Study on Book Compilation for CBI-based English Courses Aimed at Art Majors

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Abstract. When conducting CBI-Oriented (Content-based Instruction) English courses aimed at art majors, apart from readily available course books, teachers are also suggested to compile books based on different needs. The compilation needs to consider the overall teaching objectives, the characteristics of the teaching objects and the actual state and capability of the faculty involved. The paper is to examine and reflect on the process of book compilation for this purpose and the various factors that contribute to the compilation of high-quality course books.

Keywords: CBI, Book Compilation, Art Major.

1. Introduction

The integration of language and content instruction was first advanced in 1980s. (Mohan, 1986; Stryker & Leaver, 1997; Met, 1999), and the theory was later developed into Content-based Instruction (CBI). CBI teaching theory emphasizes that language learning should be combined with disciplinary knowledge and that the focus of teaching should be channeled from the language itself to enabling students to acquire language skills by learning disciplinary knowledge. The ESP courses guided by CBI theories is applicable and meaningful. According to Wang Shouren (2011), ESP courses are driven by content and the goal of such courses shall be forging language learners' effective communicative competence, and that language training and disciplinary knowledge acquiring should promote each other at the same time.

However, the majority of the English textbooks designed for non-English majors cannot meet the need in this regard. Thus, it is highly imperative to design and compile a set of course books that are based on CBI-guided course objectives and are suitable for the actual language competence of the art majors.

2. Course Book Developing

2.1 Compiler Selection

According to Stenhouse, language teachers are and should be researchers, and they are entitled to carrying out researches, so that the courses can be conducted more smoothly in classrooms. (Stenhouse,1975:142). As the teaching subjects, teachers are the most ideal authors of the books they use, as they are more familiar with the whole teaching process and their teaching objects. Thus, the compilers of the textbooks are the teachers with at least two years of CBI-oriented English teaching experience.

2.2 Teaching Material Selection

The selection and adaptation (if necessary) of teaching materials are the most intricate and demanding of the process, as the materials should be interesting to students, academically rewarding, informative and reflective. (Dong Yafen, 2006). In specific, it should meet the following requirements:

1. The subject of units and texts selected serve the interest of students from a range of departments. Take the textbook for design majors for example, it should be appealing to majors from the Department of Apparel Design and Industrial Design.

2. The content of the material must be from authentic context and provides a vocabulary of appropriate size and with proper difficulty, neither too difficult nor too easy, thus helping the students to lay a solid foundation for deeper research into the area.

3. All the information from the texts shall be valid, which requires discussion and brainstorming with teachers from respective departments before compiling and proofreading from them after that, so as to guarantee the authenticity and authority of the textbook.

2.3 Structure and Content

The content of the book should be consistent, understandable and learnable for the students. (Chen Bohua, 2012:14). The book compiling shall take into consideration the designing of the actual textbook, reference book, video and audio (if there are any), as well as the specific texts, the vocabulary that goes with each unit, the illustration (which is especially necessary and demanding for textbook aimed for art majors), the coherence among units, etc. Besides, online resources should be tapped into depth, so as to form a multifaceted network that ideally facilitates students learning both online and offline.

3. Application and Evaluation

3.1 Application

Since September, 2017, English for Design Majors has been regularly given as an optional course to juniors in Hubei Institute of Fine Arts from the Department of Design, Apparel Design, Industrial Design and Environmental Art Design. Approximately 180 students take the course in each term, accounting for 25% of all design majors.

3.2 Evaluation

The evaluation of the course book is carried out from two aspects, i. e. the assessment from students and that from teachers.

3.2.1 Assessment from Students

Questionnaire is given to students who took English for Design Majors as the optional course in Term I, School Year from 2018-2019, covering questions on interest, novelty, difficulty and content of the material. Analysis shows that students' score for interest, novelty and difficulty are above 4.1/5, while over 78% of the students think the material is more difficult than they expect. As for content of the material, the score is around 3.5/5.

3.2.2 Assessment from Teachers

The assessment is conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews. All the teachers are affirmative to the effectiveness of the course book. Their comments are primarily from three aspects.

First, the units are logically linked to each other and difficulty is varied according to different stages, thus the whole teaching was smooth and coherent.

Second, the book can effectively trigger students' interest but for some units' students cannot keep being actively participating.

Third, the material can effectively enhance students' language input and output, and the mid-term test and final test both prove satisfying.

4. Result Analysis and Reflection

Generally speaking, the course book is proven successful from the assessment. Most importantly, it is compiled by teachers with years of experience in teaching ESP courses aimed at art majors, so the materials chosen and the tasks arranged are all exactly based on the actual academic level and language competence of the learning subject. In addition, teachers find it effective in teaching in terms of logic among units, varying difficulty at different teaching stages and enhancing students' performance.

However, improvements can be made from several aspects. To begin with, the content of the course book should be diversified and deepened. This can be done after getting more specific

feedback from students and consulting experts of respective areas, such as teachers from Department of Environmental Art Design. Moreover, some texts chosen can be adapted according to students' language level. As art majors generally have a weaker foundation in the language, some texts can be further adapted to cater to their English competence during compiling. Last but not least, some teachers who are not compilers of the book are less familiar with the book, thus the teaching effect are not as flexible and smooth as the compilers (Zhao Hui, 2009: 54). This is partly because the content covers a wide range of areas which they were not familiar with prior to teaching and partly because of lack of confidence. This can be explained with the fact the compiling can help teachers grasp the guiding thoughts that are reflected in the structure arrangement and the selection of texts. Only participating in the compiling can forcefully enable them to understand the inner logic and actively teaching, rather than blindly follow.

English teachers do not teach language for language's sake, but for enabling the students to use it in their own majors. This is a trend that should be advocated and promoted. And language teachers' endeavor in this regard "not only does benefit to teachers' further promotion in their personal career, but is also the key to guaranteeing the teaching quality and the sustainable development of their career" (Zhou Xueheng, Zhang Ju, 2016:15).

The teaching of CBI-oriented courses raises certain requirements on the teachers' part. Yet this does not mean that English teachers should necessarily be an expert in the area on which the course is based. Teaching environmental art majors how to use English to talk about garden design basics is not equal to giving lectures on garden design basics in English, thus the language teachers should dispel the fear in this regard and be completely focused on how to trigger students' interest, lead them into a content-based English class and guide them in finishing all the tasks that are aimed at improving students' performance in English reading, listening, writing and speaking.

Acknowledgements

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