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# ESP Teaching Model Based on Internationalized Talent Cultivation in Shanxi Higher Education Institutions

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**Abstract:** With the continuous advancement of China's reform and opening-up, foreign language education in China has been developing rapidly. College English teaching, which traditionally focuses on the teaching of general English, can hardly meet the needs of the society and the development of students, and it is necessary to cultivate talents who know English and are able to carry out international exchanges in specialized fields or occupations. However, for a long time, there has been a view that college English teaching is general English teaching, and there is no need or necessity to teach English for ESP. There are many reasons for this viewpoint, the most important of which is that the long-term lack of theoretical research has kept the ESP teaching system in a state of confusion for many years, which is highlighted in the unclear characterization and positioning of ESP courses in the syllabus, the lack of ESP teachers, and the misuse of teaching materials. By adopting interdisciplinary research methods, questionnaires, interviews and action research methods, and after completing the needs analysis, we propose an outline based on existing linguistic theories and learning theories, using information from practice, then select teaching materials based on the outline, determine the pedagogical methods used to teach these materials and establish an assessment process that could be checked to achieve that particular goal, namely, to set clear ESP teaching objectives, employ rich ESP teaching methods, diversify ESP teachers' training and develop reasonable ESP evaluation methods, aiming to provide theoretical support and methodological guidance for the overall enhancement of the quality of ESP teaching in higher education institutions in Shanxi province.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes (ESP), College English Teaching, Internationalized Talent Cultivation

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## 1. Introduction

As a universal language, English plays a self-evident role as a bridge in international communication. In China, traditional English teaching has always been based on teaching English language knowledge, which is often called EGP (English for General Purposes). Since the reform and opening up, China's exchanges with the rest of the world have become more and more frequent and close in various fields, and the traditional English for General Purposes teaching mode, as the main way to cultivate English language talents, is far from being able to satisfy the needs of today's deepening economic globalization. The society has put forward the requirement of combining English teaching with disciplines and specialties, and the main problem we need to solve is to carry out English for Specific Purposes (ESP) [1] teaching to cultivate compound talents with professional skills and language ability [2].

With the increasing pace of economic transformation in Shanxi Province, the use of English has become more prominent, and the demand for high-level, applied and compound talents in Shanxi, as an inland province, has also grown unprecedentedly. However, the current orientation of foreign language teaching in Shanxi Universities and colleges is mainly to improve the English level of college students by simply laying the foundation, and at the same time carry out humanistic quality education. Therefore, the cultivation of compound talents with both professional knowledge of related disciplines and language ability is the main problem we need to solve.

## 2. The Present ESP Teaching in Shanxi Higher Education Institutions

A survey of college English programs in Shanxi Province

found that the vast majority of Shanxi universities and colleges, such as Shanxi University, Taiyuan University of Technology, North University of China, and Communication University of Shanxi, do not offer ESP courses. Shanxi University offers general college English for non-English majors in their freshman and sophomore years, and screens 120 students at the beginning of their enrollment to form an improvement class that offers courses in listening, speaking, reading, translating and writing. The College of Economics and Management provides students with English courses for business and trade; Taiyuan University of Technology used to provide ESP module courses for sophomores, such as business English, engineering English, cultural translation, etc., but the module courses have been canceled at present, and the English course adopts the New Vision College English compiled by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing Press, and all the English courses are concentrated in the freshman year; North University of China and Communication University of Shanxi provide two years of general college English teaching for students. Yuncheng University offers general English courses for students in the first year, and ESP courses such as English for Social Sciences, English for Law, English for Science and Technology, and English for Management are offered to students in the second year. From the point of view of the courses offered, there has long existed a view in colleges and universities in Shanxi province that college English teaching is general English teaching, and there is little need or necessity for specific purpose English teaching. Institutions with ESP courses also have problems such as non-standardized preparation of teaching materials, unclear teaching objectives, and lack of teachers.

There are various reasons for these problems, the main one being that the long-term lack of theoretical research has kept the ESP teaching system in a relatively chaotic state for many years. As an emerging field of English language teaching, ESP has not been produced and developed for a long time, and scholars both at home and abroad generally believe that its emergence in the 1960s is the inevitable result of the comprehensive development and interaction of society, economy and culture. Comparatively speaking, the domestic ESP has a late start. Accompanied by the rise of the international English for ESP research boom, the opening of ESP courses and related research in China also started in the 1980s. Up to now, the development of ESP teaching in China has gone through three stages: the first stage is called "professional reading"; the second stage is called "professional English"; and the third stage is the popular bilingual courses in colleges and universities and internationalization courses in colleges and universities [3]. Although the research on ESP has been paid great attention in China, the development and research foundation of English for Specific Purposes is still relatively weak for the universities in Shanxi, which is located in the inland area, and the research on ESP is still in the primary stage, which not only lacks systematic and holistic research, but also has considerable contradictions that the theoretical research and

the teaching practice are not unified [4]. Therefore, how to overcome the constraints on the development of ESP in universities in our province, how to grasp the relationship between ESP and EGP in teaching practice, and how to ensure that ESP teaching achieves the expected results in theory are the problems we are currently facing and urgently need to solve.

### 3. ESP Teaching Model Based on Internationalized Talent Cultivation

The traditional EGP is to teach English as an independent language course, while the ESP program has clear teaching objectives, content and communicative needs. The ESP program is designed to encompass multiple disciplines, combine various linguistic theories flexibly and appropriately, and cannot rely on a single theory. The Communicative Approach guides the general direction of teaching [5], Transformational-Generative Grammar inspires teachers to develop students' cognitive potential [6], and Structuralist Linguistics establishes the principles of listening and speaking as the first step, and of gradual progression [7]. Affective and cognitive factors in educational psychology are interdependent and inseparable. The process of learning ESP is the process of synchronization or interaction between the two factors, and if the design of ESP courses takes these two factors into full consideration, it will lead to a virtuous cycle of learning. Needs analysis should be all-round, multi-angle, not only to understand the learners as people, learners and applicators, but also to understand the most effective learning methods and approaches to specific learners, as well as the target scenario and the learning environment, only in this way, the needs analysis is scientific, comprehensive, effective, and can lay a solid foundation for the design of ESP courses.

Considering the current ESP teaching situation in Shanxi universities and colleges and the needs analysis [8], we prepare the syllabus based on the existing language theories and learning theories, use the information from practice, select or compile teaching materials based on the syllabus, determine the pedagogical methods for teaching these materials and establish an evaluation procedure that can be checked to achieve the specific goals. We should firstly, based on "needs analysis", follow the law of cognitive development, select authentic materials, focus on the diversity of materials, give full play to the function of corpus, and select and compile ESP teaching materials suitable for our students on the basis of evaluation, and secondly, we should set up clear student-centered goals for teaching English for Specific Purposes, and achieve them through scientific and effective teaching methods and teaching tools. This requires that all activities in classroom teaching should be centered on students' learning status, and that students' self-learning ability and communicative competence should be effectively improved.

#### 3.1. Setting Clear ESP Teaching Objectives

The purpose of teaching is to meet the specific needs of

learners, focusing on a wide range of knowledge, expertise, and emphasizing the cultivation of the ability to independently acquire information, learn independently, and solve problems independently; the focus of teaching is to teach students how to effectively use the target language as a carrier to complete the exchange of professional information or information activities related to their professions; the content of the teaching is related to specific professions and occupations, and takes the basic structure of professional knowledge as the framework, and specific language practice activities as the platform, and scientific, technological, economic, legal and other diversified information as the carrier content. At present, there are certain problems with the teaching objectives of English for Specific Purposes classroom in China: the teaching objectives are not clear, and they are mixed with those of general English. Therefore, to establish an effective model of ESP classroom, we must start from the reform of teaching objectives and establish clear and feasible teaching objectives [9].

The teaching objectives of ESP are established on the basis of students' learning needs, and are designed to cultivate students' language communicative competence in their professional and vocational fields, which requires students to master their respective basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating related to their professional contents, and ultimately to realize the use of English as a tool for obtaining information and communicating with professional knowledge. Therefore, classroom teaching should focus on the cultivation of students' language use ability, on language practice, and on acquiring direct, effective and authentic experience through practice [10]. It should be noted that emphasizing practice does not mean that the teaching of basic knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar, chapter and genre can be set aside, but the training of language skills should be increased on the basis of these superficial knowledge of language. Specifically, the specific cultivation objectives of English for Specific Purposes are: through the study of ESP, students can understand professional classes and lectures taught in English; can read, understand and translate English literature in their professional fields; can write professional academic or applied articles in English; can communicate academically, participate in discussions and keynote speeches, etc., in English; and can solve communicative problems in their professional fields in English [11].

### **3.2. Employing Rich ESP Teaching Methods**

Classroom teaching is of great significance to the teaching of English for Specific Purposes. The traditional foreign language teaching model is a teacher-centered teaching model based on behaviorist theory. Constructivist learning theory, on the other hand, believes that learning is not constructed by the teacher, but by the learners themselves. We should give full play to the learner's personal initiative, follow the principle of "student-centered", and adopt all methods and strategies conducive to foreign language learning to achieve the ultimate goal of classroom teaching.

(1) Register analysis teaching method. Register is a general term for the occasion or domain in which a language is used. The British linguist Halliday (1976) defines register as the situation in which language variants can be categorized as domains according to their use. There are many kinds of registers in which language is used, for example: news broadcasting, speeches, advertising, classroom teaching, office talk, home conversation, etc. Language used in different domains will have different corpora [12].

The influence of register on specific English is very significant. When teaching grammar items such as phonetics, vocabulary, phrases, syntax, tenses and moods in the classroom of English for Specific Purposes, teachers relate them to a specific domain and analyze the special meanings they express in a particular area.

(2) Interactive communicative teaching method. Constructivist theory emphasizes that learning can realize its meaning through interpersonal collaborative activities. As a part of language teaching, the primary purpose of teaching English for Specific Purposes is to cultivate students' ability to use the language, i.e. communicative competence. The specificity of the purpose of teaching ESP requires teachers to provide the skills needed for communication through the practical use of language according to the language characteristics of each specialty [13].

In actual teaching process, communicative activities are practiced in a variety of ways: role-playing, group discussions, competitions, games and case studies. Case study can bring students into a specific event through a specific case, give full play to the degree of student participation, and create a good communicative atmosphere. This teaching method can reproduce the real communicative activities, and thus has strong realism. Its basic steps are: selecting cases, describing cases, analyzing cases, summarizing cases and writing case reports. In addition, cases in the classroom activities of English for Specific Purposes often contain many real, complex and controversial issues. There are no standard answers to such controversial issues, and students are free to give play to them through group discussions without being confined in their thinking by standards; learners are able to maximize their participation in debates and persuasions, and accurately enhance their language skills in the process of communication [1].

(3) Task-based teaching method. The task-based teaching method aims to transform the basic concept of language application into a classroom teaching mode with practical significance. The advantage of task-based teaching is that it can create good opportunities for students to practice the language, thus fully mobilizing students' enthusiasm for learning and cultivating their ability to analyze, solve problems and think independently [14].

The implementation of task-based language teaching can be divided into three steps: (1) Pre-task. The teacher introduces the topic that students are not very familiar with, learns and reviews the language related to the task, sets up the learning task and makes the students clear about the goal of the task. (2) Task ring. First, students perform the task in pairs or small

groups; second, students in each group report to the class orally or in writing on the completion of the task. The teacher not only informs students of the purpose of the report, but also helps them solve the problem as a language consultant; finally, students report on the completion of the task or exchange written reports. (3) Post-task. The teacher helps the students to analyze the problems and their reasons in the process of task completion, and guides the students to practice accordingly.

### **3.3. Diversifying ESP Teachers' Training**

ESP teachers must be proficient in English and know the theories of English language teaching, curriculum design and testing, as well as the basic knowledge of curriculum-related specialties, so it is necessary to solve the problem of ESP teachers' lack of professional knowledge through teacher training and cooperative teaching. In order to cultivate a full-time and stable ESP teacher team, the target of ESP teacher education and training mode should mainly be oriented to the in-service general English teachers in colleges and universities, and they should learn professional knowledge on the basis of the solid language foundation they already have, so as to make them have the ability to teach both the language and the profession, which can fundamentally solve the contradiction of choosing teachers, improve the quality of ESP teachers, and gradually form a full-time team of ESP teachers.

Cooperative teaching is the most effective teaching method of ESP. The mode of cooperation can be a long-term fixed, whole process, in which both teachers work together to make teaching plans, select teaching materials, design teaching activities, etc., that is, both teachers work together to complete all the teaching steps; it can also be a short-term, flexible mode of cooperation in which professional teachers assist in teaching, that is, the professional teachers act as consultants to help the language teachers to solve some professional knowledge problems when they need to do so. The cooperative teaching method integrates English language knowledge and professional knowledge, which can make up for the defects of language teachers teaching alone, and enable both teachers to give full play to their respective strengths, so that students can learn reliable professional knowledge and also get good language practice, so that the language communication ability can be cultivated in the language environment related to the specialty, and achieve the ideal teaching effect. The success of ESP teaching cannot be achieved without the cooperation between professional teachers and ESP teachers, and the premise of cooperation is that if both sides liberalize their horizons and actively cooperate, they will surely find more and better ways of cooperation [15].

### **3.4. Developing Reasonable ESP Evaluation Methods**

At present, most colleges and universities in Shanxi province have not established an efficient evaluation mechanism for ESP teaching. ESP teaching is different from general teaching, which cannot be measured by the general teaching evaluation mechanism, so it is necessary to establish

an evaluation mechanism that is objective, fair, and in line with the laws and characteristics of ESP teaching [16]. Academic evaluation is an effective means of promoting the improvement of teaching quality and the realization of course training objectives. Tests are used to understand the learning situation and evaluate the quality of teaching. Testing is an important part of ESP teaching and an important means of obtaining feedback information on teaching. Testing is a re-learning process for students, which can be used to summarize their own lessons in learning attitudes and learning methods; for teachers, testing can be used to understand the learning situation of students, identify problems and make improvements in time.

There are three main types of ESP course tests: (1) Placement Tests: Placement tests are often conducted before the start of the course, with the aim of understanding the degree of difference in students' English proficiency, so that classes can be properly grouped according to the level of the students, and teaching can be organized. The test questions should be highly differentiated so that it is easy to identify the differences in students' English proficiency. (2) Achievement Tests: These are conducted at any time during the course or at the end of the course to check whether the students' mastery of the material they have learned meets the requirements of the syllabus and the textbook, so the test questions should not be out of line with the requirements of the syllabus and go beyond the scope of the content of the teaching. Tests generally conducted in schools, such as midterm exams, semester exams, and graduation exams, all fall into this category. In addition to these more formal tests, teachers can also organize their own quizzes to check the progress of students at any time, to prevent students from relaxing their studies. (3) Proficiency Tests: The purpose of proficiency tests is to check whether the candidate's proficiency in English meets the requirements for certain activities, such as studying abroad, professional training, and engaging in a professional job. The test questions do not necessarily follow the syllabus, nor are they limited to a particular textbook. Such tests often have certain reference standards to determine the level of proficiency of the candidates [17].

## **4. Conclusion**

As the 21st century is an internationalized high-tech economic and information era, students should be able to face the frontiers of reform and opening up, adapt to the market economy, engage in education and scientific research, and play an active role in the 21st century, which is also the 21st century China and the world's new requirements for foreign language professionals. As a proven teaching pathway, ESP is based on the theory of language learning and takes students' special learning needs as the starting point for formulating teaching objectives, contents and methods, with the ultimate goal of training students to utilize English for communication in practical work. It is recommended that ESP teaching be fully introduced on the basis of completing general English teaching. Advocating the vigorous development of ESP teaching and

endeavoring to improve the quality of ESP teaching is the key to the current reform of college English teaching.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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