

Post College English Era, the Exploration and Practice of ESP Teaching

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Abstract

College English teaching has made remarkable achievements for many years. EGP teaching approach deserves much of the credit. But with the advance of economic globalization, college English is faced with many new problems, while ESP teaching approach has been increasingly prominent. In view of the focus of higher education being how to orientate ESP teaching properly and how to integrate ESP and EGP effectively post college English era, the paper will explore such perspectives as the reposition of college English teaching in China and the teacher engagement between EGP teaching and ESP teaching and ESP teaching theory system, put forward the necessities of building ESP teaching team and analyze the emphases of building ESP teaching team.

Key words: Post college English era; ESP teaching; The construction of ESP teaching staff

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INTRODUCTION

ESP (English for Specific Purposes), a branch of applied linguistics, emerged in the 1960s. Compared to EGP (English for General Purposes), ESP is a relative concept

with various explanations. The more authoritative definition is from English scholars Hutchinson and Waters. They conclude that “ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In light of this, firstly, ESP is a teaching approach or teaching concept rather than a teaching method; secondly, ESP teaching must be based on the analysis of specific purpose and specific needs of learners. Accordingly, ESP courses in a true sense refer to the English courses offered according to ESP teaching concept. ESP can be classified into two types, EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes). EAP also divides into two specific branches, EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) and ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes). Jordan pointed that ESAP involves different subjects in which standard and academic English is the main language of instruction, such as Medical English, Computer English and Engineering English etc, while EGAP courses impart skills needed for English learning, such as English listening skills, shorthand skills, academic writing, speed reading skills etc. (Jordan, 1997).

China introduced ESP courses in the 1970s. At that time, EST (English for Science and Technology) was all the rage. But for various reasons, the teaching effects of ESP were below expectation, while EGP achieved remarkable achievements. With the advance of economic globalization, the status of ESP teaching in universities and colleges has become increasingly prominent. In 2007, professor Cai Jigang put forward “the era post college English teaching”. He points that one of the features of college English teaching manifests as the unification and standardization of teaching developing to personalization. And then he points out that against the background, college English teaching in China The college English teaching in China is transferring its cultivation orientation from the simple basic English training to the practical

ability training including English ability related to specialty (Cai, 2007). In view of the focus of higher education being how to orientate ESP teaching properly and how to integrate ESP and EGP effectively post college English era, the paper will explore such perspectives as the reposition of college English teaching in China and the teacher engagement between EGP teaching and ESP teaching.

1. THE REPOSITION OF COLLEGE ENGLISH IN TEACHING CHINA

1.1 The Disadvantages of EGP Teaching

EGP has long been regarded as the focus of college English teaching in China. But this teaching philosophy has turned out to be unsatisfactory, with many problems. First, EGP teaching results in test-oriented education. In order to pass final exams, CET exams and TOEFL, and find an ideal job after graduation, most students regard taking exams as the main motivation of learning English. Second, ESP teaching confines students' learning potential. The traditional classroom atmosphere is monotonous and boring. As time passes, students' interest in English may exhaust and present an inactive state. Third, high cost and low efficiency are characteristic of EGP teaching. According to investigation, the number of freshmen and sophomores in our university, who spends one fourth of their part time in reading English and memorizing English words, nearly hits 65%. Moreover, the number of students who spend half of their part time in learning English even hits three fourths. However, the juniors and seniors in our university admit that they don't learn or have little contact with English, which is the reasons for this phenomenon that English level of college students is on the decrease instead of on the increase. Last, the teaching content of EGP course is close to life. The teaching content and classroom practice activities focus on daily life and seldom involve professional knowledge used in workplace communication.

1.2 The Feasibility of ESP Teaching

In April 2015, the questionnaire survey was carried out among the students from freshman year to senior year in three universities such as Northeast Petroleum University,

Table 1
What Are the Purposes of College English Learning in Your Mind? (Multiple Choice)

A.	B.	C.	D.
English study should be combined with students' major and promotes the students' professional learning.	Students' employment benefit from English certificates.	A good record in English may help obtain a master degree.	Study English well in order to study abroad.
68.5%	62.9%	38.5%	36%

Daqing Normal University and Heilongjiang Bayi Agricultural University. The total number of valid return was 932.

Table 2
Do You Have the Following Requirements in Your College English Learning? (Multiple Choice)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
Take the second degree in English	Use English to do academic reading and writing.	Listen academic lecture and take notes in English.	Attend seminars and give present statements in English.	No requirements
58%	68%	60.5%	56%	1%

The answers to the two questions indicate that college students value English and few students have no requirements in English. English is indispensable in college education. On the other hand, with the advance of economic globalization and the internationalization of higher education, more and college students realize that CET certificates are not enough if you want to amount to something in the professional field. On the contrary, it is very important to master English skills in an academic setting. Only in this way, can they keep up-to-date with the latest academic development by listening to English academic lectures and reading the English academic literature.

In July 2010, China announced its Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), which explicitly points out that education should meet the needs of national economic opening to the outside world and cultivate a large number of international talents with international perspective, familiar with international rules and able to participate in international affairs and international competition. It also indicates that colleges and universities should attract more world-class experts and scholars to join the teaching, scientific research and management in China and according to a systematic plan, introduce overseas high-level talents and academic team, in order to raise the proportion of foreign teachers engaged in institutions of higher education. It could be argued that our country has entered into internationalization of higher education. For colleges and universities, college English teaching must be repositioned in order to implement the demand of talents strategy, adapt itself to the economic globalization and cultivate international talents with superb professional knowledge and strong foreign language skills.

The teaching aim of college English is the compass of the college English teaching. Although education experts haven't arrived at agreement on the problem that college English should be EGP or ESP, but with economic globalization, middle school students' English has a great improvement, and meanwhile, ESP teaching theories in foreign countries are becoming mature, which contribute to ESP teaching in China. Therefore, ESP should be positioned as a compulsory course, which is of great

significance. Key universities can offer ESP course from the first semester while ordinary university can offer ESP course from the second or third semester.

2. THE TEACHER ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN EGP TEACHING AND ESP TEACING

2.1 The Problems in ESP Teacher Development

The questionnaire report indicates that ESP teachers in the three universities are all teachers of professional courses in each school or department. However, ESP courses

Table 3
Who Is Your ESP Teacher Presently?

A.	B.	C.	D.
Teachers of specialized courses with solid professional foundations and good spoken English.	English teachers with good spoken English and rich professional knowledge.	Teachers of specialized courses with rich professional knowledge but poor spoken English and little knowledge in language teaching.	English teachers with good spoken English but little knowledge in profession, unsatisfactory to students.
21.8%	0%	78.2%	0%

Table 4
What Is Your Expectation of ESP Teachers?

A.	B.	C.	D.
Master profession and understand English.	Master English and understand profession.	Master profession and don't understand language teaching.	No expectation.
30.8%	38.5%	18.2%	12.5%

Table 5
What Is the Performance of Your ESP Teacher? (Multiple Choice)

A.	B.	C.	D.
He/she give priority to technical terms and grammatical structures.	He/she can't communicate well with students in English because of poor English.	He/she has little communication and interaction with students.	He/she can't combine professional knowledge and English teaching effectively.
58%	64.2%	61%	56.8%

Table 6
What's the Teaching Method Taken by Your ESP Teacher in Classroom? (Multiple Choice)

A.	B.	C.	D.
The teaching method is single and boring	Give priority to literature translation	Regarding the problems of professionalism, ESP teaching is often characterized by explaining knowledge points.	Professional knowledge and English learning can be combined flexibly and variously.
48.3%	65.2%	77.6%	20.2%

taught by teachers of professional courses produce many problems. First, with low English level and inadequate teaching experience, they often take the single and boring teaching model of literature reading and translation, so they lack interaction with students. Second, they spend limited energy on ESP teaching because they afford too much pressure from scientific research, which have influence on ESP teaching. Third, their students give limited feedback to ESP teaching, which results in the lack of direction in teachers' development. Last, most countries haven't established ESP teachers' professional development system.

There are many problems in ESP courses offered by teachers of professional courses. So, how to position ESP course—professional course or English course—relates directly to the prospect of ESP course. The full name of ESP is English for Specific Purposes. In the light of this, firstly ESP is an English course, which should be taught by English teachers. But English teachers are inclined to teach language knowledge and don't understand corresponding professional knowledge. So it is not an overnight thing to transfer EGP teaching into ESP teaching.

2.2 The Construction of ESP Teaching Staff

2.2.1 System of ESP Teaching Theories

Based on the practices of ESP teaching at home and abroad, the basic principles of ESP teaching mainly refer to Authenticity, Needs analysis and Learner-centeredness (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), which puts forward a high request to ESP teacher. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) identify five key roles of teacher: Teacher, Collaborator, Course designer and materials provider, Researcher and Evaluator. The five roles of teacher indicate that ESP teachers are closely related to teaching materials, teaching activities and teaching evaluation. The teaching material should originate from subject-related authentic materials, but presently authentic texts reflecting ESP teaching characteristics are few in number. Because ESP teachers know the needs of the students best, universities and colleges encourage ESP teachers to select teaching materials themselves. In ESP classroom, ESP teachers should follow the principle of learner-centeredness to organize teaching activities, make teaching assessment which promotes teaching reform.

In short, the key to promote ESP teaching is to cultivate stable ESP teaching staff with high quality. In terms of ESP teaching, "knowledge" takes in knowledge of English pedagogy, ESP subject matter and students' background information. As for students' background information, it is got by Need analysis and includes Professional information about the learners, Personal information about the learners, English language information about the learners, the learners' lack, Language learning information, Professional communication information about learners' professional

information, What is wanted from the course and Environmental situation (Ibid.). These information is the foundation of ESP teaching, guiding the ascertainment of ESP syllabus, curriculum design and teaching evaluation.

2.2.2 The Construction of ESP Teaching Team

The lack of ESP teachers with high quality in universities and colleges restricts the development of ESP teaching. The creation of ESP teaching team help promote the teaching abilities of ESP teachers, increase academic level and improve the quality of college English teaching, which is very important for college English teaching reform. Team is a concept in the field of management. In the field of teaching management, experts have given various explanations of the teaching team. This paper adopts the definition of teaching team in the notification about the organization of 2007 review of state-level teaching team. According to the specific circumstances of every subject (profession), teaching team with explicit development goal, good team spirit and reasonable echelon structure reflecting in three aspects such as age structure, knowledge structure and structure of professional title is created after many years' teaching reforms and practices, taking teaching and research sections, research institutes, laboratories, teaching bases, training bases and engineering centers as construction unit and a series of courses or professions as platform, and achieve outstanding effects when guiding and motivating young and middle-aged teachers to improve their professional quality and professional level. Thus, ESP teaching team can be defined as a teaching team with a certain degree of professional knowledge and good English, guided by the advanced ESP teaching theories and based on the needs analysis of English learning, taking ESP teaching as the key link and putting emphasis on team ability building, course construction and teaching conditions.

2.2.2.1 The Necessities of Building ESP Teaching Team

(a) The requirements from the nature of ESP course

Firstly, as a part of higher education, ESP course should be a compulsory course for non-English majors. It contact with the most students and the most class hours in all courses. It not only teaches language knowledge, but also ESP professional knowledge, and meanwhile, it is a quality education course helping students understand the world culture and broaden knowledge. Second, with more and more frequent international contact, society requires higher and higher comprehensive language application ability of talents, especially listening and speaking ability. So, it is urgent for college students to learn ESP well. Third, given the nature and target of ESP course, it is impractical to require each English teacher to be a general teacher. Therefore, to make students become the main beneficiaries, it is necessary to build ESP teaching team

which can promote teachers' learning from each other in cooperation and improve ESP teaching effects.

(b) The requirements from teachers' self-development
First, under the influence of enlarged university enrollment and shortage of qualified teacher, English teachers undertake too heavy teaching load. Second, presently ESP teaching in China is still being explored, with few previous research achievements, which result in the weary psychology of some teachers. Third, the teaching ability and the scientific research ability of ESP teachers are uneven, because there are a large proportion of female teachers and more young teachers. Over time, these factors will influence teachers' self development, thus affecting college English teaching quality. In consequence, building a teaching team composed of EGP teachers and teachers of professional courses can improve overall teaching effect and quality of a teaching team, and promote individual teacher's scientific research level and teaching ability.

2.2.2.2 The Emphases of Building ESP Teaching Team

It is one important step to build a well-trained ESP teaching team, which can benefit the team, such as promoting individual teacher's ability, teachers' overall quality and the quality of teaching. Members in ESP teaching team are different in knowledge and skills, educational background, personality, professional title and age etc. In order to guarantee the sustainable development of ESP teaching team, the construction of teachers team should put emphasis on the following aspects.

(a) Establishing the learning organization

Colleges and universities should encourage teachers to improve their academic levels and in a planned way provide young teachers the opportunity to learn and communicate. For example, colleges and universities should arrange group preparing lessons according to courses, hold public ESP class regularly, select ESP teachers openly, conduct teaching seminars and order old teachers to help young teachers etc, which can create team learning atmosphere and make teachers become teaching elites.

(b) Building a platform for the growth of ESP teachers

There is a direct relationship between the growth of teachers and the teaching atmosphere. A good platform can provide more opportunities for ESP teachers to bring their talents into play. With respect to the construction of ESP teaching staff, institutions of higher education can carry out two modes: "Introduction" mode, according to which colleges and universities can enrich authentic materials by inviting domestic and foreign experts and people who devote themselves to the profession to campus to give lectures, and "going out" mode, according to which colleges and universities can send ESP teachers group by group to study in teacher-training agencies abroad.

CONCLUSION

Under the direction of EGP teaching approach, colleges and universities in China put emphasis on exam-oriented education for nearly half a century, which has encountered many difficulties. Post college English era, colleges should change English teaching approach, combine the needs of students and society, and transfer EGP teaching into ESP teaching, which not only help colleges come out of the dilemma of the English teaching, but also figure out its future trajectory. And the construction of cooperative ESP teaching team is the only way for the sustainable development of ESP teaching. So, the research of building ESP teaching team is of guiding significance for ESP practice.

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