

ESP Curriculum for Non-English Majors: Taking GDUFS as an Example

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Abstract

This study, taking Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS hereafter) as an example, discusses how to develop an English for Specific Purposes (ESP hereafter) curriculum for non-English majors in the context of internationalized talents cultivation. It is argued that the design of an ESP curriculum should satisfy ontological needs of ESP in college English curriculum, needs of talents cultivation, students’ needs of ESP learning and so on. Based on modern foreign language teaching and learning principles, the ESP curriculum in GDUFS has been carried out successfully with ESP course design, teaching and assessment, textbooks development integrated together. The ESP curriculum has promoted students’ comprehensive English use, improved their cross-cultural communication competence and cultivated their critical thinking in the future professional fields.

Key words: Needs analysis; ESP curriculum; Non-English majors; GDUFS

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with *Outline of National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)*, advanced international educational concepts and experience should be introduced to facilitate China’s education reform and enhance its international status, influence, and competitiveness; Universities and colleges, in order to meet requirements of China’s economic and social opening up to the outside world, are supposed to cultivate a large quantity of internationalized talents who have global views, good mastery of international rules, and the ability to involve themselves in international affairs and competitions. Obviously, college English education plays an important role in the cultivation of internationalized talents, just as it has been pointed out in *College English Teaching Guidance (CETG hereafter)* (Ministry of Education, forthcoming) that college English courses are meaningful to college students’ future career. Learning English can help students establish a global view, cultivate their international consciousness, and improve their humanistic quality. In the meanwhile, it can also provide students with a basic tool for their knowledge innovation, realizing their potential and their all-round development, helping them have a good preparation for challenges and opportunities in the era of globalization. The instrumental nature of college English courses can be demonstrated in ESP, which helps specialists or learners function well in workplaces or higher education settings where English serves as a medium of communication (Widodo, 2016). And students can acquire relevant communication ability in the academic or occupational field after learning academic English or occupational English related to their professions or future jobs.

Nowadays, school-based ESP courses, directly related to students’ majors, future career or jobs, have been developed in universities and colleges in China (Wang & Wang, 2011). Despite the constant development of

China's ESP teaching and research, there are many deficiencies in college English ESP teaching, including undefined goals of course design, outdated teaching models, deficient testing and assessment system, and insufficient teaching and learning resources (Mo, 2008). Therefore, this paper, taking the ESP curriculum in GDUFS college English as an example, will analyze how to develop an ESP curriculum for college English teaching reform and practice, including course design, teaching and assessment, textbook development and so on. Undoubtedly, the curriculum has been constructed and implemented based on needs analysis, which has long been argued to be the prerequisite for the design of language curricula or syllabi and the selection of tasks (Malicka, Guerrero & Norris, 2017; Liao, 2017).

1. NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR ESP IN COLLEGE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

1.1 Ontological Needs of ESP in College English Curriculum

In the globalized world, one of students' actual needs is ESP in that English has assumed the position of a global lingua franca (Chovancová, 2014) and ESP is an English learning concept based on learners' needs and a kind of curriculum design for people who need to use English for special tasks (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). As a kind of teaching concept based on need analysis and learning as the center, ESP takes overall consideration from the aspects of curriculum design, teaching method, teaching content, curriculum assessment and so on.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) argues that ESP, in absolute terms, is designed to meet students' special needs and it employs existing teaching methods and activities in various disciplines to focus on the language (grammar, vocabulary and domain) skills, discourse and genres related to these activities. ESP can be categorized into English for academic purposes (EAP hereafter) and English for occupational purposes (EOP hereafter). The former refers to English courses designed for college students' academic learning and research, and the latter provides learners with English courses for employment training (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

1.2 Needs of GUDFS Talents Cultivation

GDUFS serves as an important base for cultivating internationalized talents and conducting research on foreign languages and foreign trade in South China. As for the talents training, the university focuses on the in-depth integration between professional teaching and teaching conducted in foreign languages, where three fourths of non-English majors have been choosing to learn college English courses, including ESP courses. ESP courses have guaranteed students' abilities of comprehensive application of English and a solid foundation for their

cross-cultural communication. Since 2008, GDUFS has constantly strengthened the college English teaching reform and built a college-based ESP course system. Now, ESP has become an important part of college English courses in GDUFS.

1.3 GDUFS Students' Needs of ESP Learning

As for college English, students' needs have always been exerting a critical influence on the curriculum (Hu, 2014; Huang, Tan & Xie, 2017). In GDUFS, "high-level English competence + solid professional knowledge" has become the students' pursuit. For example, the students of the innovation classes in GDUFS hope that they can reinforce their advantages in English and foster the quality of internationalized talents through English language learning. Meanwhile, the students majoring in broadcasting and hosting want to be cultivated into qualified Chinese-English bilingual announcers.

To obtain ideal students' feedback about college English course design and their actual needs, GDUFS has conducted a comprehensive questionnaire survey among all the non-English majors. The students accept the fundamental ESP courses from their hearts; most students say that English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP hereafter) is their favorite; they generally believe that EGAP is very practical and helpful to the improvement of their academic language use; especially, many students hold that presentation skills introduced in ESP classes are of great help. As for advanced ESP courses, 1023 valid samples were collected. The students give an enormous affirmation to advanced ESP courses. Thereinto, 96% of the non-English majors believe that it is necessary to offer advanced ESP courses, and 91% hold that the aim of advanced ESP courses is different from that of fundamental courses or specialized courses. Advanced ESP courses combine English skills with specialized knowledge properly, and emphasize learning and training the application of English language in professional context, then concern students' understanding of specialized knowledge, which can enhance the combination function of "English + majors". Moreover, 90.44% of the students believe that advanced ESP courses can help them follow international standards in future learning and career.

2. COLLEGE ENGLISH ESP CURRICULUM IN GDUFS

2.1 Course Design

Since the reform of college English teaching in GDUFS, the curriculums have experienced 2008, 2011, 2013, and 2015 versions, gradually turning ESP courses to be a highlight in the reform. At present, GDUFS has established a ESP course system with relatively sufficient credits and a complete structure (see Table 1).

Table 1
College English ESP Courses

Course Nature	College English ESP Courses			
	Fundamental Courses		Advanced Courses	
Credits	2	2	2	2
Course Names	English for General Academic Purposes(1)	English for General Academic Purposes(2)	Economic and Trade English (1) Management English (1) Marketing English (1) Financial English (1) Accounting English (1) Logistic English (1) Legal English (1) Diplomatic English (1) Journalism English (1) Advertising English (1) Statistic English (1) Computer English (1) Mathematical English (1) Art English (1)	Economic and Trade English (2) Management English (2) Marketing English (2) Financial English (2) Accounting English (2) Logistic English (2) Legal English (2) Diplomatic English (2) Journalism English (2) Advertising English (2) Statistic English (2) Computer English (2) Mathematical English (2) Art English (2)
		

Considering students' needs for English learning in GDUFS, it is advisable to compress the credit of English for General purposes and increase the percentage of ESP courses. In view of the overall needs of different majors for English teaching and classifications of ESP courses, fundamental ESP courses can be offered in the first school year, including EGAP (1) and (2); advanced ESP courses can be offered in the second school year, including economic and trade English, management English, marketing English, financial English, accounting English, logistic English, legal English, diplomatic English, journalism English, advertising English, statistic English, computer English, mathematical English, art English and so on.

As for the teaching content, EGAP mainly aims to foster students' general and interdisciplinary fundamental English language abilities, including listening, speaking, reading and writing for academic purposes. The advanced ESP courses put emphasis on such language features as specialized vocabularies, sentence structures, terminologies, expressions and discourse, and on communication skills, oral and written expressions, and reading comprehension in professional fields, fostering students' listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation abilities and their abilities to learn relevant professional knowledge and follow professional trend. As a bridge between English for General Purposes (EGP hereafter) and English Immersion Approach or Chinese-English bilingual education, ESP courses can lay a solid foundation for the in-depth integration of professional teaching and English teaching and enhance the combination functions of English language and professional knowledge, serving students' competitiveness.

2.2 Teaching and Assessment

In order to solve the problem of the low efficiency in college English teaching and learning, CETG points out that college English teaching

should combine formative assessment and summative assessment scientifically and reasonably, especially to promote formative assessment in college English teaching. Accordingly, GDUFS attaches importance to the role of formative assessment for learning, and establishes a teaching system integrating teaching, learning, assessment and testing to promote the improvement of students' autonomous learning. Guided by the theory of formative assessment for learning and based on the teaching practices in GDUFS, FiF Teaching Assessment System (FiF Platform), a multi-terminal online teaching management system, has been developed by Beijing FiF Education Technology Co., Ltd. (www.fifedu.com). FiF Platform provides strong technical support and guarantee for the new teaching mode, and technically ensures the effective implementation of the formative assessment (Chen, 2017a). Formative assessment includes automatic objective assessment from FiF Platform and teachers' objective assessment, and students' self-assessment and peer assessment. Formative assessment employed in teaching process has solved the problems of subjective record and calculation of students' academic performance and unbalanced weight and unfairness of each learning module.

Always guided by formative assessment, students' learning process has been stressed, students' as the center in teaching and learning has been highlighted, and students' learning autonomy and critical thinking have been cultivated. Meanwhile, encouragement has been given to priority in the assessment for learning. Besides, the recordings in FiF Platform have been always comprehensive, transparent, scientific and standardized, which guaranteed students to trace back to their own learning process. In addition, teachers' teaching concept has been updated and teachers' role has also been changed, in which teachers have played the roles as organizers, coordinators and motivators.

In GDUFS, some other approaches have also been employed in college English teaching and learning processes, for example, case analysis, corpus-based

teaching method (Chen, 2011, 2017b), project-based learning approach and so on.

2.3 Textbook Development

With the speeding up of GDUFS ESP curriculum, the school-based textbooks have also been developed. At present, the textbooks of ESP courses under construction include Management English, Marketing English, Financial English, Legal English, Logistic English and Accounting English. In the following, the first two textbooks will be taken as examples.

Management English: Based on the content of Management, this textbook combines English linguistic skills, problem-solving ability and communicative ability together. Each chapter focuses on language skill training in the field of Management, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. It attaches much importance to the application of task-based teaching methods and cultivates students' language use ability to solve the subject-related problems. The teaching materials are selected from the articles published on famous financial newspapers in recent years, which are timely and international in content, and professional and lively in language. The editing of the textbook is centered by students' needs. And it is edited after extensive investigation and survey among teachers and students, concerning topic selection, linguistic skill training, and vocabulary and grammar acquisition.

Marketing English: This textbook focuses on how to achieve the following goals through combining English skills and relevant professional knowledge, i.e. help students to have a good mastery of the lexicons, terminologies, sentence structures, expressions and linguistic application in the marketing field; strengthen students' language skills, competence in spoken and written English, and reading comprehension in that field; improve students ability in how to acquire professional knowledge with English and how to trace the latest trends in the professional field in the world so as to broaden their horizons and widen their knowledge. Relevant activities are designed in accordance with the characteristics of different chapters. It also attaches importance to the appropriate amount of input and the efficiency of output. It takes the marketing content as a carrier and different types of activities as supplement so as to enhance students' competence in the application of English in the professional field.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Conduciveness to Internationalized Talents Cultivation

Nowadays a common understanding of English education in China is that ESP is a development direction and growth point of college English. Moreover, the survey

made in GDUFS shows that students have shown a keen interest in both EGAP and advanced ESP courses. In this context, first, GDUFS has witnessed that the ESP teachers have been developed and trained increasingly, and they are also organized to write textbooks that conform to the students' actual level; secondly, it is hoped that the school can introduce the high-level ESP teachers to guarantee the quality of ESP teaching and prepare for the update of ESP curriculum; thirdly, it is hoped that special policies will be formulated to encourage and support the development of ESP courses.

The survey made in GDUFS has also shown the students' opinion that college English curriculum needs to be adjusted, i.e. to decrease the credit proportion of EGP courses, and to increase that of ESP courses. As for a questionnaire, 32.9% of the students involved think that ESP is the development trend in college English teaching, 45.4% believe that the credit proportion of EGP courses in the first and second school years can be scaled down. Therefore, students are in great need of ESP learning. But actually, students' EGP learning is still very necessary in that a large number of students' performance in the annual College Entrance Examination in China is not good, which means that these students have a very large room for the improvement in basic English skills. Therefore, both EGP and ESP courses should be provided for the college students at different English levels.

3.2 Important Base for Internationalized Talents Cultivation

The series of ESP courses in GDUFS aim to promote students' ability in comprehensive application of English, cross-cultural communication and critical thinking in professional fields. This is not only an important base to advance the deep integration of professional teaching and foreign language teaching, but also an important base for GDUFS to build a high-tier internationalized university of excellence.

Firstly, students have received benefits from classroom presentations, which help cultivating internationalized talents. For example, the students in legal English class have opportunities to present their case report. Many alumni of GDUFS, who are now furthering their study for MA or Ph.D in some famous American universities, comment as follows: college English curriculum including ESP courses in GDUFS, teaching methods and teaching in English hang together pretty well with those in America, students from GDUFS have great advantages when they go abroad to further their study, and "CPU" (crazy presentation university) trains students' competence in oral English, team work and social communication. They suggest that the students in GDUFS should take the presentations seriously, which will be of great help in the future for them to go abroad to further their study and engage in jobs related to foreign affairs. Secondly, rich practice opportunities after class help students to

improve their competence in English language use for specific purposes. For example, students' participation in annual English business knowledge competition can apply English into the solution to commercial problems; students can improve their international communicative competence in their professional fields when they work as interns in China Import and Export Fair and other international trade fairs. Thirdly, the ESP teaching practice in GDUFS has also advanced the cultivation of students' ability in cross-cultural communication and critical thinking, and promoted their innovative awareness, innovative competence and innovative personality in their professional practice and cross-cultural communication.

3.3 Great Efforts for the Update of ESP Curriculum

Recent years, college students in China are not very satisfied with college English teaching. Many graduates feel that it is very difficult for them to apply English in their actual professional fields. According to the survey in GDUFS, students show strong interests in and needs of EGAP and advanced ESP courses. Therefore, great efforts should be made for the update of ESP curriculum.

Firstly, the construction of ESP teaching team will be further strengthened in GDUFS since ESP teachers should be fully familiar with language that need to be taught in a particular specialized domain (Lumley, 1998). On the one hand, the present ESP teachers' leading role will be guaranteed; on the other hand, teachers will be encouraged to further their study for ESP teaching and research needs. Secondly, ESP teachers will be organized to edit school-based ESP textbooks. Thirdly, more and more senior ESP talents will be introduced so as to build a scientific ESP teaching and research team and secure the sustainable development. Fourthly, needs analysis will be continuously conducted to update the systemic college English curriculum for social requirements of talents and talents cultivation of universities.

CONCLUSION

In order to cultivate internationalized talents, ESP courses has become an important part in the reform of college English teaching. Based on ESP ontological needs, talents cultivation needs and students' learning needs, GDUFS has designed a school-based college English ESP curriculum, which integrates course design, teaching and assessment and textbook development together. The curriculum has effectively promoted the cultivation of students' comprehensive English use, cross-cultural communicative competence and critical thinking. However, the curriculum has much room for update and it is hoped that teachers and students can offer suggestions and feedback for the improvement of ESP teaching practice.

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