

On ESP-based English Teaching Mode of “Major + English” Dual-degree

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Abstract. With the increasing requirements of inter-disciplinary talents in the market economy, many university students choose to pursue the study of “Major + English” dual-degree. The paper firstly analyzes the present situation of teaching and studying of “Major + English” dual-degree in Chinese universities. Then, it proposes a teaching mode based on ESP theory, which is made up of the three modular courses “English language skill classes + public basic course + ESP professional courses”, the practice, the second classroom, and network platform.

Keywords: ESP; teaching mode; “Major + English” dual-degree.

1. Introduction

With the further expansion of economic globalization, more and more joint ventures and foreign-funded companies are established in China and have made significant contributions to China’s economy. All fields increasingly demand inter-disciplinary talents who are skillful in their major as well as foreign language. Society has a tendency to demand for one’s foreign language ability to contain a level of diversity and specialization. For instance, those who major in trade can fluently use English to participate in business negotiations, those who major in news can use English to interview, those who are lawyers can use English to engage in various cases, and those who are engineers can use English to communicate with foreign technicians. Therefore, it is hard for those who have merely a general foreign language ability to be best suited for market demands.

In Chinese job market, there is an increasing demand for talents who not only possess all the necessary expertise, but also have a good command of English. Therefore, the need for training compound talents has become increasingly prominent. “Major + English” dual-degree education, a new training model emerged in this context, has changed the single training model in Chinese colleges and universities, broadening the channels of talent cultivation.

2. Teaching situation of “Major + English” dual-degree

Dual degree, namely, is the second bachelor’s degree. In the undergraduate study stage, the students pursue the major; meanwhile, they choose to learn subjects of another major degree program, obtaining two bachelor's degrees after achieving the given demands. Dual degree education belongs to the category of undergraduate education. This is a teaching reform measurement with the purpose of giving full play to the advantages of comprehensive university, exploring the teaching mode of interdisciplinary organization, and promoting the talent cultivation.

“Major + English” dual-degree in Chinese universities usually adopts the studying procedure as follows: the sophomores are entitled to applying for admission to “Major + English” dual-degree programs with duration of two and a half years. Students take advantage of night, weekends, holidays and spare time to pursue “Major + English” dual-degree. There are four compulsory courses in each semester within two years, with practical courses completed in the winter and summer vacations. The last six months is used to write a thesis. “Major + English” dual-degree education, on the one hand, provides an effective way for training compound talents. On the other hand, it is a powerful incentive to mobilize the enthusiasm of the majority of students learning English, to promote the development of students’ personality and overall growth, to create more favorable conditions and broader space, and to meet the diversified demands of the social talent cultivation. However, Chinese State Board of Education has not yet developed a syllabus for “Major + English” dual-degree, and there is no unified

management and unified guidance of the special committees. Lack of a systematic and mature teaching philosophy and teaching mode, there are some drawbacks in the teaching mode of “Major + English” dual-degree.

Due to the lack of national uniform syllabus guidance, its curriculum positioning, teaching goals, and curriculum model are not clear, and the selection of teaching materials, teaching arrangements and teaching content are at random, impacting the effectiveness of teaching. Curriculum design of “Major + English” dual-degree, similar to that of English major, focuses on literary language courses in addition to skills courses. This curriculum design has not linked the students’ first major with English learning, without combination with the actual needs of the students. As a result, it is difficult to make English learning of double degree can effectively play a useful complementary role in student's first major. The teaching goals do not emphasize the majors with the ideas, methods and knowledge mastery, forming organic, integrated knowledge system, in order to achieve the maximization of students’ own added value.

3. ESP and EGP

For many teachers, ESP is no longer a strange term which has enjoyed popularity in China for almost 40 years. ESP is a relative concept compared to EGP (English for General Purposes). Since its appearance in the 1960s in western countries, a complete system concerning the study of ESP has been established and at every stage of its development, there would appear representative figures and eminent literature works. Compared to other countries, in China, articles or monographs on ESP are very few, with many released ones only lingering on the introduction of foreign research achievement [1].

Generally speaking, ESP is known as a learner-centered approach to teaching English as a second language. “It is recommended for senior undergraduates who need to learn a foreign language in their specific fields, such as science, technology, and academic learning in a lot of university. ESP has undergone three main phases of development as an independent discipline. “It is now in a fourth phase with a fifth phase starting to emerge” [2]. According to them, the development of ESP has undergone 5 stages, including register analysis, rhetorical/discourse analysis, target situation analysis, skills and strategies and learning-centered approach. Each phase has their own focus: the first three phases, i.e. register analysis, rhetorical/discourse analysis and needs analysis are analysis at the language surface. The following two phases observe language beyond the surface in which the learners’ thinking processes are involved.

4. Status Quo of ESP in China

With the development of China’s economy and the enhancement of the country’s internationalization, ESP has developed to some extent. To meet the needs of the market-oriented economy, various English training courses are offered, for example, foreign trade English, tourism English, English secretary, international finance and so on. On the other hand, College English is the main battlefield for China’s ESP. About two decades ago, universities and colleges began to offer English courses concerning students’ specific professional needs.

However, there is not yet a sound ESP system which is suited to the specific situation of China’s higher education. In College English Syllabus, it has been stated that the ESP course should be a compulsory course; in the first two years of the undergraduate study, students are offered the course of Basic English; ESP should be set from the fifth to the seventh semesters with no less than 100 hours altogether and two periods each week is required. If time or resources permit, it is better to offer EAP reading, ESP translation or ESP writing courses on the eighth semester [3].

However, the teaching of English for General Purposes is still the main concern of college English teaching. The main part of English teaching in many universities ends up with two years’ general English teaching at students’ undergraduate stage and at the postgraduate stage, general English continues to dominate the English learning and teaching. According to the survey conducted by the

Foreign Language Department, Henan University, 58% of institutions of higher learning questioned failed to set up the ESP course as a regular course due to the lack of finance, equipment and teacher resources. So we can see that ESP develops very unevenly in China. Nowadays, the ESP teaching in China remains at the stage of traditional teaching which still focuses on the analysis of single sentences and grammatical rules, which fail to meet the requirements of the times and cannot satisfy the current needs of cultivating ESP talents. Thus, a new and appropriate teaching mode is greatly needed in the ESP teaching.

5. A teaching mode of “Major + English” dual-degree based on ESP theory

5.1 Needs analysis

Speaking of ESP, no ESP practitioner can keep silent about “needs analysis”. Almost every definition of ESP accepts needs as nature or starting point of ESP course. Therefore, when approaching ESP, we have to obtain thorough understanding of needs. Needs refer to students’ study or job requirements, that is, what they have to be able to do at the end of their language course. This is a goal-oriented definition of needs [4]. We can consider needs as what the students themselves would like to gain from the language course. The awareness of needs can also distinguish ESP from General English. In EGP, learners can have needs, too, such as the need to pass examination. Hutchinson and Waters explained: “If learners, sponsors and teachers know why the learners need English, that awareness will have an influence on what will be acceptable as reasonable content in the language course and, on the positive side, what potential can be exploited”. Thus, although it might appear on the surface that the ESP course is characterized by its content (Science, Medicine, Commerce, Tourism etc.), this is, in fact, only a secondary consequence of the English. “Needs” consists of two types: target needs and learning needs. They deal in terms of necessities, lacks and wants, and what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. When knowing the students’ needs, teachers can effectively teach, namely, the ESP teachers can know what methods they should adopt. ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; related in content to particular disciplines, occupations and activities; centered on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse semantics and so on, and analysis of the discourse; in contrast with “General English”. The variable characteristics are that ESP may be restricted to the learning skills to be learned (for example reading only), may not be taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.

ESP teaching should focus on improving students’ English proficiency. Teaching content should be closely linked with students’ major and professional environment of English communication. ESP teaching is a special language training course which combines professional content and English language skills. The learners have a clear understanding of the needs. ESP designers should conduct a needs analysis based on the professional needs of learners and society. Needs analysis is the basis for developing ESP syllabus and compiling ESP textbooks. Therefore it is necessary to conduct an investigation about the curriculum needs for “Major + English” dual-degree students in polytechnic universities in order to determine the curriculum which may display the characteristics of polytechnic students and reflect combination of students’ major. English teachers should be interviewed to learn their overall understanding, assessment and recommendations of curriculum, English teaching mode, teaching methods, teaching materials, and assessment methods make recommendations in order to further improve ESP teaching.

ESP researchers generally believe that ESP curriculum based on the needs analysis may become effective curriculum project [5]. It will be possible to reflect these needs in the ESP curriculum when designing the teaching mode only by understanding needs of English which related industries in the polytechnic universities rely on. The English syllabus with a clear course positioning can be achieved based on needs analysis. Learning tasks have to be set according to needs, so that the purpose of ESP teaching can be reflected. Then, the students are able to retrieve, collect literature materials in English about what they learn from their major to have access to professional information, developing

expertise, improving the ability of academic exchanges, so that they can participate in production, scientific research, international exchanges and its related activities in English in the future.

5.2 ESP-based English teaching mode of “Major + English” dual-degree

ESP teaching is the continuation and expansion of EGP teaching. In fact, they are not antagonistic or incompatible because both EGP and ESP teaching are to achieve the same teaching objectives. Universities are to cultivate the talents of practical professional and technical personnel for the society. Different majors embody different characteristics, in addition to some common professional courses. Most professional courses have their own relatively independent features which should be noted in teaching. Courses content, knowledge systems, project materials, evaluation system have to be designed according to the different majors. ESP teaching has to match students’ major, setting the ESP teaching ideas based on the process of professional positions.

Curriculum setting, a key part of the ESP teaching, directly affects the implementation of the teaching objectives and teaching effectiveness. Oriented by ESP theory, based on needs analysis of foreign language teaching, the characteristics of “Major + English” dual-degree and the actual situation, teaching content may adopt a modular way, which shifts entirely to the combination of EGP and ESP teaching to build a multi-level and diversified of three module courses including “English language skills lessons +public basic courses +ESP professional courses.”

(1) English language skills courses: the purpose is to further improve the English skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, which are the backbone of “Major + English” dual-degree courses. Specific courses include: Advanced English, Senior English Audiovisual, English Writing, Intermediate and Advanced Spoken English, Newspapers Readings, Album of English-speaking Countries, Chinese Cultural which are concerned with the English language, literature, and culture courses. Appropriate adjustments in the course content may be made to embody the characteristics of polytechnic universities. For example, mode of literary works in Advanced English may be changed into the integration of the double degree students’ professional English, expanding students’ knowledge [6].

(2) Public basic courses include: Economic Management, Second Foreign Language. Science and technology information needs make polytechnic students prefer to choose to learn German or French as second foreign language learning, which may increase students’ interest in foreign languages and the first professional knowledge.

(3) Related curricula of ESP professional expertise: English teaching of double degree should be based on professions in the universities themselves, that is to say, school-based ESP courses should be established to make English teaching of double degree offer service for the students’ first profession, to help students obtain professional English skills, and support student’s future career development with foreign language education. Curricula are offered, such as Scientific English Reading, Scientific English Translation, Scientific English Writing, Contract English, Professional Literature Reading, Mechanical English, Civil English, Environmental English, Management English, Legal English, enabling students to link their first-degree professional knowledge with English.

ESP curriculum setting enables students to apply what they have learned to making English serve for their first profession, which facilitates its future work, and meets their demand for language learning. Then, students may utilize English as a language tool to acquire their professional knowledge, undertake English-Chinese translation, participate in academic conference and practice, give academic reports, as well as write English papers and English abstracts.

Practice aspects, the second class, and network platform form the teaching mode of “Major + English” dual-degree together with three module courses. Practice aspects include social practice and professional practice. By inviting off-campus experts, practice training bases may be established to train students’ ability to apply their expertise to work by means of the practice and training, and to strengthen students’ application ability. Students are allowed to participate in school-enterprise cooperation projects, and personally involved in the practice of English translation. Schools, together with enterprises, cultivate talents of practical application. Universities can establish school-enterprise cooperating projects. For example, some management staff and experienced technology translators

from translation companies may be invited to give lectures to deepen students' understanding of the English practical application, and to lay a good foundation for the guidance work of professional teaching and practice aspects. Students may have chances to applied knowledge to practice, further consolidating and verifying the theory, improving the level of knowledge and practical ability, exercising students' coordination skills, communication skills and the ability to use English, improving students' profession quality. Most universities always invite some foreign experts to have a visit or give academic lectures, and often sponsor International Conference on science and engineering, which may offer good chances for students' learning English. "Major + English" dual-degree students may be arranged to participate in these activities to broaden horizons, improve professional academic level and proficiency of professional foreign language.

The second class building could expand "Major + English" dual-degree students' extracurricular activities, which become complementary to the first class and the second class. The second classroom of College English can fully realize the principles and spirit of personalized teaching, and make up for the lack of classroom teaching. Combined with the college's campus cultural activities, "Major + English" dual-degree students are encouraged to actively participate in the "English Culture Festival" activities, which are sponsored annually by the Institute of Foreign Languages, such as English Speech Competition, English Learning Lectures, English Debating Competition, English Song Contest, English Drama Contest, and Translation Competition. By participating in the English second classroom, the "Major + English" dual-degree students may increase a sense of belonging and identity so as to stimulate zeal and enthusiasm to study English.

Building of network learning platform and optimization of ESP teaching can promote the integrity of the teaching mode of "Major + English" dual-degree. Campus learning website of "Major + English" dual-degree should be established to offer downloading the supplementary information and courseware of language skill courses, and to provide the ESP corpus and downloading and update ESP courses of the professional expertise. Students can select and combine learning content by themselves. Students may seek, organize and download these materials on the campus website to learn English language knowledge, foster the interests and abilities of language learning, and grasp the forefront knowledge and the latest developments in their first major, thus unifying language and professional learning. The network can provide a very convenient way to communicate quickly to shorten the distance between students and teachers. Through channels of communication like Tencent QQ groups or China's mobile Fetion groups, teachers may conduct real-time communications with students, counseling, individualized teaching based on the needs of different students.

6. Conclusion

To change the teaching situation of "Major + English" dual-degree, a teaching mode based on the ESP teaching philosophy should be established. Firstly, related demand research and analysis should be conducted. Only if a real understanding of the demand for English in the related industries of universities, can these requirements be reflected in the ESP curriculum, thus forming a truly special teaching mode of "Major + English" dual-degree. Aiming at students' actual needs, based on students' majors, the curriculum system of "Major + English" dual-degree is design based on ESP theory. Gradually, the transition from language skill courses to the curriculum of English culture, finally, the ESP professional English courses are set up according to the characteristics of different students. Meanwhile, practice of school-enterprise cooperation should be established to integrate needs of the students' first major and the students' English knowledge. Personalized and active network learning platform should be provided, and the design of the second class English activities have to be optimized to carry out various second class English activities to stimulate students' interest in learning English, improve their comprehensive ability to use English. The current English education of dual degree should establish a teaching mode of "Major + English" dual-degree based on the ESP teaching philosophy by means of curriculum system optimization in order to cultivate compound talents for the development of society and the times.

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