
Li-hua TANG
College of Foreign Language Education of China West Normal University,
Nanchong, Sichuan, China
16867933@qq.com

Keywords: College English Teaching, Comprehensive Study of the Soviet Union, Construction Period

Abstract. Since the founding of People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, the teaching of College English has gone through the mileage of more than 60 years. Reviewing the course of College English teaching, we found that the development and change of College English teaching and society is closely related to the changes of social development. It can be regarded as the era of "teenage table".

1. The Decline in the Teaching English in the Period of "Comprehensive Study of the Soviet Union" (1949 - 1956)

In the period of the comprehensive study of the Soviet Union in China, English teaching was completely marginalized. In July 1953, the Ministry of Education stipulated in the eight normal colleges and universities in the country, only the East China Normal University can keep the English course, and the rest of them should take Russian language. In the second half of the year, the adjustment of the school department was basically completed. After adjustment, among the 182 colleges in the country, only 8 schools, such as Peking University, and other universities, were reserved for English majors.

In this context, the English teaching was facing unprecedented embarrassment. In 1952, only 5 students from the Department of journalism of Fudan University selected English. English in colleges and universities was almost extinct. Here was a phenomenon in which many English-born teachers were taught to teach Russian. These teachers attended self-study or short-term training courses, learning teaching Russian. Although they were teachers, the starting point and level of their Russian language were almost different from those of the students they taught. Therefore, to a certain extent, the effect of Russian teaching at that time was influenced.

The singularity in the language setting has brought adverse effects on the teaching of foreign languages. In the early days of the founding of the people's Republic of China, under the situation of "learning from the Soviet Union", the language background of most foreign universities was not considered comprehensively, which is bound to bring various kinds of deficiencies, such as the lack of teachers, the lack of teaching materials, and the simplicity of teaching methods. At that time, there was a tendency to attach importance to professional foreign languages and to despise public foreign languages. While emphasizing the development of Russian teaching or foreign language teaching, the main loss is public foreign language and primary and secondary school English teaching.

In 1954, the demand for public foreign language teaching in China was: "colleges and universities should set up Russian class, but it can be determined according to the specific circumstances of the students of each school." Therefore, although the public foreign language was a compulsory course, the requirements of the school teaching were not high. The school seldom considered the staffing and further study of the teachers. In many cases, public foreign language courses were regarded as "fill in the blanks". Students who had difficulty could also be exempt from. They will not repeat, does not affect the distribution of graduates. The public foreign language had become a dispensable course, and there was no place in the teaching of colleges and universities.
2. The Restoration of Public English Teaching during the Construction Period (1955—1966)

2.1 The Establishment of the Education Policy of "English as the First Foreign Language"

In 1956, the five year plan was completed in advance and in excess of the total. The high tide of large-scale socialist construction was coming soon. The question of the quantity and quality of the intellectuals was again mentioned in the important agenda. In 1956, the State Council convened a meeting to discuss the question of intellectuals. Premier Zhou Enlai made a "report on the intellectuals" at the meeting. In his report, he pointed out: "in order to adapt to the urgent needs and development needs of our national construction, we must expand the number of intellectuals and improve our business level." "Our country's scientific and cultural power is much smaller than the world's major powers at the moment, and at the same time it is much lower in quality. This is not commensurate with the needs of our six hundred million socialist country. We must catch up. We should strive to expand and improve the scientific and cultural strength of our country as quickly as possible and catch up with the world's advanced level." "In order to realize the plan to advance to science, we must prepare all the necessary conditions for the development of scientific research. It is necessary to expand the teaching of foreign languages and to expand the translation of foreign language books."

According to the instructions of "expand the teaching of foreign languages", the Ministry of Education had formulated a plan for training talents in twelve years. Since the autumn of 1956, it was decided that the number of enrolment of English, German, French and other languages would be expanded. Various schools had created conditions for foreign languages college, and the English, German, French and Japanese languages had been set up in succession. The comprehensive university foreign language department, the public foreign language and the primary and secondary school foreign language also expanded the English teaching surface.

In the early 60s, a prosperous situation of industrial and agricultural production appeared in China. Our country's prestige in the world has been improved and its role in international affairs has increased gradually. In 1963, Chancellor visited Africa and established diplomatic relations with France in 1964, which further improved our international status. In order to carry out foreign work actively and extensively, a large number of foreign language cadres need to be trained. In order to get rid of the backward situation of science and technology, absorb advanced technology and experience from all over the world and carry out socialist construction in China, we also need to train a large number of talents who are familiar with foreign languages. In order to meet the needs of this situation, the Education Department in 1964 set up an outline plan for developing foreign language education in China in seven years. The outline pointed out that the number of students in higher foreign language departments was far from enough to meet the needs of national socialist construction and foreign affairs. The foundation of the whole foreign language education was very incompatible with the needs of the country, and there was a sharp contradiction. Therefore, this seven year plan needed to expand the scale of foreign language education from passive to initiative.

The outline proposed four guidelines for the development of Education: 1. The professional foreign language education is equal to the public foreign language education. 2. The foreign language education of the school is equal to the amateur foreign language education. 3. English is the first foreign language in school education. 4. While vigorously developing and adjusting the proportion, we should pay special attention to the quality assurance. The promulgation of the instruction to expand the teaching of foreign languages and the announcement of the foreign language education policy of "English as the first foreign language" in the public foreign language class in Colleges and universities has greatly promoted the development of Public English Teaching in China. We made great efforts to adjust the proportion of languages in foreign language courses. The number of people learning English has gradually increased, while the number of people learning Russian has gradually contracted. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the teaching of Public English has finally taken the first step.

2.2 Measures for the Rehabilitation of Public English Teaching

In order to meet the new requirements for foreign language education in the new period, public
English classes have been set up gradually since 1956. After 1960, the number of students in the middle and upper English classes in colleges and universities increased rapidly. Although the teaching of Public English was gradually restored, the teaching was in a state of confusion for a long time. There was no clear teaching goal and teaching requirements, and also in lack of teaching materials. English teachers only determined the content of teaching by their own subjective knowledge and experience, so the effect of the teaching of Public English was very low. In order to restore the teaching of Public English as soon as possible, the Ministry of Education has taken some key measures.

2.2.1 Formulating English Syllabus and Ending the State of Teaching Disorder

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the policy of foreign language education paid too much attention to the development of foreign language majors and neglected the teaching of public foreign languages. There was not clear guiding ideology in public Russian or English teaching. In order to change this situation, The University of foreign languages of the industrial school was entrusted with the formulation of Russian and English syllabuses. The first draft of the English syllabus was proposed by the Department of Foreign Language Teaching and Research at the Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Then it was approved by the foreign language curriculum of higher industrial school teaching committee. The draft was reexamined at the working meeting of the higher industrial school in May 1962. In June, it was published by the higher education press.

This is the first college English syllabus published in China after the founding of the People’s Republic of China. In the early stage of restoring public English Teaching in colleges and universities, the promulgation of the English syllabus ended the disordered state of Public English teaching, and laid the foundation for further development of Public English teaching.

2.2.2 Compiling and Publishing Public English Textbooks

In 50s, there was no national English textbook for public use in our country. It is generally written by the English teachers of each school for the non-English Majors of the University. In order to unify the content of the National Public English teaching, the Ministry of Education decided to start the compilation of the national unified teaching material. The work began in 1960 and was published in 1962. Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Tongji University, East China Institute of chemical and Engineering College of Shanghai were taking part. The first set of Public English teaching materials which have great influence on the whole country after the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

Summary

Since the founding of People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, the teaching of College English has gone through the period of more than 60 years. Reviewing the course of College English Teaching in this period, we find that the development of College English teaching is closely related to the changes of the society. College English teaching is not only imprinted with the deep brand of the times, but also going towards its inevitable state step by step.

Acknowledgement

The paper was supported by Funded projects: 2017 China West Normal University Teachers Elite fund project number. (No. 17YC073).

References


