

Construction of University General English Courses Based on Needs Analysis

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the importance and implementation strategies of constructing university general English courses based on needs analysis. Through literature review, it reveals the challenges faced by university English education and summarizes the main needs of students through needs analysis. Based on this, specific plans for course construction are proposed, including course objectives, content, teaching methods, and evaluation systems. The article concludes with suggestions for future research, emphasizing its significance for educational reform and improving the quality of teaching.

Key words: needs analysis; general English courses; course design and assessment

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1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, college English education not only aims to develop foundational academic communication skills but also to enhance cross-cultural competencies. Facing challenges such as diverse learning needs, unequal resource distribution, and outdated teaching methods, these courses struggle to maintain teaching quality and student satisfaction. Identifying and implementing a course construction approach that meets student needs while improving teaching efficacy is crucial.

College English courses are essential for developing comprehensive English skills, crucial for practical language use and cross-cultural communication. However, the demand for high-quality talent has outpaced the capabilities of current college English curricula and teaching methods, necessitating urgent reform and innovation.

A needs-analysis-based approach to course construction can align curriculum content, teaching methodologies, and assessment systems with student expectations, enhancing learning efficiency and satisfaction. This approach ensures the relevance and effectiveness of teaching activities, improving both teaching quality and learning outcomes. Thus, research into

needs-analysis-based college English course construction is vital for personalized, precise education.

This study aims to refine college English education by employing needs analysis to investigate students' actual learning needs, designing appropriate course content and teaching methods, and assessing the effectiveness of these innovations through empirical research. Addressing key challenges such as accurate needs assessment, course design based on these assessments, and establishing an effective evaluation system is essential for successful teaching reform.

This research seeks to offer theoretical and practical insights for the advancement of college English education, facilitating its adaptation to contemporary needs and providing students with an efficient, personalized learning experience.

2. Research background

Educational theories guide teaching practices, underpinning the theory behind effective learning. Constructivism and situated learning are pivotal in course design, suggesting that knowledge construction is an active process engaged by learners through interaction, reflection, and practice within their cultural and social environments. Situated learning highlights learning as social participation,

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with knowledge best learned and applied in context for deeper understanding and learning transfer. These principles are crucial for designing college English courses, focusing on practicality, interactivity, and relevance.

Needs analysis is central to course design, aimed at identifying learners' needs to create suitable teaching activities and content. Techniques include surveys, interviews, observations, and literature reviews, addressing both student learning and teacher instructional needs, alongside societal and business talent demands. This comprehensive approach enables the design of more targeted and effective courses.

Internationally, needs analysis is widely used in college English education, showing that tailored courses can significantly improve student motivation and outcomes. In China, there's growing interest in needs analysis for education reform, aiming for personalized and precise education. However, domestic research could benefit from further empirical and methodological development.

In summary, educational theories support the development of needs-analysis-based college English courses. Various needs analysis methods provide practical design tools, with current research offering valuable insights for this approach.

In studying the development of university general English courses through needs analysis, the choice of an appropriate research methodology is crucial. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, blending qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve a well-rounded and in-depth analysis. Quantitatively, surveys will gather large-scale data to statistically assess student needs and course satisfaction. Qualitatively, interviews and observations will offer insight into specific student needs and teaching practices, informing course design with greater detail. This dual approach aims to marry the quantitative data's breadth with the qualitative data's depth for a comprehensive understanding of general English course needs and development at the university level.

Data will be collected using diverse tools, including online and paper surveys for quantitative insights into students' needs and satisfaction, and semi-structured interviews and classroom observations for qualitative exploration of perspectives and practices. This multifaceted data collection strategy enables a thorough examination from various perspectives.

Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical software for descriptive and inferential statistics, highlighting relationships between student needs and satisfaction and examining variable interplay. Qualitative

data will undergo content analysis, identifying key themes from interviews and observations to enrich the quantitative findings and provide context.

Overall, by combining these research, data collection, and analysis methodologies, the study aims to offer a comprehensive evaluation of university general English courses' needs and development, supporting future course refinement and innovation with solid evidence and theoretical backing.

3. Needs analysis

The students at University of Jinan represent a highly diverse group with varied learning backgrounds and personal characteristics. Most hail from different regions across China, bringing unique cultural backgrounds and English learning experiences to their university education. For instance, some students may have already participated in international exchange programs during their high school years, possessing strong English proficiency and practical usage experience. Conversely, others might have primarily engaged in classroom learning, feeling less confident in their practical English application. Thus, their needs for English learning vary significantly, encompassing both the enhancement of basic language skills and more advanced requirements such as applying English in professional studies, career development, and international communication. Additionally, students' interests and motivations in learning English differ greatly; some are passionate about English, seeking to broaden their horizons and enhance international understanding, while others may feel pressured, requiring more motivation and support to sustain their learning momentum.

Survey findings revealed varied perceptions and needs regarding the current university general English courses among students at University of Jinan after conducting questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews. Approximately 70% of surveyed students believe the course content should focus more on practical English, including everyday communication and business interactions, reflecting a strong demand for skills directly applicable in real-life situations. Furthermore, 80% of the students expressed a desire for more modern and interactive teaching methods, such as project-based learning and role-playing, to enhance the interest and practicality of learning. In interviews, many students highlighted the need for guidance from teachers on recommending English learning resources and integrating English learning with career planning, expressing hopes for courses to align more closely with their future career expectations.

Synthesizing data from surveys and interviews, it's

evident that University of Jinan students have several core needs for the university general English course. Firstly, there's a demand for practicality in content, with students wishing for coverage of more practical topics like daily and business communication to confidently utilize English in everyday life and future workplaces. Secondly, the call for modernization in teaching methods is clear, with students favoring practical, interactive, and multimedia approaches to learning English, which would not only increase their interest but also enhance learning outcomes. Lastly, students' strong demand for course relevance to career development reflects their future-focused attention and planning, aspiring to pave the way for their careers and international exchanges through English learning. By understanding and analyzing these needs deeply, we can develop a university general English course that more closely matches students' actual requirements. To meet these needs, course design should include highly practical content, such as modules focused on email writing, business report drafting, and interview skills, which are directly applicable skills in the workplace. Moreover, the course should incorporate elements of international cultural exchange to foster cross-cultural communication skills, vital for career development in a globalized context.

Regarding the need for modernization in teaching methods, course designers should consider introducing more technology-based learning tools, like interactive online platforms and utilizing social media platforms for language practice activities. These innovative teaching methods can not only boost students' interest in learning but also effectively enhance their comprehensive English language skills.

Furthermore, the course design should address students' needs for course relevance to career development. This could involve setting up specific modules, such as "Professional English" and "International Communication English," to prepare students for their future careers. Additionally, inviting industry professionals as guest lecturers to share their experiences and insights could provide practical career guidance and inspiration for students.

4. Courses design and assessment

In response to the evolving demands of the global workforce, a transformative approach to English education is undertaken at the University of Jinan, where practicality is synergized with career preparation, equipping students with vital skills indispensable in the global workforce. This course, more than an academic endeavor, is a holistic training ground, meticulously crafted to address various facets of professional and interpersonal development. Its core lies in augmenting essential English presentation

skills and workplace communication strategies. Here, students delve into the art of email writing, business reporting, and oral presentations, acquiring tools essential for their future professional endeavors. This is not a mere linguistic journey but a comprehensive program aimed at preparing students for the diverse challenges presented by a globalized work environment. The curriculum's focus extends to cross-cultural communication, an increasingly vital skill in today's interconnected world. Students are immersed in understanding different communication patterns across cultural backgrounds, an endeavor crucial for adapting to and excelling in a multi-cultural professional landscape. Furthermore, the course places a pronounced emphasis on comprehensive language skill enhancement. By focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and especially boosting speaking and listening abilities, it addresses the need for students to be effective communicators in both everyday and professional contexts. A notable aspect of the course is its dedication to fostering autonomy in learning and innovative capacity. Students are encouraged to embrace modern technology resources for English learning, thus inspiring innovative thinking and problem-solving skills, traits that are invaluable in the modern workforce.

The University of Jinan's English course is meticulously structured, with a curriculum that encapsulates a wide array of content and activities tailored to achieve the set objectives. It commences with a focus on English presentation and career preparation, incorporating elements such as career planning, report writing, and presentation skills, all vital for team collaboration and professional growth. As students progress, they explore the nuances of cross-cultural communication. This segment of the course delves into understanding and respecting various communication habits and business etiquettes across cultures, thus equipping students with the knowledge to navigate complex global business environments. Language skill enhancement is another cornerstone of the curriculum, with a dedicated focus on refining grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and especially listening and speaking skills. This is complemented by the introduction of various online resources and technological tools, which not only support English learning but also encourage a self-directed approach to education. The teaching methods are diverse and interactive, ranging from case analysis and role-playing to project-based learning and international collaborations. These activities are designed to mirror real-world communication scenarios, providing students with practical experience and a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The teaching methods and evaluation system of the course are pivotal in fostering an engaging and collaborative learning environment. The course strategically combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning modalities, offering a flexible learning experience that accommodates diverse learning styles. Interactive and collaborative learning is heavily emphasized, with a focus on enhancing interaction among teachers and students through group discussions, project collaborations, and simulated practice using real cases. This approach not only facilitates knowledge acquisition but also fosters critical thinking and practical application skills. The course's evaluation system is comprehensive, incorporating continuous assessment, formative and summative evaluations, and self-assessment and peer evaluation. This multifaceted system assesses students' grasp and application of course content through varied means like assignments, online discussions, and group projects. It also balances the assessment of both the learning process and the final outcomes, ensuring a thorough and fair evaluation of student progress. This interactive and multidimensional approach aims to cultivate students' active participation, develop their autonomous learning capabilities, and nurture teamwork skills, thereby fulfilling the educational objectives of the University of Jinan's English course.

In summary, the construction of the general English course based on a thorough needs analysis is designed to provide University of Jinan students with an efficient, interactive, and innovative learning environment. This approach not only aims to enhance students' English language skills but also to strengthen their cross-cultural communication abilities, career readiness, and capacity for autonomous learning and innovation, laying a solid foundation for their future academic and professional endeavors.

5. Course Implementation and evaluation

The process of course implementation involves detailed planning and execution steps, aimed at effectively achieving the set educational objectives. Initially, based on the needs analysis, a curriculum outline and teaching plan are designed, specifying course objectives, teaching content, methods, and evaluation criteria. Subsequently, preparation of teaching resources is undertaken, including the selection of textbooks, establishment of teaching platforms, and preparation of necessary teaching aids and materials. Professional training for teachers is also essential to ensure they are adept at using various teaching methods and technologies to effectively guide student learning.

During course implementation, emphasis is placed

on the interactivity of teaching and student participation. Educational activities such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and case analyses are employed to stimulate students' interest and engagement. A blended learning model combining online and offline approaches is adopted to leverage digital platforms for providing extensive learning resources, thereby promoting self-directed learning among students. Moreover, regular teaching seminars and feedback sessions are organized to adjust teaching plans and methods based on student performance and feedback, ensuring the timely update of teaching content and effectiveness of instructional strategies.

A critical component of the implementation process, involves gathering quantitative and qualitative data to analyze the effectiveness of course delivery, thereby informing continuous improvement. Quantitative data typically include student grades, participation, and homework completion rates, offering a numerical reflection of student achievement and course effectiveness. Qualitative data are collected through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations to gain insights into students' learning experiences, teachers' perceptions, and the appropriateness of course content and teaching methods.

The evaluation process prioritizes student feedback, systematically gathering their opinions and suggestions regarding course content, teaching methods, and the evaluation system. Involving educational and industry experts in the evaluation provides a professional perspective on the rationale and practicality of the course design. Teacher performance is also assessed, utilizing peer review and student feedback to facilitate personal development and professional growth.

Based on evaluation outcomes, continuous improvements to the course are made. Adjustments to course content and teaching methods are informed by student needs and industry advancements. Enhancing teacher training improves instructional skills and research competencies. Additionally, increasing course interactivity and practicality through more case studies, project work, and cross-cultural exchanges enhances students' comprehensive and practical abilities.

The ongoing cycle of course implementation and evaluation ensures that the general English curriculum in higher education meets students' learning needs effectively and efficiently, fostering their English language skills, cross-cultural communication abilities, and innovative thinking, thus laying a solid foundation for their personal development and future careers. Continuous improvement

and optimization of the course should align with higher education trends, reflecting modern shifts in educational philosophy and teaching methods.

The success of course implementation and evaluation relies not only on the effectiveness of teaching content and methods but also on creating a conducive teaching environment and learning atmosphere. Hence, universities should provide ample resources and support, including modern teaching facilities, diverse learning materials, and robust online learning platforms. Encouraging positive interactions between teachers and students fosters knowledge exchange and experience sharing.

Furthermore, universities should establish comprehensive course management and quality assurance systems to ensure the timeliness of course content and consistency in teaching quality. Regular course reviews and teaching evaluations help identify issues, summarize experiences, and share best practices, thereby driving ongoing course improvement and innovation.

6. Conclusion

This study takes the general English curriculum at University of Jinan as an example to delve into the course construction process based on needs analysis. The research found that through detailed analysis of student needs, combined with educational objectives and the demands of social development, University of Jinan has successfully built a university English curriculum system that not only meets students' personalized learning needs but also promotes the development of their comprehensive abilities. The richness of course content, diversity of teaching methods, and optimization of the teaching environment have collectively contributed to the comprehensive improvement of students' English proficiency, especially in enhancing practical application abilities and critical thinking skills.

Moreover, the adoption of a course evaluation method that integrates quantitative and qualitative analysis effectively monitored the effects of course implementation, ensuring the continuous optimization of teaching quality. This process not only provided strong data support for the improvement of University of Jinan's general English curriculum but also offered valuable references for the construction of general education courses at other universities.

Despite certain achievements, this study encountered some challenges and limitations. Firstly, the course needs analysis was primarily based on current student and societal needs, which might not fully predict future trends. Thus, course content and teaching methods may need to be continually updated to adapt to future changes. Secondly,

although the combined quantitative and qualitative evaluation method is comprehensive, it also entails some subjectivity, particularly in the interpretation of qualitative data. Additionally, challenges remain in resource allocation, teacher training, and other aspects during the course implementation and evaluation processes.

In response to these challenges and limitations, this study suggests the following. Firstly, future course construction should focus more on flexibility and foresight, regularly conducting course needs analysis to adapt to the rapid changes in student needs and social development. Secondly, it is recommended to further optimize the course evaluation system, incorporating more objective data sources and applying advanced data analysis techniques to enhance the accuracy and objectivity of evaluation results. Lastly, universities are advised to strengthen teacher training, enhance teachers' teaching abilities and research levels, increase resource investment, and improve teaching conditions to provide students with a higher quality learning environment.

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