



Study on the Characteristics, Problems and the Counter measures to Teaching Contents in Colleges English Course of ‘Tour Guiding’ under a New Tourism Environment

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Abstract: In the curriculum of current Chinese higher education for tourism management major, Tour Guiding is a basic course for undergraduate students. The teaching objective of this course is to teach students how to understand the job responsibilities a qualified tour guide should hold in an ever-changing dynamic international tourism industry. Therefore, the teaching contents mainly focus on tour guiding work procedures and operational tourism business knowledge in the workflow of tour guide in international context. This research article analyzes the characteristics and problems concerning the teaching contents in the course in a new environment after the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlighting three current typical problems in teaching contents of Tour Guiding course, this study promotes some strategies for the construction of a more effective teaching contents system. A vertical-horizontal analysis based teaching contents framework is building up. A ‘tour guiding business+ tourism English’ teaching model with multi-dimensional teaching methods can produce a positive effect on teaching contents for tour guiding course. Teachers’ practical ability in the tourism industry always a support for improving the quality of teaching contents in this course.

Keywords: Tour Guiding, Teaching Contents, English Course

1. INTRODUCTION

In the curriculum of Chinese college tourism management major undergraduate, the English course on Touring Guiding has long been playing an important role in cultivating future international tourism professionals, especially tour guides. In reality, with the institutional reform of national tour guide system and the gradual improvement of tour guide team construction, tour guide team system in China now has built up a hierarchical structure that is composed of four types tour guides [1]. They are scenic spot tour guide, local tour guide, national tour guide and tour leader. For the last four decades, tour guides in different languages in China have been playing an indispensable role in tourism development, as well as building up a bridge of friendship with tourists from all over the world [2]. According to statistics, registered tour guides in China had been up to 800,000 in 2019. With professional knowledge, they served up to 6 billion domestic tourists and 145 million inbound international tourists in the year 2019 [3]. Concerning tourism education, college is the cradle fostering future high talents where students get their systematical curriculum and knowledge about tourism [4]. There is a rule in tourism teaching that the knowledge learned in class should always be in sync with the development of tourism to meet the real market trend [5]. The COVID-19 epidemic in 2020 had a huge hit on tourism industry around the world. During the epidemic, tourism associations, including tour guides, joined the anti-epidemic activities such as donating masks, and raising funds, actively participated in various volunteer services for local communities. The impact of the epidemic is also accompanied by a strong call for thorough reform [6~8] on the tour guide profession for the environment in tourism industry is in a fluctuating time which requires a stronger capacity to deal with different situations. The new environment also puts forward higher requirements for teaching contents in college tour guiding course [9]. In this sense, any endeavor in college tourism education will surely promote the cultivation of tour guide talents in the new world tourism industry from now on. The aim of this article is to rethink the teaching contents systemically of Tour Guiding

course to the point that some existing problems impede its teaching objective in nowadays development of tourism. The following parts of this article are arranged as follows. Part two analyzes the current problems in the teaching contents of this course. The third part tries to promote some improvement strategies before the conclusion in the fourth part.

2. TYPICAL PROBLEMS IN TEACHING CONTENTS OF THE TOUR GUIDING COURSE AT COLLEGE EDUCATION

Most English courses for non-English major in higher education in China, meaning English as the primary teaching language, is with an, if not the only, objective to improve students’ intercultural and bilingual capacities in a specific field related to the future job area [10]. Compared with academic courses of tourism major, tour guiding course is a business-oriented course. Teaching in class pays more focuses on the practical work of the tour guide instead of theoretical knowledge. It is in order to cultivate the operational ability of international tour guiding [11]. It requires students to understand the standard criteria and business of a qualified international tour guide. Another point is to deeply understand the function of international tour guiding job as a way of spreading the world of Chinese tradition and modern cultures. All those indicate that students should fully master the complete workflow in tour guiding and know tour guide practices in detail as much as they can in the classroom before working in real world to serve international tourists with their professional knowledge and practices. However, three existing problems in teaching content are impeding the teaching aim in tour guiding course.

2.1. The Teaching Content Structure Lacks Integrity

In the revision of the Tourism Law of the People's Republic of China in 2016, Article39 was quoted ‘Those who have obtained a tour guide certificate, got the required academic degrees, language ability and experience in the tourism industry, and signed a labor contract with a travel agency may apply for a tour leader certificate’ [12]. According to Article39, the former outbound tourism leader registration system in China is adjusted to a new filing system [13,14]. Under the previous tour guide management system, there was no unified training platform between tour guides and tour leader in China. Nor had the same training system of the two. In the past, the potential tour leader was required to pass the national tour leader exam and then hold a tour leader qualification to apply for being a tour leader. Under the current filing system, international travel agency helps tour guides who have labor contracts with it to submit necessary files onto official website. After the tourism authority examines and verifies all the files, the registered tour guide can automatically be an outbound tour leader. There is no such a tour leader exam anymore. What makes sense is that tour leader is now an integrated part of the tour guide team system, forming a more unified tour guide management framework. However, the teaching content fails to keep up a pace with this. The two each have their teaching contents system separately. Colleges that provide students tour guiding course usually deliver additional tour leader courses in parallel. In tour guiding textbooks, it commonly finds no complete tour leader teaching contents in teaching chapters.

2.2. The Teaching Contents Design in Chapters Lacks Articulation

What commonly can be found in tour guiding teaching units area mechanical arrangement of teaching contents. The teaching contents design in chapters sometimes has an outdated structure, making linear segmented teaching logic in scenic spot tour guide, local tour guide, national tour guide and tour leader respectively. Even some non-standardized classifications of tour guide, such as a coined name “independent tour guide” can be found in teaching contents as a teaching unit, delivering blurring knowledge to students. In reality, in a successful travelling product, it is always the overseas tour agency, domestic wholesale travel agency and local travel agency who work together to satisfy tourists during their travel experiences. This co-work asks for a close cooperation among tour guides or a working "synergy" among tour guides. The fragmented arrangement of chapters is not only designing a mechanical teaching model with no articulation in teaching contents but making confusion of students' understanding of the tour guiding work.

2.3.A "Tourism English + Tour Guiding Business" Teaching Model Needs to be Modified

The language feature of a typical tour guide is mostly shown in a simple, clear, colloquial but professional way. The way of expression in tour guiding course need simultaneously meet three requirements, meaning accuracy, professionalism, and artistry [15]. However, in the traditional teaching model of "tourism English + tour guiding business", it usually stages learning English as the center of teaching and learning, putting tour guiding business at a secondary place. While, it is the guiding business practices that play a key role in determining the quality of tour guide service. Besides, only the study from a textbook in the classroom is far more sufficient to be a real tour guide. For solving this problem, it is time to call for more effective and multi-level teaching methods to support the teaching content to exert positive effects. In this sense, the teaching methods of this course need to be modified systematically, combing language teaching approaches with tour guiding business teaching practices. It needs the co-participation of both teachers and students together and asks for a versatile teacher who are not only being good at business English but, more importantly, having affluent tour guiding business experiences.

3. STRATEGIES ON IMPROVING TEACHING CONTENT SYSTEM OF TOUR GUIDING COURSE

Hereby in this article, it proposes three strategies that are helpful to improve the construction of teaching contents of the college English course Tour Guiding. First, a new framework should be set up to give a guideline on teaching content in this course.

3.1. Forming a Complete and Inclusive Teaching Contents Framework

On rethinking the current problems in teaching contents of tour guiding course, it is necessary to reform a more effective framework. A vertical-horizontal analysis should take a place at this moment. At the vertical dimensional analysis, all the teaching contents should be based on a consistent concept of tour guide in line with the China national tour guide classification system in which tour guide team system is consist of four types, namely scenic spot tour guide, local tour guide, national tour guide and tour leader. All other kinds of classifications and informal terms regarding tour guide should not be used in teaching content. Further, a horizontal dimensional analysis of the collaborative businesses of four types tour guides helps improve teaching contents. On guiding international tourists group, usually involves work cooperation amongst the inbound tour leader from an overseas travel agency, the national tour guide from a domestic wholesale travel agency, and the local tour guide of each stop city during the tour in China. Each teaching unit in which the teaching contents involve business cooperation amongst different types of tour guides is carefully analyzed in order to determine who the type of tour guide should be anchored as the main perspective of the contents. This will help to avoid the single linear segmented teaching way caused by a mechanical and fragmented classification on tour guide. For example, the teaching contents structure of English Tour Guiding course should normally follow the work procedure, starting with pre-tour preparation, followed by meeting up guests, delivering welcoming speech, hotel check-in, dining arrangement, on coach tour guiding, on site tour guiding, shopping, hotel check-out, seeing-off service and business after tour. Each part in the workflow can be further subdivided into several parts depending on the teaching objective. In hotel check-in teaching unit, the teaching contents of room card distribution can be found it is explained by the local tour guide, while it is the tour leader who sends every tourist room card. The local guide is not allowed directly issue the room card to the group guests. Most of work the national tour guide does at this point is just to take care of the tourists and supervise the job quality of the local tour guide. Right here it is the local tour guide in a collaborative position building up a well-organized division of work. Upon understanding this logic in tour guiding work here, the teacher should explicitly inform students it the local tour guide here as the main perspective in teaching contents of this chapter. The teacher should also explain the collaborative businesses between the tour leader and local tour guide. With this vertical-horizontal analysis, a teaching content framework was formed based on a clear workflow logic in chapters. Figure 1. shows the framework structure.

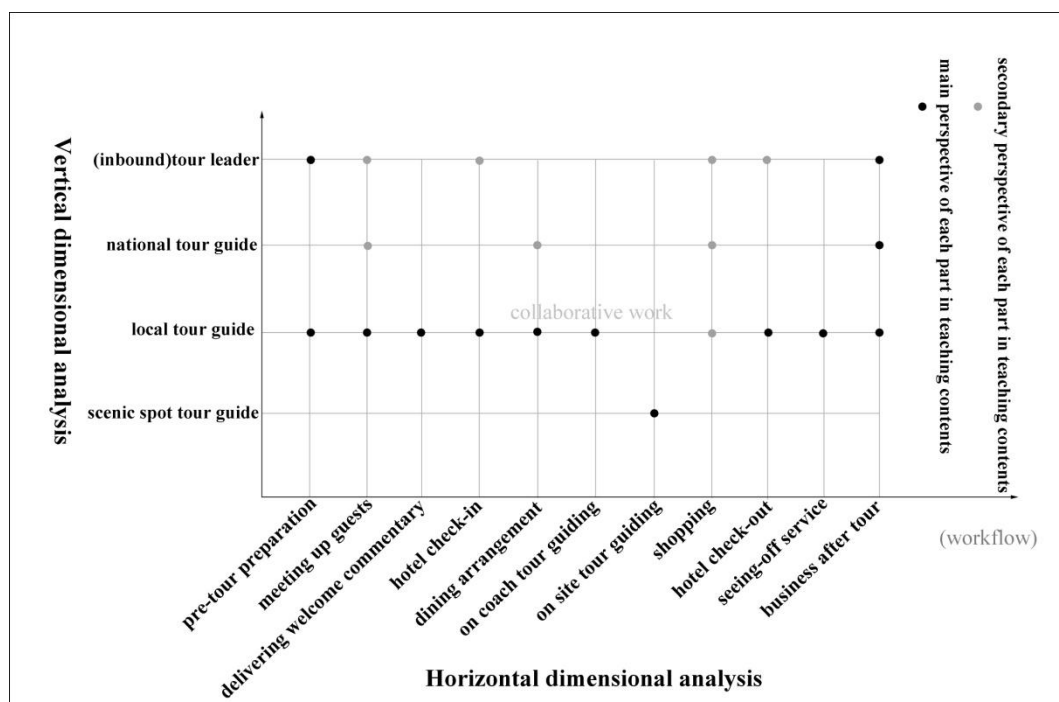


Figure 1. A teaching content framework based on a vertical-horizontal analysis in Tour Guiding course

The four sections in vertical dimensional analysis ensure teaching content is organized in structural integrity based on a unified tour guide classification system. At the horizontal level, the primary and other secondary perspectives of the teaching content are positioned based on the analysis of collaborative businesses among tour guides. Finally, a complete and inclusive tour guiding teaching contents framework is building up.

3.2. Adopting a ‘Tour Guiding Business+ Tourism English’ Teaching Model With Multi-Dimensional Teaching Methods

Even college courses like tour guiding pay more attention to tourism business practices, and understanding basic concepts and theories is the cornerstone of learning. There is no possibility for correct work procedure without a clear distinction in concepts, not to mention the work cooperation among tour guides. Doing this requires the teacher to explain basic concepts at the beginning, supplemented by case studies. Though tourism English, like other professional English used in the specific professional field, is full of industry terminology, a tour guide's language is featured with more colloquial expressions. When an exam-oriented written English way brings into tour guiding class, such long sentences or uncommon words, even Chinglish can be seen. Unfortunately, many Chinese students have long been trained to get used to such a way. The way of changing is not easy in such a situation. In the delivery of the course, the scenario performance method (ScP) is a scenario-based teaching-learning method in which the teacher identified topic areas to encourage problem-solving skills among students [16,17]. A scenario performance method can convert plain teaching contents into vivid topics and fabricates a working scene simulating reality. This teaching method reshapes the traditional way of teaching content by arousing all-sense participation of students with a relatively lower time cost [18]. Group-based discussion and performance let students actively participate in tourism business problem solving which is supported by more practical tourism English expressions. Based on ScP, a ‘tour guiding business+ tourism English’ teaching model is in place instead of the traditional English learning dominated teaching way in class. The teacher shouldn't forget to give more learning resources such as online links to English videos and movies as a supplement to let students arouse again their study memory in ScP. This multi-dimensional teaching method system adapts a student-centered problem-solve way. The synergy of multiple methods allows students to immerse themselves in teaching in an active and self-experiential way.

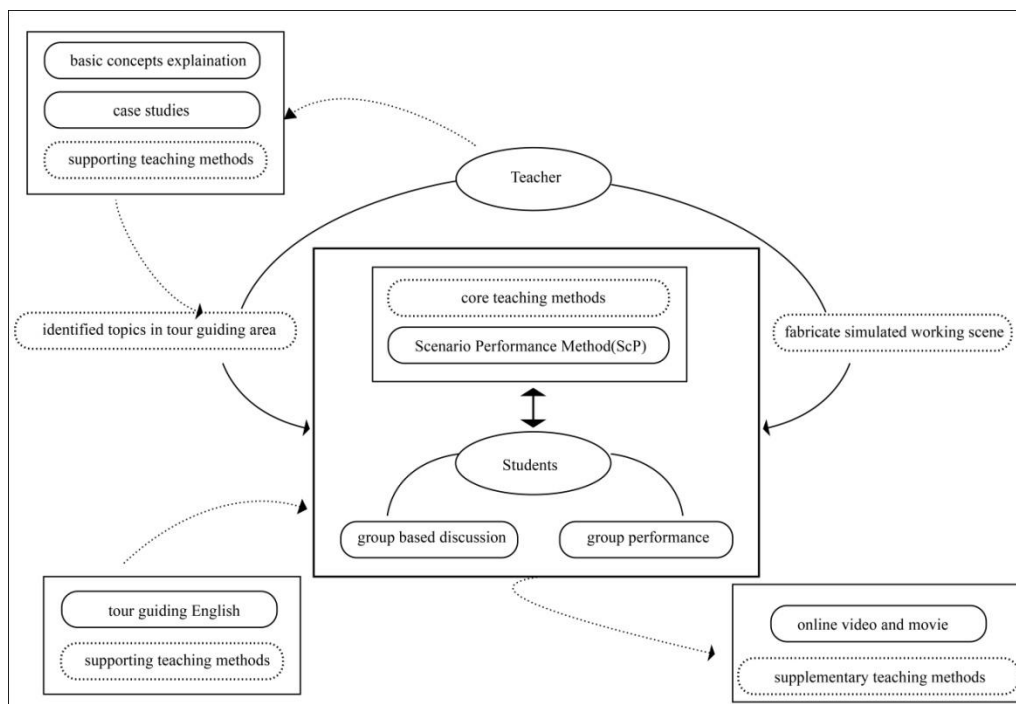


Figure 2. A 'tour guiding business+ tourism English' teaching model with multi-dimensional teaching methods

3.3. Constantly Improving the Teacher's Practical Ability in Tour Guiding

Most undergraduate students now in China were born in the new millennium and are so-called Generation Z [19]. They are growing up in a new world where they can search bulks of knowledge online. It will be a huge challenge for the teacher when delivering a class just depending on the contents of books or newspapers. First-hand 'references' from real experiences are more persuasive to the new generation. In college when a teacher who holds a higher education teaching certificate as well as a professional certificate, such as a national tour guide qualification or national legal certificate is endowed as a "double-qualified" teacher or lecturer. This means the teacher not only teaches in class but is also an expert in a specific field. Teachers' working experiences in tourism enterprises are a wealth in teaching tour guiding classes. By joining part-time work in a tourism enterprise or secondment in the tourism industry or through the cooperation between college and enterprises, a teacher can be a trusted one to lead students in an effective way as a real international tour leader. Reciprocally, this will further enrich the teaching contents of the tour guiding course.

4. CONCLUSION

In the analysis of a new environment in the tourism industry, this article aims to rethink the teaching contents of the college English course Tour Guiding. It puts forward three innovative strategies for improving the teaching content system of the tour guiding course. A vertical-horizontal analysis was come up with in an endeavor to help form a complete and inclusive tour guide framework in teaching content. The reconfiguration by combing multi-dimensional teaching methods can improve tour guiding practice as well as tourism English capacity. It is also important to be a "double-qualified" teacher who can capitalize on working experiences for enriching the teaching contents in tour guiding course.

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