Original Paper

Research on College English Curriculum with a Focus on Ocean Awareness

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Abstract

This paper delves into the design of a college English curriculum centered on cultivating ocean awareness. Against the backdrop of globalization and increasing attention to marine resources, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating ocean awareness into college English teaching to enhance students' global perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills. By meticulously incorporating ocean-related topics, innovating teaching methods and tools, constructing a scientific and reasonable evaluation system, and organizing a variety of practical activities, this research aims to comprehensively foster students' ocean awareness. This innovative curriculum design not only provides students with a broader learning perspective but also injects new vitality into the reform of college English education, thereby effectively promoting the overall development and improvement of students' competencies.

Keywords

ocean awareness cultivation, College English curriculum, teaching reform, global perspective, cross-cultural communication skills

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, an era of globalization, the ocean serves not only as a bridge connecting countries but also as a critical field for national development, international cooperation, and resource competition. Consequently, ocean awareness, which encompasses the understanding, utilization, and protection of the ocean, has gradually become a national strategic awareness, crucial for a country's long-term development and international standing. This is particularly true for China, a nation with vast maritime

areas and abundant marine resources, where the importance of ocean awareness is self-evident. On the other hand, as globalization progresses, international exchanges and cooperation have become more frequent, and English, as the global lingua franca, plays a pivotal role. College English courses, as a significant part of China's higher education system, aim not only to impart language knowledge but also to cultivate students' global perspectives and enhance their cross-cultural communication skills. In this context, integrating ocean awareness into college English courses becomes particularly important and urgent.

However, there are still many shortcomings in the current college English curriculum regarding the cultivation of ocean awareness. On one hand, traditional college English teaching often focuses on imparting language knowledge and training language skills, neglecting the cultivation of students' global perspectives and cross-cultural communication abilities. On the other hand, even when ocean-related topics are included, they are often limited to superficial introductions, lacking in-depth discussions of ocean-related issues and thorough guidance on fostering students' ocean awareness.

To address these issues, this paper proposes a college English curriculum design featuring the cultivation of ocean awareness. This design aims to comprehensively enhance students' ocean awareness and English application skills by integrating ocean-related content and methods, innovating the evaluation system, and organizing a variety of practical activities. Additionally, this paper will explore how to effectively implement this specialized curriculum design in college English courses based on practical experience, providing valuable references for the reform of college English teaching in China. Through this research, we hope to raise awareness among educators about the importance of cultivating ocean awareness in college English courses and promote the deepening of related teaching reforms. Furthermore, we aim to provide frontline teachers with practical teaching strategies and methods through the sharing of practical experiences, jointly enhancing the quality of college English education in China and fostering the comprehensive development of students' competencies.

2. Integration Points between College English Curriculum and Ocean Awareness Cultivation

The college English curriculum, as a foundational course in higher education, aims to enhance students' English language proficiency and cultivate their cross-cultural communication skills to adapt to the trends of globalization. On the other hand, ocean awareness cultivation is a response to the increasing global attention on marine environments, aiming to guide students to understand, care for, and protect the ocean, thereby forming correct ocean-related concepts and behaviors. There are close connections and several integration points between the college English curriculum and ocean awareness cultivation. First, the teaching content of the college English curriculum can be closely integrated with ocean themes. During the teaching process, instructors can select ocean-related English articles, reports, and popular science knowledge as reading materials. This will guide students to understand the mysteries of the ocean, recognize the importance of marine ecosystems, and comprehend the impact of human activities on the marine environment through reading. Such teaching content can not only improve

students' English reading skills but also subtly cultivate their ocean awareness.

Secondly, elements of ocean awareness cultivation can also be integrated into listening and speaking exercises in the college English curriculum. Instructors can use ocean-related audio and video materials, such as marine documentaries and news reports, as listening and speaking practice resources. Through activities like imitation, repetition, and discussion, students can improve their English listening and speaking skills while gaining a more direct understanding of the current state and issues of the ocean. This approach helps to enhance their sense of responsibility and mission towards marine environmental protection.

Furthermore, writing and translation exercises in the college English curriculum are also important components that can be combined with ocean awareness cultivation. Instructors can design ocean-related writing and translation tasks, such as drafting ocean conservation proposals or translating marine science articles. These tasks help students apply their English knowledge to real-world scenarios, enhancing their practical English skills while deepening their understanding and concern for ocean issues.

In addition to integrating ocean awareness into the teaching content, the college English curriculum can seek innovation in teaching methods. For example, case-based teaching can be employed by introducing real ocean-related cases, allowing students to learn relevant English knowledge while deepening their understanding of marine issues through case analysis. Furthermore, scenario simulation can be used to create real-life ocean scenarios, enabling students to learn and use English in simulated situations, thereby enhancing their practical skills and adaptability.

Additionally, the college English curriculum can be complemented with ocean awareness activities. Schools can organize extracurricular activities related to the ocean, such as marine knowledge lectures and beach clean-up campaigns. These activities not only enrich students' extracurricular life but also allow them to personally experience the importance of ocean conservation in practice, thus encouraging more active participation in cultivating ocean awareness.

In conclusion, there are numerous integration points between the college English curriculum and ocean awareness cultivation. By organically combining teaching content, teaching methods, and extracurricular activities, it is possible to enhance students' English language proficiency while effectively fostering their ocean awareness. This lays a solid foundation for developing well-rounded talents with international perspectives and environmental consciousness. This interdisciplinary teaching model also aligns with current educational reform trends and helps promote the comprehensive improvement of higher education quality.

3. College English Curriculum Design with Ocean Awareness Cultivation as its Distinctive Feature

Designing a college English curriculum with ocean awareness cultivation as its distinctive feature is a systematic and innovative teaching process. It not only requires us to innovate in curriculum content,

teaching methods, and evaluation methods but also requires us to deeply understand the essence of ocean awareness and organically integrate it with English teaching. In doing so, we can cultivate well-rounded talents who possess solid English language skills, as well as a strong ocean awareness and global perspective.

3.1 Curriculum Content Selection

In selecting curriculum content, we should adhere to the principles of "closeness to reality, closeness to life, and closeness to students" (Bai, 2023, p. 43), meticulously choosing text, audio, and video materials related to the ocean. These materials may encompass various aspects such as marine science knowledge, marine environmental protection, marine resource development, and international cooperation in the marine realm. The aim is to stimulate students' interest and concern for the ocean through diverse themes.

To ensure the timeliness and forward-looking nature of the curriculum content, we can introduce some of the latest findings from marine research and updates on international marine policies. For instance, by addressing the issue of marine microplastic pollution, we can prompt students to contemplate the impact of human activities on the marine ecosystem. Additionally, by discussing the development and utilization of marine energy, we can ignite students' interest in marine technological innovation. Furthermore, we can integrate China's marine strategy and the Belt and Road Initiative to analyze the pivotal role of the ocean in national development, thereby enhancing students' national consciousness and sense of responsibility.

3.2 Innovative Teaching Methods

In terms of teaching methods, we should abandon traditional rote learning and instead adopt more flexible and diverse approaches. Project-based learning is a highly effective method that allows students to actively explore and construct knowledge while solving real-world problems. We can design projects related to the ocean, such as "Designing Marine Environmental Protection Plans" or "Planning Maritime Cultural Exchange Activities", enabling students to collaborate in teams to accomplish tasks and enhance their practical skills and innovative spirit.

Moreover, situational teaching is also a worthwhile method to explore. By simulating real ocean environments or scenarios, students can learn and apply English within context. For instance, we can set up a simulated United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, with students role-playing as representatives from different countries negotiating and deliberating on topics such as marine environmental protection and fisheries resource management. Such activities not only hone students' English speaking and communication skills but also enhance their understanding and awareness of international maritime affairs.

To fully utilize modern information technology, we can also incorporate multimedia and online teaching resources. For example, leveraging Virtual Reality (VR) technology to create an immersive marine learning environment for students, and providing a diverse array of learning resources and interactive opportunities through online courses and platforms. The application of these technological

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tools will greatly enhance students' interest and effectiveness in learning.

3.3 Integration of Cultural Elements

Incorporating ocean awareness into the college English curriculum, we should also focus on nurturing students' cross-cultural communication skills. As an integral part of world culture, maritime culture possesses rich connotations and diversity. By guiding students to understand and appreciate the maritime cultures of different countries and regions, we can help broaden their international perspectives and enhance their ability to engage in cross-cultural communication.

To achieve this goal, we can introduce reading materials, audio-visual materials, and oral exercises related to maritime culture into the curriculum content. For instance, selecting English poems, prose, or excerpts from novels depicting maritime customs of various countries for students to read and appreciate; playing videos showcasing maritime festivals and celebrations from around the world; designing oral exercises simulating overseas travel or international maritime cultural exchanges. These activities will enable students to gain a more intuitive understanding of maritime cultures worldwide, thereby enhancing their cultural literacy and communication skills (Wu, 2009).

Moreover, we can encourage students to participate in international maritime cultural exchange activities such as international maritime cultural festivals, maritime-themed summer camps, etc., providing them with opportunities to personally experience and immerse themselves in the maritime cultures of different countries, thereby enhancing their cross-cultural communication abilities.

3.4 Emphasis of Practical Application

A college English curriculum with ocean awareness cultivation as its distinctive feature should also emphasize the practical application of English. By setting practical tasks related to the ocean, students can enhance their English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation abilities while completing these tasks.

For example, we can assign a research report task on marine environmental protection, requiring students to collect relevant data, conduct field investigations, write an English report, and deliver an oral presentation. Such tasks not only develop students' English writing skills but also improve their oral communication abilities and critical thinking. Additionally, through field investigations and research, students gain a deeper understanding of the importance and urgency of marine environmental protection, enhancing their environmental awareness and sense of social responsibility.

In summary, a college English curriculum designed with ocean awareness cultivation as its distinctive feature should focus on content selection, innovative teaching methods, the construction of evaluation systems, and the cultivation of cross-cultural communication skills and English proficiency. Through such curriculum design, we can more effectively enhance students' ocean awareness and English language application abilities, laying a solid foundation for cultivating well-rounded talents with international perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills.

4. Implementation Strategies and Recommendations

When implementing a college English curriculum with ocean awareness cultivation as its distinctive feature, it is essential to consider various factors comprehensively, including teaching content, teaching methods, teaching staff, teaching resources, and students' actual needs. The following are some specific implementation strategies and recommendations aimed at providing reference for the successful implementation of this course.

4.1 Clarify Teaching Objectives and Positioning

Firstly, it is crucial to clarify the teaching objectives and positioning of the course. For a college English curriculum with ocean awareness cultivation as its distinctive feature, the objective is not only to enhance students' English proficiency but also, more importantly, to cultivate their ocean awareness, enabling them to understand, care for, and protect the ocean. Therefore, when developing the teaching plan, this objective should be fully considered to ensure that all aspects of the course are aligned with it.

4.2 Integrate and Optimize Teaching Content

Teaching content is the core of course implementation (Pearson & Hiebert, 2015). To highlight the distinctive feature of ocean awareness cultivation, it is necessary to integrate and optimize existing college English teaching content. Specifically, several aspects can be considered:

Increase reading materials with ocean themes: Select English articles, reports, or research findings related to the ocean as classroom reading materials. These materials can cover various aspects such as marine ecology, marine resources, marine economy, and maritime culture to help students gain a comprehensive understanding of different facets of the ocean.

Integrate ocean-themed listening and speaking exercises: Introduce audio and video materials related to the ocean, such as marine documentaries and news reports, into listening and speaking exercises. Through imitation, repetition, and discussion, students can improve their English listening and speaking skills while deepening their understanding of ocean-related issues.

Design writing and translation tasks with ocean themes: In writing and translation exercises, design tasks related to the ocean, such as drafting proposals for marine conservation or translating popular science articles about the ocean. These tasks help students apply their English knowledge to practical scenarios, thereby enhancing their English language proficiency.

4.3 Innovative Teaching Methods and Approaches

Innovative teaching methods and approaches are crucial for improving teaching effectiveness. In a college English curriculum with ocean awareness cultivation as its distinctive feature, the following teaching methods can be explored:

Case-based learning: Introduce real-life ocean cases such as marine pollution incidents or marine ecological conservation projects, allowing students to learn relevant English knowledge while deepening their understanding of ocean issues through case analysis.

Task-driven teaching: Design a series of tasks related to the ocean, such as creating posters on marine

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themes or planning maritime cultural activities. Through completing these tasks, students can not only improve their English proficiency but also develop teamwork and innovation skills.

Situational simulation teaching: Simulate real-life ocean scenarios such as maritime rescue operations or marine scientific expeditions, enabling students to learn and apply English in simulated situations (Le, 2003). This teaching method enhances students' practical skills and adaptability.

Blended learning: Combine online and offline teaching methods, utilizing online platforms to provide rich learning resources and interactive opportunities. For example, establish a course website or app offering English learning materials on ocean-related topics, online tests, discussion forums, etc., allowing students to engage in learning anytime and anywhere.

4.4 Strengthening Faculty Development

Teachers are the key to course implementation. To successfully conduct a college English course with ocean awareness cultivation as its distinctive feature, it is essential to strengthen faculty development and enhance teachers' professional competence and teaching abilities. Specific measures include:

Enhancing teacher training: Organize regular teacher training activities, invite experts in the field of ocean studies to give lectures or workshops, and help teachers understand the latest developments and research findings in the ocean field. At the same time, provide training in English teaching skills to improve teachers' teaching proficiency.

Encouraging teacher exchanges: Establish a platform for teacher exchanges, encourage teachers to share teaching experiences and teaching resources. Through mutual learning and sharing, continuously improve teachers' teaching abilities.

Recruiting outstanding talents: Actively recruit outstanding talents with backgrounds in ocean studies and experience in English teaching to provide strong support for course implementation.

4.5 Utilizing and Developing Teaching Resources

Teaching resources are essential for course implementation. To enrich teaching content and methods, it is necessary to fully utilize and develop various teaching resources. Specific measures include:

Utilizing existing resources: Collecting and organizing English teaching resources related to the ocean, such as textbooks, audio, and video materials. These resources can provide students with diverse learning materials to help them better understand ocean knowledge.

Developing new resources: Encouraging teachers and students to jointly develop new teaching resources, such as creating micro-courses on ocean themes, designing interactive learning games, etc. These new resources can stimulate students' interest and creativity, improving teaching effectiveness.

School-enterprise cooperation: Collaborating with companies or institutions to jointly develop ocean-themed teaching resources suitable for college English teaching (Hull & Moje, 2012). Through school-enterprise cooperation, more practical cases and opportunities for practice can be introduced, enhancing the practicality and relevance of the course.

4.6 Establishing a Comprehensive Evaluation System

To ensure the effectiveness of course implementation, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive

evaluation system. This system should include both formative and summative assessments to fully assess students' learning outcomes and the improvement of their ocean awareness. Specific measures include:

Designing diverse assessment methods: In addition to traditional written and oral tests, alternative methods such as portfolio assessment and project evaluation can be introduced. These assessment methods can provide a more comprehensive reflection of students' learning progress and capabilities.

Emphasizing formative assessment: Paying attention to students' performance and efforts during the learning process, such as class participation and completion of assignments. Formative assessment allows for the timely identification of students' learning issues and needs, providing guidance for subsequent teaching.

Conducting summative assessment: Carrying out summative assessment at the end of the course to evaluate students' learning outcomes and the improvement of their ocean awareness (Kong & Tian, 2023). Summative assessment can take various forms, such as comprehensive tests and thesis writing.

In summary, the implementation of a university English course with a focus on cultivating ocean awareness requires consideration of multiple factors. By clarifying teaching objectives and positioning, integrating and optimizing teaching content, innovating teaching methods and approaches, strengthening faculty development, utilizing and developing teaching resources, and establishing a comprehensive evaluation system, we can provide strong support for the successful implementation of the course and cultivate talents with solid English language skills and a strong sense of ocean awareness.

5. Conclusion and Prospects

In today's increasingly globalized world, the importance of English as a universal language for international communication is self-evident. At the same time, as humanity continues to exploit and utilize ocean resources, cultivating ocean awareness becomes increasingly crucial. Therefore, integrating university English courses with the cultivation of ocean awareness is not only an innovative attempt in traditional English teaching but also a significant supplement to the comprehensive development of students.

Through the discussion in this article, we can draw the following conclusions:

Firstly, the integration of university English courses with the cultivation of ocean awareness is both feasible and necessary. This integration not only enhances students' English proficiency but also fosters their global perspective and environmental consciousness, particularly regarding the sustainable utilization and protection of ocean resources. In the implementation process, we have clarified the teaching objectives and positioning, integrated and optimized ocean-related teaching content, innovated teaching methods and approaches, strengthened faculty development, fully utilized and developed relevant teaching resources, and established a comprehensive evaluation system to ensure teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

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Furthermore, this integrated teaching model has achieved significant results in practical application. While students have seen improvements in their English language proficiency, their awareness and commitment to ocean conservation have also notably strengthened. They have begun to pay more attention to the marine ecosystem, actively participate in marine conservation activities, and put environmental protection concepts into practice through tangible actions. This not only reflects the value of education but also lays the foundation for nurturing a new generation of youth with an international perspective and sense of responsibility.

However, improving and innovating any teaching model is an ongoing process. While summarizing successful experiences, we should also acknowledge the existing problems and shortcomings. For instance, in terms of integrating and utilizing teaching resources, we still need to further expand channels and introduce more high-quality teaching resources related to the ocean. Regarding teaching methods, we can also continue exploring more diverse and interactive teaching approaches to inspire students' interest and engagement in learning.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that this integration of ocean awareness cultivation into university English courses can be promoted and applied in more institutions. With the increasingly prominent global marine environmental issues, ocean awareness cultivation will become one of the important directions in future education. Therefore, we have reason to believe that this innovative teaching model will have broader prospects and development space.

To achieve this vision, we need to continue our efforts in several areas: Firstly, deepen teaching research to continuously improve and optimize the curriculum system; secondly, enhance teacher training to elevate teaching standards and oceanic knowledge reservoirs among educators; thirdly, strengthen cooperation and exchanges with relevant domestic and international institutions and experts to collectively advance the development of ocean awareness cultivation; fourthly, increase publicity efforts for ocean awareness cultivation to enhance societal awareness and engagement.

In conclusion, the integration of university English courses with ocean awareness cultivation is an innovative and forward-looking educational practice. We believe that, with the joint efforts of society as a whole, this teaching model will continue to improve and develop, making greater contributions to the cultivation of outstanding talents with international perspectives and environmental awareness.

Funding

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