. Among different teams, there is one unified standard to coordinate and in each team, we have specific design and development focusing on abilities improving.

4. Conclusion

Achieving the improvements of talents' cultivation is a key factor in higher education. And among various dimensions to improve qualities of higher education, constructing university-based curriculum is essential. Being one of the general education courses that almost non-English majors will take, foreign language courses play an important role in cultivating talents. Guided by ideological and political education, we should develop our university-based curriculum under the mode of "1+X" and integrate certifications and competitions into the development of foreign language curriculum. Besides, in order to develop a more scientific university-based foreign language curriculum system that can better meet the needs of society and students, we also should focus on the career development of our foreign language teachers.

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