

Analysis and Countermeasures of College English Majors' Employment Difficulties---Under the Context of Global Financial Crisis

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Abstract

This paper sets English majors' employment difficulties under the changing global and national context. It examines the impact of global financial crisis and current English majors' employment difficulties. To adapt to the changes, efforts have been made to change the training models, revise the national curriculum and update textbooks.

Keywords: English majors, Employment difficulties, Global financial crisis

1. Introduction

Since the college enrollment expansion in 1999, great changes have taken place with the transition of the higher education from an elite-oriented education to a popularized education. In 2009, the financial crisis in the United States spread abroad and made great influence on the economy in our nation. It makes the employment of 2009 university graduates more serious. According to the data released by the Ministry of Education, the total number of college graduates is 5.59 million by the year of 2008. Together with 0.7-0.8 million unemployed graduates left over from the previous year, in fact more than 6 million graduates are competing for a shrinking number of job vacancies in 2009.

English majors are no exception. Until now, the total enrollment of English majors has reached over 0.4 million. Now the problem of English majors' employment has become a remarkable issue for the whole society. Therefore, it is extremely urgent to analyze the causes of the plight of employment so as to seek out the effective measures to English majors' employment difficulties.

2. Analysis of English majors' employment difficulties

The reasons of English majors' difficult employment are various and with multi-players. Based on the research, it is found that the reasons are mainly embodied in four pairs of contradiction as follows.

2.1 More English major graduates VS fewer job vacancies

The most basic reason that influences employment is the nation's economic growth speed. In the background of global financial crisis, speed slowing restricted the community's capability of labor force, embodying in the amount of labor supplied exceeds the amount of employment posts. Since 1998, more and more high school graduates chose English as their major, while fewer job vacancies are available with the shrinking national economy growth.

2.2 English discipline design VS social needs

In the process of higher education's popularization, the contradiction between English discipline design and social needs is mainly shown in two aspects. First, the structure of disciplines is monotonous; the running is indistinctive; discipline design is disjoint with social needs. Second, it is short of adjustment and improvement timely in interior; the teaching methods are stereotypical; the theory is separated from practice; and the difference of teaching effects is obvious. Showing on the graduate students, it is the contradiction between the students' ability structure and post needs, resulting in the structural unemployment.

2.3 Personal expectation of employment VS social reality

The other reason of employment difficulties is that English graduates get into trouble between high expectations

of future employment and social reality. Students can not fully understand the situation of employment in the reality, make mistakes in vocational orientation in the future, at last give up their jobs involuntarily in the course of employment because their talent can not display, or other factors such as interests, hobbies, wages, insurance benefits, interpersonal relationship, and so on.

2.4 English majors VS other majors

In recent years, with universities and the students themselves gradually attaching great importance to English learning, students become more proficient in English. Therefore, competition in jobs such as teachers, translators for English graduates will become more intense. According to statistics, only a small fraction of translation vacancies is for English language skills, and most of the vacancy is in Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese and other languages.

3. Effective countermeasures for employment difficulties

3.1 Transforming English training models

Finding a job can be difficult for all job seekers in tough economy, but a survey of recent graduates shows it is particularly difficult for graduates with only English landing a job.

The introduction of six new training models is significant: “English major plus courses in other specialisms”, “English major plus an orientation towards other disciplines”, “English major plus a minor”, “A major plus English language”, “English language plus another foreign language”, and “Dual degree: BA degree of English language and literature plus another BA degree”. Turning out ‘composite-type’ graduates has become a training objective of the curriculum for English majors, with consequent implications for the future development of this sector of education in China.

3.2 Reconstructing curriculum

According to the statistics, of all the courses, the important + very important rates for listening and oral English are 94% and 92.7% respectively. Then come the courses with the high rates, such as foreign trade English, phonetics, correspondence and business negotiation and writing. Intensive reading, originally taking up the biggest proportion of course time, only obtained 40.4%. At the same time, British and American literature courses are at the bottom, occupying 18.4%. It is worth thinking over, and the focus of the program should be reconsidered and adjusted.

New curriculum consists of the three areas: language-based skills, business-related knowledge and skills related to clerical work. In order to develop talents with professional skills and practical application capacity on the basis of social needs, the courses can be divided into three divisions: language skills, knowledge of business and other skills in working. Courses of language skills give priority to developing basic language use. The teaching focus should be on listening, speaking, reading, writing and interpreting. The objectives are to develop communication competence. Courses of business-related knowledge aim to teach students about international practice. Professional skills are concerned with teaching methodology.

3.3 Reassessing personal strength

It is wise for English majors to reassess personal strength exactly and establish appropriate expectation for employment, to prepare in advance to make personal career planning, to join in social practice to acquaint themselves with the social environment, to perfect personal knowledge and ability by keeping considering and studying, and to adjust themselves to the social environment and become hard working.

3.4 Integrating practice into course design

Since practicability and applicability are more essential and significant, it is advisable to adopt the teaching methodology with the focus on developing communication competence and to make the most of practice opportunities in order to free students from the disadvantages of traditional methodology which ignores listening and speaking and stresses reading and writing.

To give prominence to developing language skills, the language program is to attach importance to the practical activities through various possible channels, for example, the interaction on the campus and internships in the society. During the course of teaching, classroom time should be devoted to developing and improving the skills and quality of individual students. It is more important to help students learn how to use the language than to just pass on language knowledge. Compared to the traditional course design, classroom time should be reduced in order to increase practice in the corresponding practice companies or schools.

Considering students’ interest and needs, practice activities can be carried out by making full use of local

resources, such as companies and middle schools. Students can be scheduled to have their internship during the middle of the term and in summer or winter vacation. Meanwhile, they will attend the various international fairs held in the local areas to work as interpreters or translators. All of these activities provide students with the real input of language and the opportunities to learn about business and trade and how to teach in the middle school if they are interested in teaching.

3.5 Promoting the vocational guidance

Facing the social phenomenon of English graduates' employment difficulties, the community has reached a consensus that it needs the mutual participation of the government, enterprises, school, families and individuals to resolve the social problems. As the educational institution, the university plays an important role and has irreplaceable status. The vocational guidance in the university is the most important measure to resolve the problem.

It is advisable to establish systematic work platform of vocational guidance. That is to be composed a network of school vocational guidance by school leaders, middle-level teaching managers, career guidance teachers and class teachers. To help students understand the professional, self-understanding, so they can make rational decision in accordance with their own advantages, characteristics, combined with the characteristics of social occupational demand. To help students improve career and employment skills, including skills of self-recommendation, interview and written examination, in order to enhance the ability of employment and career successfully.

4. Conclusion

The global setting is not propitious for the creation of stable employment, and many steps have been taking in the region to address the resulting challenges. Although significant progress has been achieved, much remains to be done, as shown by the English majors' employment difficulties. Without solving this problem, the stability and harmony of the society can not be truly achieved.

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