

## English for Specific Academic Purposes in the Chinese –British Collaborative Context

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**Abstract.** In recent years, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has become the main trends in college English teaching in Chinese universities. This paper presents English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course relating to art design field in a Chinese-British cooperative institute. It then analyzes the teaching context, faculty, material and methodology of the course. Finally, the paper provides some recommendations for ESAP teaching in China.

### Introduction

Now English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching system exists in China in three types roughly: English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) (Cai Jigang, 2013) [1]. EGAP tends to the academic aspect, not limited to a specific field, while ESAP relates to a disciplinary, regards the professional knowledge as the main teaching content, but English as a learning instrument. It tends to the application.

ESAP course in the area of art design in the Chinese-British collaborative context are designed to help art design students develop the language and subject skills they need to study successfully through the medium of English. On the one hand the students need to acquire some general English academic literacy to precede their study in the cooperative surroundings, and on the other hand they should have some disciplinary knowledge to develop their subject capability. These two aspects explain why the course integrating language and disciplinary content are developed in the collaborative context.

The ESAP courses instruction, in general sense, focuses largely on the conventionalized patterns of language use, the academic genre of the discourse in the specific field and the pragmatic sense of regarding ESAP teaching as a socialization process of acquiring a complex set of discourses, identity and values. The thing we need to notice is that the discourse in art design in some ways distinct from discourse in other fields. It is essentially art discipline specific. Art design is a subject much associated with inspiration and creativity which is far away from the logic and academic feature of some scientific subjects, which leaves much space for the research and thinking of designing the curriculum of ESAP course of art design. Are conventionalized patterns of language use taught in a creative and abstract art field language teaching? How can discourse in this subject be transferred to ESAP teaching content? Does teaching terms need to consider the social process in which academic discourse is situated in the art field?

### ESAP Dimensions

In the Chapter of *Course Design, English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centered Approach*, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) proposed “WHAT, WHY, WHEN, HOW, WHERE, and WHO” as the breakthrough points and ESAP teaching theory mostly framed in this “5W1H”: (1) WHY, Teaching purpose and curriculum setting; (2) WHO, Allocation and training of teachers; (3) WHAT, Teaching content and teaching materials; (4) WHEN, Class hour and learning sequence; (5) WHERE, the environment or condition of teaching; (6) HOW, teaching methods and curriculum evaluation[2].

The organization of this paper follows largely of the above mentioned. There are four parts of the teaching mode will be discussed. The first section describes the teaching purposes and context of the course. The second describes the necessity of teaching faculty. The third illustrates the teaching content and materials. Finally, the fourth section discusses the teaching methodology of the course. Among them, teaching content and resources is our main focus to be discussed.

### **Context**

ESAP course in art design field was developed for students in a Chinese-British joint institute in Visual Communication, Landscape Architecture and Digital Media Technology. The name of the course is Key Concepts and Reflective Practice which run for the first academic year and serve as a foundation year to entry into the intense subject learning years. The students either need to complete the program to the English language condition of entry to their university, or they have already met their conditions but would like to develop their academic language skills before commencing their studies. The students here have limited art design knowledge and their English competence is relatively low and unfamiliar with the genres, especially the written genres that were important for their subject studies. In the first year, the core subject course for them is an art inspiration course, a course focusing on theoretical concepts in the art design.

The students have EGAP courses preparing for their reading, listening, speaking and writing skills at the same which will aid them to attain the English proficiency Test of the collaborative British University. Key concepts and reflective practice integrates the basic four language skills as well. The new course is designed to input the key concepts of visual art and landscape architecture by listening and reading materials and output the reflective practice of the students' own design work in the presentation practice and reflective writing skills. The key concepts which the students find it difficult to understand will be the main topic of the teaching by using the disciplinary content, and the reflective writing is based on the training of description of the art work, critical thinking of the design and reflective thinking of their own work. The most radical change is that the new course would combine English teaching with disciplinary content from art theory/art history. The focus of the course is to prepare the students for the language based academic practices involved in their program of study.

### **Teaching Faculty**

ESAP course is a combination of subject and English. It needs the teacher not only be familiar with professional knowledge, but also be proficient in English. The teacher should be able to combine disciplinary subject content with language content in designing and teaching the course. This kind of teacher is in desperate need, but it is not easy to find this kind of inter- disciplinary teacher. Another possibility for integrating subject and language is team teaching. In team teaching, the EAP teacher (the language specialist) works alongside a content teacher/lecturer (a subject specialist). They cooperate fully to run the course successfully. For example, in teaching English for art design, the students may be given a reading text and comprehension questions on it (a text for example from an art theory textbook). In class the lecturers/teachers and students review the students' answers to the questions. The EAP teacher deals with queries and corrections of language items and highlights language features in the text and the subject lecturer deals with queries and corrections of the students' answers in terms of their understanding of design content and highlights points of art. At the same time, institute administrative management office should also create favorable conditions for teachers to acquire further study and training. Senior management can hire subject experts to give English teachers more professional training, and can also select local excellent professional teachers to study abroad to improve the language competence. With rapid development of Internet, institute can help also use the Internet platform to set up a Subject-based English teaching forum (Zhang Lingnan, 2018) [3].

## Teaching Content

### *Need Analysis*

Need analysis is the prerequisite to the decision of teaching content. In the collaborative context, English is the only teaching language. Students have difficulty in understanding the instruction of the subject teacher and struggle with the subject course assignment and requirement. They find the resources of learning too difficult to understand and it is almost impossible for them to write the essays with proper genre in their subject.

These difficulties are reported by the students and subject teachers alike and led to the analysis of the students' needs. The teaching content is decided to expand the EGAP course to ESAP course so that it would combine the subject content with language content. It is a kind of language aid subject course. The difficulties of the students will be solved by the discipline-specific genre teaching alongside with subject content using the language skills to interpret and reinforce.

### *Discourse Analysis*

Specialist discourse is the main teaching resources of the course. Before the class, the teacher need investigate the discourse of art design and presents some of the features of written and presentational discourse of art design focuses on. There are several ways for the teachers to investigate. For one thing, they don't necessarily do the research from the scratch. They can borrow some of the results of the previous researchers, for example, Helen (2010) cites the research of Turner and Hocking (2004), which presented many language features of the academic language discourse and communication of visual communication [4]. For the other, the teachers can examine the texts in art design focusing on what was written about, the aims of writing, how language was used and the types of perspectives valued within this academic discipline by them. After the teachers generalize the language features of the subject, they can integrate these teaching objectives into the curriculum and design the material and teaching activities based on the typical language features the students are supposed to acquire.

### *Course Design*

The course can be designed as the ESAP courses. Its pedagogy typically focuses on the content-based input and output language skills training. Key concepts instruction is one of the main inputs for the students. Context is provided for the learning and practicing of the key concepts of art design, for example, account and commentary of the design work. Specific academic reading skills are adapted to intensively obtain the gist of the reading material and key concepts. There is one thing to emphasize, the most common scenario is to use the readings that also form the main sources for writing skills training, particularly the work that prepares students for assessed writing both in language and subject. There is also increasing recognition among ESAP teachers of the value of extensive reading as a way of providing learners with exposure to new and recycled subject vocabulary and of developing reading fluency. Subject material is a good resource for the teacher and students both to develop the reading skills.

Academic listening skills work in ESAP classrooms continues an international EAP tradition of having scripted "pseudo - authentic" lectures or excerpts from lectures as the most common text and guided note taking as the main listening task. Besides common listening tasks used to practice academic listening skills, the main teaching objective of it is to reinforce the input of the key concepts and descriptive and analysis of the design work in the academic speaking presentation occasions. As noted in relation to teaching academic speaking, listening work likewise normally features in the modeling and analysis of oral presentations and of the interaction in artists and consultation with art staff. Furthermore, in relation to the links between reading and writing and between listening and speaking, language skills work in our ESAP classrooms is strongly integrated. This integration is driven and facilitated by the use of the feature of art design as a way of organizing the program. As an example, the description in an academic article on design work may be consolidated, extended, or challenged in a lecture or talk, with these written and spoken texts acting as sources and stimulus for writing and speaking skills work.

Writing skills of the course combines disciplinary subject content with a focus on language features of written discourse in the art design and on the genres that visual arts students read and write. Examples of the genres students write are Descriptions and Analyses of Art Works, the written or spoken text the student devises to support or justify his or her own design and reflective practice of their own work. In developing the writing skill, disciplinary subject content is the main source. Hyland (2009) describes the discipline-specific concept of discourse saying: Disciplines and professions are largely created and maintained through distinctive ways that members construct a view of the world through their discourses [5]. What counts as convincing argument, appropriate tone, persuasive interaction, and so on, is managed for a particular audience. Therefore, the teaching centers on the development of theme of this specific area and abide by the academic rules of this subject.

Most experienced EAP teachers would be likely to agree that academic speaking skills have traditionally been more commonly practiced and tested rather than explicitly taught. The situation needs to be changed in the ESAP courses. The traditionally strong focus on giving oral presentations remains. The differences between spoken and written academic language, the choices speakers make in ordering and signposting the stages of an oral presentation, and the techniques and language that speakers use to make points salient to an audience are all necessarily for the teachers to highlight. However, there is now more work on how to demonstrate the students' design work and how to reflect on the design based on the suggestion of the subject teachers and expert or artists. The speaking skills of consulting the idea and share or argue the idea should be taught in the course as well.

### **Teaching Methodology**

ESAP is basically a language course, so the teaching methodology adopting in the language class can bring the efficiency of the course to the full play. The traditional lecture way of teaching is not fit here, while the commonly used communicative approach is welcomed in the classroom. Because the course is subject-based, so the content-based instruction is essential in this course. In addition, situational method and project based learning can be used to organize the class according to the feature of art design instruction.

### **Summary**

According to Hyland (2009), there is a generic set of skills and rhetorical patterns that is used across different disciplines. So, there is a great need for the integration of subject content [5]. ESAP can be designed as a bridge course for the EGAP and subject teaching. So there are definitely typical patterns of language use in this specific area and we can design the ways creating the situation for the students to notice the discourse feature of this subject and internalize it. When they have the chance to practice the language they will have the chance to notice the pragmatic aspect of the subject-related language. In the near future, we can design more ESAP courses based on the practice except for the traditional medicine and business disciplinary. What's more, we can develop the course on more specific areas in a certain disciplinary, for example, the ESAP course of visual communication, landscape architecture and digital media in the art design, which will enrich our ESAP instruction to a greater extent.

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