

Objectives and Related Requirements of College English Teaching: A Comparative Textual Analysis of College English Curriculum Requirements and College English Teaching Guidelines (2020 version)

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Abstract

In order to explore the longitudinal development of the objectives and their related requirements of college English teaching in the last nearly two decades in China, the author adopting the methods of literature reading and textual analysis, draws a diachronic comparison between the College English Curriculum Requirements and the College English Teaching Guidelines(2020 version). Through careful reading and analyzing, the key findings are that at least three-aspect similarities and differences respectively exist in the two documents. For the similarities, the teaching objectives and their related requirements in the two documents both reflect the value orientation of instrumentality, the attention to students' autonomous learning as well as their comprehensive cultural literacy and the classification of three-level teaching requirements. However, as to the differences, firstly, special attention has been paid to the cultivation of students' listening and speaking skills in the teaching objectives of the Curriculum Requirements, while humanity in the teaching objectives of the Guidelines(2020 version) has increasingly become a major value orientation; additionally, an overall description of three-level teaching requirements has been made in the Guidelines(2020 version) apart from the individual description of each language skill; lastly, the numbers have been taken full advantage of to quantify English proficiency(five basic language skills) of three levels in teaching requirements of the Curriculum Requirements. Drawing on these findings, some corresponding suggestions are provided with in this paper.

Keywords: teaching objectives, teaching requirements, College English Curriculum Requirements, College English Teaching Guidelines (2020 version)

1. Introduction

In 2007, the Ministry of Education issued the College English Curriculum Requirements (2007) (Hereinafter referred to as the Curriculum Requirements) as the national guideline and authoritative foreign language education policy to guide the English teaching in China's universities as well as colleges. Six years later, with rapid changes and developments in political, economic and cultural situation, the National College Foreign Language Teaching Advisory Board (Teaching Advisory Board) began to formulate a new foreign language education policy which was College English Teaching Guidelines (Hereinafter referred to as Guidelines) in 2013(Cheng, J.Y., 2021). And later the new Guidelines was issued in 2015. While in order to better boost the deepening of reform as well as improving the quality of undergraduate education and teaching and adapt to the changing situations of international community, the Teaching Advisory Board conducted a revision of the Guidelines and finally issued the Guidelines(2020 version). The main points of the revision consist of teaching objectives and related requirements, ideological education, teaching content, teaching methodology, teacher development and so on (National College Foreign Language Teaching Advisory Board, 2020). Since both the two documents, regarded as the national and authoritative foreign language education polices to guide college English teaching, are aimed at adapting to the new situation of the development of higher education in China to deepen teaching reform, improve the teaching quality and meet the needs of the country and society for talent training, they are therefore of high comparability.

Teaching objectives vary with national and social development as well as educational background. With the

improvement of the international status, especially getting formal accession to the WTO in 2001, China at that time needed more college graduates with higher English speaking and writing skills, which thereby formed one of the reasons that the Curriculum Requirements attached great importance to the enhancement of undergraduates' listening and speaking skills (Tan, W., 2008). The design is the reflection and signal of ecological perspective of society. While for better implementing the spirit of the National Education Conference and conforming to the requirements of the development of higher education in the new era, increasing attention has been paid on humanity of College English teaching and the ideological construction of the English subject, which thus to some extent promote the appearance of the objectives of the Guidelines (2020 version). As is described in the document, the teaching objectives of college English intend to meet the needs of national society, schools and individual development, among which the last two are not emphasized in the Curriculum Requirements.

There is no doubt that the establishment of the teaching objectives of college English in the above two documents lie in the rising demands of higher education and changing situations in society. For this reason, there exists differences in the specific expression of teaching objectives and related requirements in the two documents. The China's Standards of English Language Ability (CSE), as the first English proficiency standard for learners in China, defines the requirements and standards that learners of different proficiency levels need to meet (Liu, Z. G., Z. L. L. & R. Y., 2021). Then, the group members of the Guidelines (2020 version) took full advantage of the CSE and, with reference to its description of language proficiency at relevant levels as well as concerning with the results of large-scale questionnaire survey, provided with a general description as well as individual language skills description of basic objectives, improving-objectives and developing-objectives in the college English teaching (He, L. Z., 2020). In contrast, the general description of three-level teaching requirements of relevant objectives is not provided in the Curriculum Requirements. Thus, it is appropriate and significant to compare different description of teaching objectives and related teaching requirements in the Curriculum Requirements and Guidelines(2020 version), so as to better understand the historical evolution of teaching objectives of college English teaching in the new era and thereby to facilitate the development of undergraduate education as well as teaching. Therefore, the textual analysis is mainly adopted to compare Curriculum Requirements and Guidelines (2020 version) and exactly to explore the similarities and differences of the teaching objectives, which are likely to promote better understanding and implementation of the teaching objectives.

2. Teaching Objectives and Related Requirements

Objectives are results to be achieved in the situation of an individual's activities, which are designed by him and, in the form of ideas, exist in his mind and are his expectation of the results of his activities (Wang, Y. Q. & Sun, H. A., 2015, p.11). And teaching objectives can be referred to as the changes that teaching will bring to students and as the expected learning effects of students in teaching activities. According to Cheng Da (2000), the establishment of teaching objectives is related to the harmonious development of the whole person (p.52). Besides, as the prerequisite and the central guideline of teaching, teaching objectives play the essential role in the teaching process, in which the teaching activities are guided by teaching objectives and are always implemented around the realization of teaching objectives. As for teaching requirements, they provide with a clear and specific description on how to achieve teaching objectives.

There are similarities between teaching objectives in college English teaching and those in senior high school English teaching in the concept. According to Wang Shouren (2008), in the aspect of teaching concept, the teaching objectives in the Curriculum Requirements are in line with those in English Curriculum Standard for General Senior High School. And in terms of the objectives in the Guidelines(2020 version), they also to some extent echo with those in the English Curriculum Standard for General Senior High School (Edition 2017). For example, one of the objectives of the New Curriculum Standard is the cultivation of thinking quality, which is also attached importance to in the general description of teaching requirements of the Guidelines(2020 version). Even though it is the truth that the similarities exist between the two documents, less studies have been done in this aspect. Besides fewer studies have compared the two documents in the aspect of the description of teaching objectives, which results in the situation that it is seemingly unknown what the whole picture of the change and development of the teaching objectives in college English teaching is in the last decade or so. To this respect, the teaching objectives in the two documents are in line with those in the curriculum standards for senior high school of their times in the concept, while relevantly a few studies have drawn the comparison between the two documents.

In a brief summary, teaching objectives are considered as expected learning outcome of students to a certain extent and their subsequent requirements further guide the implementation. In addition, it is necessary to compare the above two documents to better understand how to achieve those objectives, since a paucity of

studies have done the comparison.

3. Teaching Objectives and Related Requirements in the Curriculum Requirements and Guidelines

3.1 Teaching Objectives and Related Requirements in the Curriculum Requirements

Around the year of 2007, to a large extent, the teaching objectives of undergraduate education were on account of national and social development needs. According to the Curriculum Requirements, the teaching objectives of college English teaching aim to cultivate students' integrated English language competence, especially their listening and speaking skills, so that they can communicate effectively in English in the future study, work and social communication. At the same time the objectives are targeted at enhancing undergraduates' autonomous learning ability as well as their comprehensive cultural literacy to, together with the other objectives, meet the needs of China's social development and international communication. There are two key points worth noting in this document: one is the emphasis on the cultivation of students' listening and speaking skills, and the other is that the final goal is to meet the needs of the social development and international communication of the country. The reasons for these lie in the economic and political situations at that time. Therefore, the establishment of the objectives of undergraduate teaching around 2007 is the reflection of the needs of the country.

In order to better implement the above teaching objectives, related teaching requirements are offered in the document. As China has a vast territory and there are great differences among colleges and universities in different regions, three levels of the teaching requirements in the Curriculum Requirements are provided with that is, basic requirements, intermediate requirements and higher requirements. Among them the first level is for all the non-English majors in colleges and universities and the last two levels are recommended for qualified schools according to their own school-running orientation type and talent training objectives. All the three levels show a specific description of the requirements of English language proficiency, including the aspect of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating skills and recommended vocabulary.

As the basic requirements are targeted at all undergraduate students of non-English majors, they are taken as the main example to be analyzed in this paper. The main content is summarized in the following Table 1.

Table 1. English proficiency in the basic requirements in the Curriculum Requirements

Basic requirements	
Listening	Be able to understand basic English conversations aimed at communication, and understand radio as well as television programs spoken at a slow speed (130~150 words/minute).
Speaking	Be able to use basic conversational strategies to communicate in English.
Reading	Be able to use effective reading methods such as skimming and scanning to read English materials on common topics (70 words/minute).
Writing	Master basic writing skills to complete English compositions on common topics with at least 120 words in half an hour.
Translating	Be able to translate English (300 words/hour) into Chinese and Chinese (250 characters/hour) into English by a dictionary.
Recommended Vocabulary	4795 words and 700 phrases.

From the table, it is vividly indicated that the basic requirements of the objectives in the Curriculum Requirements put high emphasis on sub-skills to enhance basic five skills. Another highlight is the numbers, as can be seen in the table that the realization of nearly each skill has a specific number to quantify.

Taking all the above into consideration, the teaching objectives of college English teaching for students of non-English majors mainly reflect the needs of the country, and their related teaching requirements attach great importance to the improvement of listening and speaking.

3.2 Teaching Objectives and Related Requirements in the Guidelines

Humanity is thought highly of in the teaching objectives of college English teaching in the new era apart from the instrumentality. As what is shown in the Guidelines (2020 version), the objectives of college English teaching are aimed at cultivating students' English application ability, enhancing their intercultural communication awareness as well as competence and facilitating their autonomous learning so that they can utilize English effectively in their study, daily life, social communication and future work in order to meet the

needs of the state, society, school and their own development. From these description, it is obviously that two points have caught our attention: the objectives are paid attention to on the role of English in students' daily life and the final purpose of realizing these objectives is also because of the developmental needs of schools and the individuals. With this respect, the teaching objectives in the Guidelines (2020 version) highlight not only the importance of the instrumental needs of the country and society but also the individual development.

In addition, there are three-level teaching objectives (basic objectives, improving-objectives and developing-objectives) in the Guidelines (2020 version) concerning with the current situation of higher education and social development of basic education in China. While at the same time, according to the three-level objectives, three levels of college English teaching requirements are put forward respectively to better implement the responding objectives. The teaching requirements of basic objectives mainly focus on the students who have passed the English college entrance examination and should be met by most students when they graduate from college, and the other two levels of the requirements are recommended for students who enter university with a good level of English proficiency. Besides, the Guidelines (2020 version) has made a general description and individual language skills description of the teaching requirements of these levels, upon which the former includes the content of language skills and knowledge, intercultural communication competence and learning strategies, while the latter consists of that of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. Since the teaching requirements of basic objectives are defined for the English learning basic needs of most non-English majors, they are also therefore considered as the examples to be analyzed in the paper.

As to the general description of the teaching requirements in the basic objectives, three typical representations of language skills and knowledge, intercultural communication competence and learning strategies are as follow. Firstly the students are required to meet the needs of basic communication in the daily life, study and future work. Secondly, the students are able to use basic linguistic knowledge of English correctly, with an increase of about 2,000 words over the vocabulary required in high school. Thirdly, it is expected that the students can understand the dialogues on common topics and can use the limited learning or communicative strategies. So on a large extent, linguistic and communicative competence and learning ability are all emphasized in the teaching requirements of basic objectives in the Guidelines(2020 version).

While in terms of the description of individual language skills in the teaching requirements of the basic objectives, the main content is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Individual language skills in the teaching requirements of the basic objectives in the Guidelines (2020 version)

Listening	Be able to understand basic English conversations aimed at communication, and can basically understand the pronunciation at a slower speed.
Speaking	Be able to use basic conversational strategies to conduct short but multi-round conversations in English on familiar or daily topics.
Reading	Be able to use basic reading strategies to read English materials on familiar topics.
Writing	Be able to use basic writing skills to express ideas.
Translating	Be able to limitedly use translation skills to do translation between English and Chinese by a dictionary.

From the Table 2, it can be known that the Guidelines (2020 version) also attaches the importance to the cultivation of basic sub-skills to enhance college students' listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating skills.

All in all, humanity plays an essential role in the teaching objectives of college English teaching in the Guidelines (2020 version), and these objectives include three levels that is, basic objectives, improving-objectives and developing-objectives. As for the teaching requirements, the document provides with a general description and the description of individual language skills, in which the former emphasizes the improvement of linguistic competence, communicative competence and learning ability, while the latter mainly pays attention to the enhancement of sub-skills to boost the five basic language skills of English.

3.3 Results of the Similarities and Differences of the Teaching Objectives and Their Related Requirements in the Curriculum Requirements and the Guidelines (2020 version)

Both the Curriculum Requirements and the Guidelines (2020 version) are regarded as the authoritative foreign language education policies in the year of 2007 and 2020 respectively to guide the undergraduate English

teaching of non-English majors in China. Although more than ten years apart, with different economic situation and foreign language education background, the teaching objectives and their related requirements defined in these two documents have three aspects of similarities (Table 3): (1) They both highlight the value orientation of instrumentality; (2) Students' autonomous learning and comprehensive cultural literacy are thought highly of; (3) Both the two documents provide with the related three-level teaching requirements, among which the requirements in basic objectives emphasize the application of sub-skills to promote the enhancement of five basic language skills of English.

However, as also can be seen, there are indeed four-aspect differences of teaching objectives and related requirements in the Curriculum Requirements and the Guidelines (2020 version): (1) Humanity is a prominent value orientation in the teaching objectives of the Guidelines (2020 version) apart from that of instrumentality which however is exceedingly attached importance to in the Curriculum Requirements; (2) The teaching objectives of college English teaching in the Curriculum Requirements highly emphasize the cultivation of students' listening and speaking skills; (3) The clear general description of teaching requirements in the Guidelines(2020 version) are put forward together with individual language skills description, while the former are not seen in the Curriculum Requirements; (4) The first level of teaching requirements (basic requirements) in the Curriculum Requirements takes full advantage of numbers to quantify each proficiency of language skills.

Table 3. Comparison and contrast of the teaching objectives and their related requirements in the two documents

	Curriculum Requirements	Guidelines (2020 version)
Similarities	(1) Value orientation of instrumentality.	
	(2) Emphasis on students' autonomous learning and comprehensive cultural literacy.	
	(3) With the classification of three-level teaching requirements.	Increasing attention to the value orientation of humanity.
Differences	High emphasis on the cultivation of listening and speaking skills.	With general description of teaching requirements.
	Fully utilizing numbers to quantify each proficiency of language skills in basic requirements.	

Taking all the above comparison into consideration, there are indeed at least three-aspect similarities and differences respectively in the objectives and their related requirements in the Curriculum Requirements and the Guidelines (2020 version).

4. Discussion

As we all know, language policies and documents are the reflection of the Times. Some reasons for the above similarities and differences are as follows. For similarities, firstly, in terms of the highlight on the value orientation of instrumentality, as the realization of those objectives benefits the needs of the country and the social development. English taken as a subject in China at first was largely because of the need of international communication, and it is without doubt that the value orientation of instrumentality was equipped in the foreign language policies. Secondly, since the aim of learning knowledge is not in the intake of itself, but more in the ways on how to absorb it, so students' autonomous learning and comprehensive cultural literacy are thought highly of in the two documents. Furthermore, the reasons for the three-level teaching requirements lie in that English is as a foreign language in China and the country has a vast territory with great differences among colleges in different regions, so college English teaching should follow the principle of classified guidance and individualized teaching.

As to the differences, in the first place, for humanity being a prominent value orientation in the teaching objectives of the Guidelines (2020 version), as described in section 3, the achievement of teaching objectives of college English teaching in the Curriculum Requirements mainly concerns with the needs of the country and the social development, while that of teaching objectives in the Guidelines (2020 version) also benefits the schools

and the individuals. This to some extent can be explained by the emphasis on the ideological construction in the new era of China since in the year of 2014 the Ministry of Education issued the Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Curriculum Reform and Implementing the Fundamental Tasks of Cultivating Moral Talents. In the second place, for the emphasis on the cultivation of students' listening and speaking skills in the Curriculum Requirements, as having been explained in the introduction part, with the improvement of the international status, China around 2007 needed more college graduates with higher English speaking and writing skills. Besides, this is in view of the situation that reading comprehension was the main task in college English teaching in the past, while students' listening and speaking ability was weak, which thus can also account for this decision. In the third place, addition of the general description of teaching requirements in the Guidelines (2020 version) to individual language skills description can be considered as a progress in the teaching reform.

Teaching objectives play the central roles in curriculum reform, while it is the fact that fewer studies have drawn a comparison between the two authoritative documents to analyze the teaching objectives. Only with the clear objectives and destinations can the implementation of teaching receive better effects. Even more than a decade apart, analyzing the Curriculum Requirements can offer some inspiration to the reform and carrying out of the objectives of the Guidelines(2020 version). Therefore, it is necessary and significant to conduct a textual analysis on the teaching objectives and their related requirements in the Curriculum Requirements and the Guidelines(2020 version) in order to lay a literature foundation for the longitudinal research of college English teaching policies in the future and guide college English teaching practice in China.

5. Conclusion and Implication

Teaching objectives and their related requirements will to a large extent affect students' learning effects. A diachronic analysis of the objectives of college English teaching for non-English majors and their dynamic development will be more conducive to guiding the teaching reform and practice. Through textual analysis of the teaching objectives and their related requirements in the Curriculum Requirements and the Guidelines (2020 version), the key findings are that there are at least three-aspect similarities and differences respectively in the two documents. The similarities are shown in the aspects of the value orientation of instrumentality, students' autonomous learning as well as comprehensive cultural literacy and the classification of three-level teaching requirements; while the differences are that increasing attention has been paid to the value orientation of humanity in the teaching objectives of the Guidelines(2020 version) apart from that of instrumentality, the cultivation of students' listening and speaking skills is attached great importance to in the teaching objectives of college English teaching in the Curriculum Requirements, the general description of teaching requirements has been made in the Guidelines(2020 version) and the numbers have been took full advantage of to quantify each proficiency of language skills in the first level of teaching requirements(basic requirements) in the Curriculum Requirements.

Accordingly, together with the key findings, some corresponding suggestions are as the following. Firstly, college English teaching is suggested to put enough emphasis on not only instrumentality but humanity. Secondly, students' autonomous learning and comprehensive cultural literacy should never be ignored. Thirdly, students are encouraged to learn and apply sub-skills to facilitate their enhancement of English language basic skills. And lastly schools and teachers can quantify and refine teaching requirements to better achieve teaching goals. While the study has its limitations such as only taking the basic teaching requirements in the two documents as the examples to draw the comparison, which implies that more future studies will offer more examples in terms of the other two levels of the requirements.

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