

The Construction and Implementation of ESP Cooperative Teaching Model Based on Action Research

Yuanfan Li¹

¹ Wuhan Textile University, Wuhan 430200, China

ABSTRACT

In recent years, theoretical research and discussions on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching have become increasingly in-depth both domestically and internationally, including debates on ESP course teaching models. However, the popular ESP teaching methods abroad require teachers and students to have long-term experience living and studying in an English-speaking environment, which are not well-suited for students in China. This paper aims to explore how to construct an effective ESP cooperative teaching model under the context of Sino-foreign cooperative education programs, in order to effectively enhance students' professional English abilities, cross-cultural communication skills, and teamwork capabilities.

Keywords: *English for specific purposes, ESP teaching, Cooperative teaching, Construction of teaching models.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English, as the most widely used second language, is known to one-fifth to one-quarter of the global population. In the academic field, English has become a universal language. In some scientific and technological fields, over 90% of journal articles are written in English. Therefore, a 2007 document from the Ministry of Education proposed that college English teaching should "effectively improve students' professional English proficiency and their ability to directly use English for scientific research."

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is linked to a specific profession, discipline, or purpose and is designed based on the specific goals and needs of learners. ESP teaching shifts from isolated language instruction to an "integration of language and content learning," combining language with content teaching. It integrates students' intended majors with language learning, enabling them to master basic skills in their discipline through the use of English.

Experts suggest that college English teaching should focus on ESP. In the long term, ESP

teaching should become the mainstream of college English education in China. Cai Jigang (2004) pointed out that ESP teaching will be the future direction of college English teaching in China.

2. RESEARCH OF ESP TEACHING MODELS

There are numerous ESP teaching models both domestically and internationally. However, the popular ESP teaching methods abroad require teachers and students to have long-term exposure to English-speaking environments, which is not suitable for Chinese students. Meanwhile, current ESP teaching in China largely remains confined to traditional translation methods, which are not conducive to developing students' ESP communication skills. Cai Jigang (2015) noted that ESP teaching in terms of curriculum design, training requirements, textbook compilation, teacher training, and teaching methods is almost non-existent. Therefore, there are few scientifically effective teaching models that truly align with the actual needs of ESP teaching in Chinese universities.

In recent years, domestic research on ESP teaching models has gradually increased, focusing on theoretical exploration, teaching practices, and teacher development. For example, Liu Xiaoyang and Xu Zongrui (2017) analyzed course attributes, teaching objectives, content, textbooks, and teaching models using the Academic English course as an example, and proposed suggestions for curriculum design, textbooks, teaching methods, and teacher training.

Domestic research on collaborative ESP teaching models has shifted from theoretical exploration to practical application. Researchers not only focus on the design of teaching models but also pay attention to their application effects across different disciplines and majors. For instance, in science and engineering universities, Wang Zhenying (2017) analyzed the current status and issues of energy English teaching models through questionnaires and interviews, and proposed directions for improvement.

Additionally, with the rapid development of information technology, MOOCs and "Internet+" technologies have provided new practical pathways for collaborative ESP teaching models. For example, Zhang Jinzhu (2022) designed a student-centered ESP teaching model for college English based on a MOOC platform. Through innovative designs in pre-class, in-class, and post-class activities, the model achieved an organic integration of knowledge delivery and internalization. This approach not only improved teaching efficiency but also enhanced students' self-learning abilities. With the continuous development of artificial intelligence, AI-based collaborative ESP teaching models are also expected to become a research hotspot.

Despite some progress in domestic research on ESP teaching models, there are still challenges. ESP teachers, who are responsible for teaching design and implementation, face numerous difficulties. Although experts have pointed out that ESP teaching in universities mainly focuses on interdisciplinary academic English knowledge and skills and does not require teachers to possess deep expertise in a specific field, it still significantly differs from general English. Some ESP courses require collaboration between language teachers and subject teachers. This article aims to explore how to construct an effective collaborative ESP teaching model using such courses as examples, effectively enhancing students' professional English

proficiency, cross-cultural communication skills, and teamwork abilities.

3. ELEMENTS OF COLLABORATIVE ESP TEACHING MODELS

Building an effective collaborative ESP teaching model requires comprehensive consideration of teaching objectives, teaching teams, and course design.

3.1 Establishing Teaching Objectives

The course team primarily undertakes the task of teaching professional English courses for art majors in Sino-foreign cooperative education programs. This course serves as a language support course for specialized courses taught by foreign experts. In terms of specific teaching arrangements, the course aligns with the content and pace of the foreign teachers' courses. The teaching content includes basic theories related to the major, learning theories and methods, reflections on student self-growth, and related language knowledge. Therefore, the main teaching objectives of this course include the following:

- Enhance students' ESP listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, enabling them to proficiently use English to discuss topics related to their discipline. Cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills and the accuracy and appropriateness of language use.
- Develop students' teamwork abilities, enabling them to communicate effectively and collaborate in group tasks. Improve students' self-learning and critical thinking skills.
- Help students master core vocabulary, terminology, and expressions in their professional field by integrating content from their major courses. Cultivate students' ability to use English to solve professional problems.

3.2 Building a Collaborative Teaching Team

Given the limitations of having either general language teachers or subject teachers alone teach ESP courses, building a high-quality teaching team is undoubtedly the most effective approach. The research team needs to understand both the professional courses and the characteristics of ESP

teaching to determine teaching content, design teaching materials, and adopt appropriate and effective teaching methods. This process requires collaboration between ESP teachers and subject teachers, as well as among ESP teachers. The teaching team collaborates on lesson preparation and delivery, promoting teaching effectiveness and improving teaching quality. Guided by action research, the team identifies research topics based on practical needs, conducts research during the teaching process, and promotes the comprehensive development of teaching and research.

3.3 Developing a Distinctive ESP Course Design

ESP courses include both professional theory and language learning. The former provides the content, while the latter serves as the form; the two complement each other. The teaching team explores teaching rules and characteristics, reforms course content, teaching methods, and evaluation methods, and develops a distinctive ESP course design to deepen teaching reform. Tailored ESP syllabi are designed for specific majors, and ESP teaching plans and courseware are developed. Diverse evaluation methods suitable for ESP courses, such as formative assessment, are designed, and evaluation criteria are established.

4. CONSTRUCTION OF COLLABORATIVE ESP TEACHING

4.1 Curriculum Development

During the preparation phase, students' professional backgrounds, learning needs, and language proficiency are assessed through questionnaires and interviews. Based on the needs analysis, teaching objectives for language skills, collaboration abilities, and professional knowledge are defined. Relevant teaching materials, such as professional literature, case studies, and academic reports, are selected based on input from collaborating subject teachers. Students are grouped into teams of 4-6 members, ensuring diversity and complementarity within each group.

4.2 Implementation of Teaching Procedures

Teachers introduce the course theme through cases, questions, or videos, clarifying group tasks and objectives. Students discuss, analyze, and

divide tasks within their groups to complete assigned learning tasks. Teachers provide guidance and support to ensure smooth group collaboration. Each group presents their collaborative outcomes, and teachers and other groups provide evaluations and feedback, encouraging reflection and improvement. Teachers summarize the class content, expand on related knowledge, assign post-class tasks, and encourage self-directed learning.

4.3 Reflection and Adjustment

Student feedback is collected through questionnaires and interviews. Teachers reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching process based on classroom observations and student feedback. Discussions with subject teachers are held to evaluate the effectiveness of the ESP course on their professional courses. Based on reflection outcomes, teaching content and methods are adjusted, and teaching designs are optimized.

4.4 Evaluation

Formative Assessment will be adopted to evaluate the following aspects: students' participation, communication skills, and teamwork abilities in group tasks; the quality and efficiency of group task completion, including accuracy, logic, and innovation. Self-assessment and peer assessment will be encouraged to promote self-learning and teamwork development. Classroom observations, assignments, and quizzes can be used to evaluate students' progress in language skills and professional knowledge.

Meanwhile, Summative Assessment is delivered to test students' language proficiency related to the major, such as professional English writing, translation, and speaking. Moreover, it is used to evaluate students' final outcomes in group projects, including report quality and presentation effectiveness.

5. A CASE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF COLLABORATIVE ESP TEACHING MODEL

This section explores the collaborative teaching model through a practical case of ESP teaching in art and design under the context of Sino-foreign cooperative education.

The teaching content for this case is Typography Design. The course aims to enhance students' professional English proficiency in

typography design through collaborative learning, while fostering cross-cultural communication and teamwork skills. The target students are first-year students who already possess a basic level of English and foundational knowledge in graphic design.

5.1 Teaching Objectives

Given the unique nature of this course—where the ESP language course supports the professional courses taught by foreign experts—ESP teachers need to communicate with subject teachers to define the course objectives. When necessary, ESP and subject teachers should attend each other's classes to clarify specific goals and obtain timely feedback. The objectives for this case are to help students master core vocabulary, terminology, and expressions in typography design, enabling them to discuss and analyze typography works in English, and to cultivate teamwork skills for effective communication and collaboration in group tasks.

5.2 Teaching Team

The teaching team consists of one graphic design teacher and one ESP teacher. The graphic design teacher provides professional content support for typography design, ensuring the teaching content's professionalism and practicality. The ESP teacher is responsible for language teaching design, ensuring the improvement of students' language skills. The team collaborates on lesson preparation, designs teaching activities, and discusses and provides feedback on teaching effectiveness after class, jointly guiding students' group assignments.

5.3 Course Design

The main content of this course includes vocabulary, terminology, and common expressions related to typography design, providing language support for typography analysis and design methods in professional courses.

- Step 1: Based on classroom observations and discussions with the subject teacher, the ESP teacher designs the language input section: using multimedia tools to present typography-related terms accompanied by corresponding images.
- Step 2: Classroom activities are designed to help students familiarize themselves with and memorize relevant vocabulary and terms. Students are divided into three

groups: the first group receives materials containing professional vocabulary and terms, which are bolded; the second group receives images illustrating these terms; and the third group receives definitions and Chinese translations of the terms. After distributing the materials, students are given a limited time to match with teammates whose materials correspond to the same term. Teachers remind students not to show their materials to each other and to communicate in English during the activity.

- Step 3: Next, students form groups of three to four members. First, they quickly review all the vocabulary and terms covered in the lesson. Then, they engage in practical exercises within their groups, with members taking turns giving instructions while others use software like Office or WPS to execute the instructions. After practice, one group is selected to demonstrate their work to the class. Other students take turns giving instructions, and the selected group implements the design requirements on the classroom multimedia system, allowing students to quickly apply the learned terms and expressions.

5.4 Practice and Feedback

After the class, the ESP teacher assigns homework to further solidify students' grasp of typography-related vocabulary, terms, and expressions, enabling them to complete more complex and challenging tasks. For this case, students are required to collaboratively design a font or a brand logo centered on text and write a design description in English, including design concepts, style characteristics, and target audiences. In the next class, each group presents their design outcomes, including the font design or brand logo. The ESP teacher, subject teacher, and other groups provide evaluations and feedback, focusing on the professionalism of the design, the accuracy of language expression, and the performance of teamwork.

5.5 Reflection and Adjustment

Teachers reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching process based on classroom observations, student feedback, and feedback from subject teachers on the effectiveness of language teaching. Adjustments are made to teaching content and methods based on reflection outcomes to optimize the teaching design.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Currently, ESP teaching in China primarily relies on English teachers and subject teachers, but both types of teachers have significant limitations. English teachers lack professional background knowledge, and their teaching content often focuses too much on language, failing to meet students' needs for professional knowledge expression. Subject teachers, while possessing rich professional knowledge, often lack sufficient English proficiency to effectively cultivate students' language skills. This study, through the practice of constructing a collaborative ESP teaching model with ESP and subject teachers, explores the potential of collaborative teaching models and demonstrates how such models can effectively enhance students' professional English proficiency, collaboration skills, and self-learning abilities.

However, through the research and analysis of teaching practices, the author has gained some insights and offers corresponding suggestions for future ESP teaching. For example, to achieve better teaching outcomes, it is essential to strengthen the training of ESP teachers. Schools should understand teachers' needs, invite domestic and international experts to provide training, or allow teachers to observe professional courses through collaborative projects to enhance their interdisciplinary knowledge and teaching abilities. Additionally, during the development of the ESP course in this study, teachers recognized the lack of high-quality ESP teaching materials. High-quality ESP teaching relies on high-quality ESP textbooks and digital resources, which can be selected based on course needs to meet diverse teaching requirements. Schools can also develop ESP textbooks tailored to their specific majors, students' English proficiency levels, and practical needs.

In conclusion, domestic research on collaborative ESP teaching models has achieved some results, but further efforts are needed to integrate theory and practice, develop teaching resources, and enhance teacher capabilities to promote the high-quality development of ESP teaching. Future research can further optimize teaching designs, explore collaborative ESP teaching models suitable for different majors, and strengthen teacher training to drive the high-quality development of ESP teaching.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is the result of the project "Construction and Implementation of ESP Collaborative Teaching Model Based on Action Research" funded by the Philosophy and Social Sciences Research Project of the Hubei Provincial Department of Education (Project Number: 19Y056).

REFERENCES

- [1] Cai, J. ESP and the development direction of college English teaching in China. *Foreign Language World*, 2004, (2).
- [2] Cai, J. Exploration and research on the evaluation system of general academic English. **Shandong Foreign Language Teaching*, 2015, (4).
- [3] Chen, Y. Pursuing teacher development in collaborative ESP teaching. *Journal of Qiongzhou University*, 2006, (1).
- [4] Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. *College English curriculum requirements*. Higher Education Press, 2007.
- [5] Liu, X., & Xu, Z. Research on ESP teaching practice in college English: A case study of academic English courses. *Journal of Hubei University of Economics*, 2017, (12).
- [6] Pan, H. English teaching in Sino-foreign cooperative education programs based on ESP. *Journal of Zhejiang University of Water Resources and Electric Power*, 2015, (1).
- [7] Wang, Z. Research on ESP teaching models for English majors in science and engineering universities: A case study of China University of Mining and Technology (Beijing). *Contemporary Foreign Language Studies*, 2015, 15(11).
- [8] Xu, G., & He, C. Research on the quality assurance system of ESP teaching in Sino-foreign cooperative education programs. *Journal of Higher Education*, 2016, (11).
- [9] Zhang, J. Research on the reform of college English ESP teaching model based on MOOCs. *Innovation Frontier*, 2022, (2).
- [10] Zhang, J., Wang, B., & Gao, Q. Exploration of ESP teaching at the foundational stage of

university based on corpus. Computer-Assisted Foreign Language Education, 2009, (2).