学生需求视角下的大学英语课程研究

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Research into the College English Curriculum: A Learner Needs Perspective

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序一/Preface 1

China—politically, socially, and educationally—is on a cultural-intercultural cusp! Where foreign language education is concerned, grammar-translation methods have been slowly giving way to more communicative approaches, and now, intercultural approaches. Meanwhile, with the acknowledgement of learners' central position in learning activities, increasing attention has been paid to learner-centredness and learner autonomy in foreign language education. As Jingyan's book demonstrates, the need for guidelines to a learner-centred approach in English language education which can be adapted and adopted by educators, teachers, and learners in China, is imperative. This book, informed by doctoral research undertaken at Durham University in the United Kingdom, and grounded in an exploratory study of the English language learning experiences of College English students in a Chinese university, offers such a resource. The book provides an original and unique perspective on these students' language learning needs and recommendations for a pedagogy that responds to them.

Furthermore, the language learning landscape in China is changing. In the context of China's rapid internal development citizens are in need of an intercultural

perspective. As China experiences internal migration, the presence of minority languages and regional dialects exposes citizens in everyday life to linguistic and cultural diversity, and thus, the need to understand the complexity that this diversity offers. In addition, through international educational and business exchange, Internet communication, and the internationalisation of education, young Chinese learners are exposed to multiple forms of representation and identification, challenging stable identities and fixed belongings to one place or one history and culture. Through language and cultural expression individuals are able to experiment with and experience otherness as well as locate themselves in broader social and (inter)cultural local and global spaces. The exploration of these more self-reflexive and critical perspectives in language education can be explored in a process-oriented curriculum. In this regard, Jingyan's research offers a learner-centred approach to language learning, and a wealth of materials and approaches for supporting English and other foreign languages teachers through this transition from traditional to more intercultural pedagogies.

As Jingyan outlines in the foreword, the study draws on "the fields of needs analysis, curriculum development, and foreign language teaching and learning to explore the impact of curriculum planning and implementation on learners' English learning and personal growth in order to inform practice in foreign language education." Her findings highlight a major concern in the English language curriculum for College English: that is, that an over-emphasis on a product-oriented perspective and especially testing, risks a reductive approach to language education,

losing sight of the process of learning itself and leaving little room for the exploration of the intercultural aspects of language learning. Jingyan's research highlights the importance of a shift from a product-oriented curriculum (focusing on explanation and knowledge retention) to an emphasis on the process of learning—of apprehending, understanding and accounting for experience, thereby opening up opportunities for experiential learning, reflection, and critical thinking. The forthcoming *Guidelines on College English Teaching* introduced by the Chinese Ministry of Education with a focus on intercultural (communicative) competence means that a process-oriented curriculum is now essential in supporting these aspects of student education.

As the findings from Jingyan's book illustrate, College English students are less interested in—even bored of— product orientations in language learning. The book is timely in providing new directions for English language teaching and learning within the new intercultural curriculum, directions which allow for individual agency in learning, and communica-tive and intercultural experience. As China seeks to further open up its doors and look outwards, for example, through the One Belt One Road policy and strategy, Chinese students will be needing—and most likely wanting (as the learners in Jingyan's book demonstrate)— learning approaches that offer intercultural process-oriented learning materials and teaching methods. Jingyan's research supports the goals of the Ministry of Education by paving the way for intercultural learning and the development of intercultural communicative competence.

The book offers a wide range of insights drawn from the perceptions and experiences of the College English

language learners. The emergent outcomes and recommendations should inform language teacher education programmes not only for prospective and in-service teachers of College English, but to all teachers of English majors, and other foreign languages, including minority languages, and intercultural educators in China more generally. Furthermore, the book's conclusions and implications provide insights and inspiration for curriculum designers and policy makers about how to develop College English curricula and programmes that engage learners in the intercultural landscape of language learning. The outcomes also have resonance for many educational spheres beyond students of College English, e. g. , for English majors students, for students learning other "foreign" languages in China.

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Dr Prue Holmes

Durham University, UK

September 21, 2017

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序二/Preface 2

对"需求分析"的关注和研究,一直是我给自己的教学研究命题之一。早在 2002 年,我在《外语界》发表了"大学英语教师的外语教育观念、知识、能力、科研现状与进修情况调查结果报告",目的为开展有目的、有针对性、有实效的师资培训活动,包括为教师反思提供需求参考。该文被下载和引用次数约达 5000(中国知网检索至 2016)。同年,我出版了《现代外语课程设计理论与实践》(上海外语教育出版社 2002),对学生的需求调查,我列举了 Jack Richards(1994)对中国学生的两个问卷案例,目的是为课程设计提供目标需求。这本书据反映也成为我国大学英语教师的"案头书"。可见,"需求分析"有需求。

彭晶艳博士以学生的视角对学生进行学习需求分析,包括"感觉需求(felt needs)""表达需求(expressed needs)""目标需求(target needs)""过程需求(learning needs)"以及需求被满足程度的调查分析,以便做到真正从源头上落实"以学生为中心""以学生为学习主体""以人为本""以学为本"的教学。我为此感到兴奋,因为,这个研究一方面是补了国内的空白,另一方面为国内大学英语教学大纲(指南)给予直接的支撑,还有一方面给了国内研究一个信号,即小题可以大做成博士论文。这个在外语界,除了做语言本体研究的博士论文比较常见"小题大做"之外,在教学研究领域非常值得提倡。

彭博士的研究给我们这样的启示:只要是教育研究,不

管是外语教育研究,还是课程研究、教学方法研究、课堂研究,都离不开学生这个教学受体。所以,研究要做与学生相关的小事、实事、要事。要多做"扎根研究(grounded research)""实践研究(practical research)""调查研究(investigative research)",而且最好是问题导向,反思为先,为解决问题难题而进行研究。我国大学生作为英语学习的终端出口,其英语应用能力和跨文化交流能力屡受社会和职场批评。因此,他们的心声、呼声、应声需要有人去倾听、解读,从中反思大学英语教学的弊端和缺失。他们表达的需求即使是盲目的,自以为是的,不知道自己不知道的,也有必要的价值,教师可以进行针对性引导。如果学生反映的需求正好符合社会需求,那就需要教师、课堂、教学方法、考试方法和评价方法全面应需。

总之,"以学生为中心"和"以学为本"的教学需要来自学生、服务学生,需要相应的研究学生、了解学生,需要引导学生、指导学生,才能谈得上真正让学生自主学习、合作学习、研究性学习。自上而下的需求论证很必要,但还需要自下而上的需求调查与分析。这是研究生、研究者、教师作为研究者应该做的研究之一。彭博士的研究具有价值意义,是有前瞻前导(feed-forward)作用的研究。

夏纪梅

2017 年 10 月 1 日

于中山大学康乐园家居书房

Foreword

This book is based on a case study of English as a foreign language (EFL) education in a Chinese independent college. Independent colleges are newly-established privately funded institutions of higher education in China. The focus of the study is on learner-perceived English learning needs and how these needs are being met and can be accommodated in the English curriculum, including the national curriculum and the institutional curriculum of the independent college being studied. I seek to draw together understanding from the fields of needs analysis (NA), curriculum development, and foreign language teaching and learning to explore the impact of curriculum planning and implementation on learners' English learning and personal growth in order to inform practice in foreign language education.

Rationale for the research

It is nowadays assumed by many people that the primary purpose of education is to contribute to one's vocational and economic life. This is known as the social market perspective on education (McKernan, 2008). The perspective is also seen in language courses, with the College English (CE) course in Chinese higher education being an example. The CE national

curriculum, i. e. the *College English Curriculum Requirements*, has been drawn up with a view to "meeting the needs of the country and society for qualified personnel in the new era" (2007, p. 22), among several other purposes.

As McKernan (2008, p. 96) notes, social market advocates stipulate that accountability is required in education because public funds are expended on "investment spending". Long (2005a, 2005b) also argues that in this era of shrinking resources there are growing demands for accountability in public life, with education being a particularly urgent case and foreign language education a prime example within it. Long further states that in foreign language education this accountability translates into an urgent need for courses of all kinds to be relevant to the needs of specific groups of learners and of society at large. These needs are usually associated with the products of learning, including academic, occupational, vocational or "survival" needs for functional L2 proficiency. Identifying and analysing learners' needs is known as needs analysis (NA) and has become an indispensable part of course design—"a prerequisite for effective course design" (Long, 2005a, p. 1).

I believe that education should also be accountable to learners as *individuals* in the learning process. As McKernan (2008, p. 96-97) argues, "education must not be seen as merely an investment in the economy but also as a service to be judged by the contribution it makes to the well-being of the individual (p. 96-97)." Developing the individual as a *person* is a more fundamental purpose of education (p. 96). This is echoed by Kelly (2009, p. 98), who argues that "the prime concern of the educational process is with human development."

In this concept of education, great importance should be attached to accommodating the needs of learners as individuals in

the learning situation. Needs analysis, accordingly, should include a focus on understanding learners' perceptions of their process-oriented needs, in addition to a focus on their product-oriented needs such as academic and vocational needs. It should not only be a part of the curriculum design, but also should continue throughout the process of implementing it, i. e. in teaching and learning practice.

Research into the College English Curriculum: A Learner Needs Perspective is a book which approaches English education by combining the social market perspective with the perspective of personal development. It is based on a learner-centred NA which examines the accommodation of learners' needs in the College English curriculum and seeks effective ways to improve the curriculum so as to better accommodate learners' needs. The NA focuses not only on the products/results of learning and course design, but also on the learning process, and particularly on learners as individuals in the learning situation.

Organisation of this book

In Chapter 1, I first review the present situation of English teaching in Chinese higher education, including related concerns and problems, the design of the national curriculum currently being used, and independent colleges as a new teaching environment. This review provides the motivation for me to conduct a learner-centred needs analysis to investigate the College English (CE) curriculum with the aim of improving it. I then state the aims, importance and originality of the research and clarify two key terms: College English, and the College English curriculum.

Chapter 2 sets the theoretical scene for the present study. In section 2. 1, I review existing research on needs analysis in

language teaching, including the definitions of "needs", the purposes, philosophies, and types of needs analysis. Section 2. 2 reviews theories of curriculum development by focusing on two models of curriculum development: the product model and the process model. In Section 2. 3, I review theories regarding the purposes of language education, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, intercultural communicative competence, and language learning autonomy. The chapter finishes by setting out the research questions and providing a theoretical framework for addressing these questions.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter. I first present the rationale for a social constructionist paradigm and a case study approach. A detailed description is provided of the data sources and data collection procedures, involving documents, observations and interviews, and the data analysis process is described. Important issues in the research process are also introduced, including reflexivity, ethical issues, and trustworthiness.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the findings of the study and answer the three research questions in sequence, with each chapter focusing on one question. Chapter 4 presents the English learning needs expressed by the learners, both their target needs and their learning needs. In Chapter 5, I first present a review of the CE curriculum, covering both the national curriculum and the institutional curriculum. Subsequently, the learners' expressed needs are compared with relevant issues in the CE curriculum in order to evaluate the extent to which the CE curriculum meets the learners' expressed needs. Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the teaching environment of CE, identifying the factors that impact on the

improvement of the CE curriculum, and accordingly, the accommodation of the learners' expressed needs.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter. It summarises the main findings and discusses how they contribute to existing theories on needs analysis and curriculum development in language teaching. The pedagogical and methodological implications are also discussed, and the limitations of the study are analysed. Furthermore, the directions for future research on the development of the CE curriculum are suggested, with a view to informing foreign language education. The chapter is concluded with an overview of the study, including its key focus and its overall value.

About referencing

Sources in both English and Chinese are cited and referenced in this book. As the book is written in English, I have followed a referencing style commonly used in English-speaking countries—the Harvard (author-date) style—to reference English sources. Given that many of my readers might be Chinese researchers or educators, I have referenced Chinese sources by following the national standard—Chinese approach which is set in "Information and documentation—Rules for bibliographic references and citations to information resources (GB/T 7714—2015)". To be consistent with the English referencing, I have chosen the "first element and date method", which is similar to the Harvard (author-date) style.

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Jingyan Peng

Changsha, Hunan

October 2, 2017

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List of Abbreviations

CE   College English

CECR   *College English Curriculum Requirements*

CET   College English Test

CET-4   College English Test Band Four

CET-6   College English Test Band Six

CMOE   Chinese Ministry of Education

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

ICC   Intercultural Communicative Competence

LSA   Learning Situation Analysis

NA   Needs Analysis

TSA   Target Situation Analysis

WTO   World Trade Organisation

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