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CURRICULUM REFORM OF COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING IN CHINA: FROM ENGLISH FOR GENERAL PURPOSES TO ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

Abstract

College English teaching (CET) in China has long been accused of being time-consuming and inefficient and generated outcry against CET practices from academic circles and the public. In order to change the situation, Chinese government has initiated several rounds of English curriculum reform, moving from focusing on language foundation, i.e. English for General Purposes (EGP), to a stress on practical language use in general and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in particular. This paper first reviews these ESP-oriented changes in college English curricula from a historical perspective. Then, we evaluate the recent scholarly debates over the issue of whether CET should be completely replaced by ESP. Finally, we analyze the challenges facing ESP-oriented curriculum reform and highlight that qualified ESP teachers and ideological shift of stakeholders are key to high-quality ESP courses intended by policy makers. This paper reveals that China has a strong desire to make a breakthrough in CET, preparing to usher in the post-CET era featuring English for Academic Purposes (EAP) though fraught with difficulties and complications.

Key words

EGP, ESP, College English teaching, curriculum reform.

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