

An Analysis of Subject-based English for None-English Expertise of Universities in China

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Abstract

The paper makes an analysis of subject-based English for none-English expertise of universities in China. Through the correlated analysis of whether the students satisfy with their teachers and whether their teacher's teaching methods are flexible, student's satisfaction of subject-based English teachers is closely related with teaching methods. Subject-based English teachers adopt various teaching methods to allocate the class time and most of the time is used on "reading-translation method". Students prefer their teachers using interaction method, situational method and listening-speaking method to organize this class. Therefore, when organizing subject-based English teaching, teachers should adopt students' needs and suggestions, so that can really bring the superiority of this course into full play

Key words: subject-based English; none-English expertise; correlated analysis; suggestions

Introduction

Research Background

Whether the "College English Teaching Syllabus" of 1980, or the "College English Curriculum Teaching Requirements" of 2004, or its amendment in 2007, all of them have set up some basic standards about listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating for the various stages of foreign language learners. These requirements play a very important role in urging students to improve their basic skills of English and participate in the CET -4 and CET -6. Comparing the content of these three syllabuses, the first two syllabuses emphasize on the cultivation of general language capacities, while the latter focuses on students' comprehensive applied ability in English. But what is the "comprehensive applied ability", the syllabus has no clear instructions (Cheng Xiaotang, Kang Yan, 2010). Whether the General English, which is set up on the basis of up-mentioned principles, can meet students' needs in their future work and personal development, whether General English can meet the students' multiple intelligences training, that is still questionable. To some extent, it will inevitably make the graduates face a chasm between the knowledge they learn and their future work.

As a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and a supplement to General English teaching, Subject-based English (SBE) is a hot topic in current language teaching, in any domestic and foreign educators and scholars have practiced a lot in the theoretical research and practical experiment. To connect the English language skills and professional disciplines, to look at the subjects from a more international perspective, perhaps can become a feasible direction for foreign language teaching in China. With the acceleration of economic globalization, the intensity of China's opening up is expanding, and the political relationship, economic cooperation, cultural and scientific exchanges, personnel exchanges and military ties with other countries and regions continue to deepen. In this circumstance, English, as an international language, bears the responsibility of international exchange in many fields.

From the academic field, many disciplines and researches started late in China, many professional disciplines are exotic, there are still gaps between China and other countries in the research quality, so the scholars, college teachers and students are shouldering the task of promoting discipline development, and making up the differences between domestic and international research in professional field, so they need to read and translate the original foreign literature, listen to the international academic seminar and give a demo and presentation in English on symposiums, finally they need to publish their own research papers in international authoritative journals. The regulation of “Several Opinions on Strengthening the Teaching Work and Improving the Quality of Teaching in University”, which is issued in 2001, points out that “under graduate education needs to create any conditions to teach public courses and specialized courses in English”. Thereafter, bilingual course has been widely popularized. However, as the bilingual course is widely promoted, there are still many challenges for the curriculum setting, teacher’s capacity, teaching materials editing, teaching methods innovation, and the same challenges for the students. Therefore, Subject-based English is widely carried out along with the bilingual course.

Then from the perspective of personal development, employment, postgraduate study and study abroad are the three main choices for students. Firstly, the employment, CET-4 and CET-6 are still the important standards to test the English ability of non-English expertise students, and at the same time, BULATS (Business Language Testing Service), BEC (Cambridge Business English Certificate), TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) have also become the most important standard of recruiting and training in Microsoft, Siemens, Toshiba, Apple, Panasonic and some other international companies. According to the employment statistics in 2014, 75% of entrepreneurs will set the English requirements during their recruitment, most of them are foreign companies and joint ventures enterprises; in the list of national civil servants recruitment, about 4000 positions require English ability, about 200 diplomatic positions in the national administrative organ require the staffs whose education background are professional disciplines, while the notice is “skilled in using English, and accept the diplomatic assignment”. Then, as for postgraduate study and study abroad, English is an essential instrument in research or in life. All of these are the best evidence of the combinations of language and expertise. Therefore, to master the professional knowledge and English skills at the same time will take advantage of the future employment competition.

From the perspective of national development, during the 2015 two sessions, Premier Li Keqiang stated in “the Government Work Report”, that in 2014, China actually used 1196 billion dollars foreign investment, the amount of foreign companies in China was obviously increasing; at the same time, China also directly invested 1029 billion dollars in 5000 foreign companies from 141 countries and regions around world, our high-speed rail technology was currently transacting with Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, Russia, the United States and some other countries, and more than 3 million Chinese employees and 1 billion Chinese tourists were working or travelling in every corner of the world. Therefore, from the two aspects of “attracting foreign investment” and “going globe”, we both need a lot of human forces with both proficient professional knowledge and English skills. While according to some employment statistics from some regions, there are still large demands for foreign technical service staff. The labors that can simultaneously use English and professional knowledge are still lacking. Therefore, government promulgated the “National Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan” in 2010, and the Plan mentioned that training a large number of talents with international perspective, the understanding of international rules, and the abilities to participate in international affairs and international competition is critical in China’s Modernization”. So the existence of Subject-based English is catering to this demand.

Under the promotion of needs, universities begin to set up Subject-based English course one after another. However, from the literature reading, current Subject-based English teaching and research in China are mainly concentrated in the following several points: 1. Which one is more popular, Subject-based English or General English; 2. How to set up the class and arrange the proper hour; 3. What kind of teaching method and teaching material can be used to raise students’ interest in learning English and improve their ability; 4. How to cultivate excellent SBE teachers; 5. If the students satisfy with the textbook and teaching content. These five points can be summarized as five dimensions of curriculum setting, teachers, teaching methods, teaching contents and teaching materials.

Purposes of the Research

This paper mainly analyzes their objective and subjective needs for Subject-based English, deeply explores the learner-centered teaching approach, and figures out instrumental feature of SBE and the function of assisting subject development. The research includes the SBE courses opened by each expertise, and also the public SBE courses opened by the foreign language teaching department. The purpose of the study is to find out the existing problems in Subject-based English teaching, present some suggestions, and make the class become more effective and meaningful in the future.

Literature Review

The Definition of Subject-based English

What is Subject-based English (SBE)? During the literature retrieval, this course is directly confused with ESP and bilingual course. While these three courses have different orientations, and their teaching contents also have different stresses. Subject-based English includes the SBE course which is set by different departments or by College English Teaching Department for non-English Majors, and also the SBE course which is set for English Majors. The first two are designed for non-English majors, so their teaching content is naturally different from the latter. This paper focuses on the survey of Subject-based English Course for non-English Expertise, so the author also state Subject-based English “English for Non-English Expertise”.

Just as the term implies, Subject-based English is the English course based on specific disciplines, and is set up according to learner’s specific needs, such as a businessman needs to learn business English if he wants to do business with a foreigner. Hutchinson and Waters mentioned in *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centered Approach*, that Subject-based English is a branch of ESP, it is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material, it is an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need. (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

According to the comprehension of Subject-based English from other scholars, the author summarizes his own understanding about Subject-based English. Subject-based English is not a language or a discipline. It is a tool to serve learner’s need in some specific context of using. The emphasis of teaching and learning should be laid upon language’s assisting function to disciplines, rather than the language itself. SBE should be taught to adult learners who have certain English basis.

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) attributed the gene ration of Subject-based English into three reasons: Firstly, after World War II, the science, technology and economy in this globe had an unprecedented development. English, as a global language, was used by different professions. Therefore, not only should the learners master the General English, but also need to m aster the Subject-based English. Complex talents are desperately needed by the society, and multiple intelligence training is increasingly concerned, the students majored in news can directly interview in English and the law students can solve an international lawsuit by himself. Secondly, there is a revolution in linguistics. The traditional language description and language teaching only explain the rules of language using, which is grammar. But after World War II, people gradually realized that English had context difference. “If language varies from one situation of use to another, it should be possible to determine the features of specific situations and then make these features the basis of the learners’ course (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987)”. Thirdly, the development of educational psychology makes people gradually realize the importance of learners and their interest. So in the process of language teaching, educators paid more attention on the courses that concerned the interest and demand of learners, which extremely promoted the development of Subject-based English (Mo Lili, 2008).

The Classifications of Subject-based English

Subject-based English is a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and a supplement to General English teaching. If we want to figure out its orientation of Subject-based English, we need to figure out the classification. Hutchinson and Water divided “English as a Foreign Language (EFL)” into two parts, “English for Specific Purposes (ESP)” and “General English (GE)”. Then ESP is further divided into three categories: EST (English for Science and Technology), EBE (English for Business and Economics) and ESS (English for Social Science), and then divided each of these three categories into EAP and EOP. No matter how ESP is divided, EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) are both inevitable elements(Hutchinson & Waters, 1987:19).

Take EST as example, English for Medical Studies belongs to EAP, because learner needs English for educational purpose, while English for Technicians belongs to EOP, because learner needs English to perform his occupational duties. Then Jordan divided EAP into two big branches: English for Specific Academic purposes (ESAP) and English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) (Jordan, 1997).

Because of the limitation of teaching content, teaching material and teacher's capacity, and also the constant change of national and personal needs, the bound of these several branches gradually blurred. Now ESP teaching system exists in three types roughly: occupational English (EOP), academic English (EGAP) and Subject-based English (ESAP) (Cai Jigang, 2013). Academic English and Subject-based English are mainly set up in undergraduate colleges and universities, the former emphasizes on the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in academic research, such as reading original foreign professional journals, professional academic paper writing, it tends to the academic sphere, not limited to a specific field; while the latter relates a expertise, regards the professional knowledge as the main teaching content, but English as a learning instrument. It tends to the application. By understanding the classification, we can acquire the orientation of Subject-based English, and it will give a significant guidance for this research.

Relevant Research about Subject-based English

In the Chapter of Course Design, *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centered Approach*, Hutchinson and Waters proposed "WHAT, WHY, WHEN, HOW, WHERE, and WHO" as the breakthrough points and Subject-based English 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.

From the perspective of the curriculum setting, teachers, teaching methods, teaching contents and teaching materials, the result of literature review can be summarized as follow:

(1) Curriculum setting, the discussions are focused on "which period is proper to set up Subject-based English course", "should this curriculum be designed as professional elective courses, public compulsory courses or professional compulsory courses", "if the class hour per week is suitable for the student learning". All of these problems should be reflected from the training plan of this course, while the making of training plan should meet the needs of students and social development. The first question that needs to be answered should be "why this course should be set up". According to the previous College English Teaching Syllabus and College English Curriculum Requirements, the purpose of English teaching is to make students use English effectively, in order to carry out oral and written communication in their future work and social intercourse.

From the perspective of the recruitment to analyze the curriculum setting of SBE, Zhou Xiaoya conducted a survey in several enterprises in Zhejiang Province, the results showed that: the employer paid attention to graduate's professional knowledge at first, as for English, they paid more attention to the excellent oral communication skills, especially the competence of using English to work (Zhou Xiaoya, 2012), this is the first purpose of learning this course. From the perspective of cognition, Subject-based English learning is not only to master communication, but also to promote the development of multiple intelligences, and promote the comprehensive progress (Cheng Xiaotang & Kang Yan, 2010). This is another purpose of learning this course.

How to make the College English Teaching in China really meet the requirements of profession, occupation and individual, Guo Jianjing put forward that "College English teaching=EGP+ESP+X", X is any one skill from listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, according to the needs of society and individual, learners can choose any skill they want, and college will try modular teaching. Then not only can solve the contradiction between personnel training and social demand, but also give full freedom to student (Guo Jianjing, 2012). So as for curriculum setting, college should base on their own expertise structure, objective conditions, teacher's capacity and student's needs at first, put the subject knowledge in the first position, cultivate the communicative ability in the process of subject knowledge learning, and the final purpose is using English to study. However, according to "College English Curriculum Requirements", the class hour of Subject-based English is no less than 280 hours, it is less than General English, and so it must stick to several basic and important contents clearly (Han Hongmei, 2013). In addition, "when should students select this course" is also a key problem in curriculum setting. In Taiwan Cheng Kung University, the first key issue of curriculum operating is grading test.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) proposed that “the aim of grading test is to show whether the learners need the course, if necessary, what is the needs.” Grading test can avoid a class having different levels of students, and students can also interact with the one who has the similar degree. However, grading test means extra work and cost. If students have already form classes according to major, further classification can make the curriculum more difficult (Tsou Wenli, 2013).

(2) Teacher allocation, Subject-based English is a combination of subject and English. It needs the teacher not only be familiar with professional knowledge, but also be proficient in English, and this kind of teacher is desperately in need. Han Hongmei pointed that the current SBE course is mostly taught by English teachers, which is an advantage to teach language. However, most English teachers in China are English major graduates, their knowledge structure is limited in language, and almost has no other professional knowledge (Han Hongmei, 2013). In 2010, Cai Jigang carried out a survey of 45 universities. Although there are 25 institutions setting up Subject-based English, most of them are Secretarial English, Business English and Medical English etc. Most of the teaching methods are similar with intensive reading course of English Major. At the same time, because teachers' capacity cannot reach the standard to open the course, so the question that who is the best choice to open the course is proposed. And because of the diversity of Subject-based English teachers, the question that how to manage Subject-based English teacher is further generated. In order to solve the problem of teacher allocation, most scholars (Luo Yi & Li Hongying, 2008; Cai Jigang, 2010; Jin Yue, 2010; Guo Yanling, 2012; Han Hongmei 2013; Xin Tongchuan, 2013) proposed the cooperative teaching. This course can be carried out by both language teachers and professional teachers. College management office should also create favorable conditions for teachers to acquire further study and training. College can hire experts to give English teachers more professional training, and can also select excellent professional teachers to study abroad. With repaid development of Internet, each college can also use the Internet platform to set up a Subject-based English teaching forum etc.

(3) Teaching methods, Subject-based English emphasizes on the “Learner centered” principle, and applies various information resources to improve the students' language application. At first, changing the “Teaching centered” concept, regarding the learners as the center, as the subject, as the active constructors of knowledge; teachers only perform the function of help and promotion to student' meaning construction, and give instruction and inspiration to students, such as situation creation, offering information resources, organizing the cooperative learning, guidance for research learning and self-regulated learning strategies design (Cheng Xiaotang 2010; Jin Yue, 2010; Li Mingqing, 2010; Dou Jianying, 2011; Yun Hong, 2011). In addition, connecting the teaching method of Subject-based English and Multi-mode, choosing and arranging various teaching method such as communicative teaching, situational teaching, task-based teaching, case teaching and multi-media assistance teaching in accordance with learner's needs. That can perform the effect of Subject-based English class (Jia Lin, 2014).

(4) Teaching content and teaching material. Today, Subject-based English textbooks in our country present an abundant situation. As an important part of this curriculum, teaching material is the specific carrier of teaching concept, teaching content and teaching method. But the existing disciplines are complex, and the differentiation and integration of subjects are still continuing. Therefore, it is obviously unrealistic to write a high qualified Subject-based English textbook that can meet the needs of various disciplines in a short time. Language teachers and professional teachers need to work together, develop their own teaching materials independently. Textbook compilation and selection should follow the principle of authenticity, humanities, representative, should reflect the latest development of the economy and society in certain depth and breadth. Textbook compilation should adhere to the Task-based principle. According to the language application to design the appropriate communicative task, so that students can acquire language skills in process of communication. In addition, teaching materials should also take into account the cultivation of students' autonomous learning, so that students can form a good learning habits and effective learning strategies (Cheng Xiaotang & Kang Yan, 2010). Taiwan Cheng Kung University adheres to the principle of authenticity in textbook selection, so reading materials are mostly original articles collected directly from journals or newspapers, such as annual financial reports of enterprise, technical reports, and academic papers. In 2013, Cai Jigang collected 12 Subject-based English teaching materials. These textbooks have two characteristics. Firstly, the content is mainly the introduction of the subject, is not systematic, but their language is the most typical one. Secondly, the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in certain expertise have been stressed, and the content is only the carrier, which is used to train the academic ability of listening to lectures, reading literature and writing papers.

In addition, there are still other questions about Subject-based English, such as whether Subject-based English teaching needs to express individuality, localization, and diversification (Cai Jigang & Xin Bin 2009), whether can allow freshmen to learn Subject-based English directly, or if it is necessary to formulate a standard English language ability scale to improve the cohesion of English Teaching of different stages (Chen Guohua, 2002; Cai Jigang, 2007).

Richterich put forward the Needs Analysis mode for foreign language teaching in 1972 at first. Need analysis includes “target needs” and “learning needs”, the “target needs analysis” is to figure out the needs for learners from the future job circumstances, and specific psychological status that the future career may make for the learners; Learning needs analysis is focused on learner’s present learning background, language proficiency, professional knowledge, learning attitudes and motivation and also the next stage learning requirements and expectations (Hutchinson & Water, 1987). Shu Dingfang (2009) mentioned that needs analysis is primary condition to start foreign language teaching, the foundation of curriculum setting, and also the basis of choosing teaching materials, teaching methods and evaluating course. The core concept of needs analysis theory is to find the gap between expected proficiency of language and the current proficiency of knowledge, and then to find the counter-measures to solve certain teaching problems.

Discussion

According to the definition of SBE and ESP, the Subject-based English course is set for the adult learner who has certain English knowledge. SBE course is related to professional knowledge, and more difficult than general English. Some students expressed that “English is hard, now we need to learn professional knowledge and English at the same time, it’s doubled difficult”, so the students who acquire relative lower English proficiency are probably feeling difficult to understand this course, and difficulties will create the emotion of disappointment and boring.

Learning motivation is very important to English learning, and ultimately affect the effect of student’s English learning. More specifically, learning motivation can be divided into extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is in related with personal development, which is aroused by external stimuli and certain request; while intrinsic motivation is aroused by personal interest, which has the character of persistent. The intrinsic motivation can often make the learner maintain positive learning status. Then, Rod Ellis further divided learning motivation into instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, result motivation and intrinsic motivation. Instrumental motivation is the learners’ functional requirements of Subject-based English learning. Its purpose is to acquire some benefits, such as hunting a job; integrative motivation is that learner wishes to integrate the culture of target language, so they want to learn English; Result motivation stresses on the achievement of language learning; Intrinsic motivation is that the learners learn English because of specific interest towards specific language skills.

The pragmatic is the most important factors to the attitude of learning this course. College education is related to social demand, which makes the pragmatic in the most important principle of setting a course.

While recording to the problem of pragmatic, another question can be introduced, that is “whether it is necessary to set up Subject-based English in every expertise”. The expertise that set up Subject-based English should be more advanced in the world. Through the learning of the Subject-based English, that should be really useful for the domestic professional development. While some expertise, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine, is already excellent in China, it is unnecessary to introduce from foreign country. The suggestion is the setting of Subject-based English should not blindly follow the trend, the institutions must figure out the discipline development status, the orientation of the college and the current proficiency of students before setting any course.

Conclusion

Learning motivation

Students found a balance between the ideal target of improving themselves and realistic interests of employment that can make up the boring of intrinsic motivation and impermanency of extrinsic motivation. That is benefit to maintain learning enthusiasm.

When making training plan, college should refer to the students’ learning motivation. We should rationally use the utilitarian nature of extrinsic learning motivation and then cultivate students’ interest in learning English by utilitarianism.

The most direct utilitarian reflects in test scores, by improving the credit of course, making scores be relevant with job recommendation and trying elimination system, to stimulate the students study Subject-based English.

Curriculum Setting

Subject-based English course in institutions is usually designed as professional elective courses. Most of them are set up by each expertise, only a few are set up by the College English teaching department or Public foreign language college. Subject-based English course is usually set up in the fifth, sixth and seventh semester.

Students are basically satisfied with the current class schedule, but also more than half of the students said that Subject-based English course is too less. They think that General English learning should be offered before the studying of Subject-based English course. Therefore, the process of college English teaching reform should not be rushed. Subject-based English in a certain period of time is still a necessary supplement to General English.

Teaching content

The most wanted skills in the perspective of students are listening and speaking skills, and reading skill is also wanted by many students. But during the process of learning, the most difficult skill of students is the limitation of professional terms, and also listening, speaking and reading comprehension. In the perspective of teacher, their preference lie on the reading, translating and brief term explaining. In a word, the needs of students tend to pragmatic, while the expectations of teachers tend to academic. So teaching and learning have some differences in teaching content.

Teaching materials

The current Subject-based English teaching materials are mainly the English textbooks that are published domestically, and also the term handouts and English dissertations or other reading materials. The contents of teaching materials lack practicability and interest, the knowledge is old, which are the three main reasons of students' dissatisfaction of the teaching materials. The ideal teaching materials in students' mind is the original English textbooks, at the same time assisted with Subject-based English vocabulary handouts, English dissertations and other reading materials.

Teachers and Teaching Methods

Now, Subject-based English course is mainly set up by each disciplines and departments. The management and training of Subject-based English teachers how concentrated in each department, so there is no unified standard about the training and management of Subject-based English teachers in the country, or in a province, even in a college. the setting of curriculum or not is decided by whether qualified teachers are in place, if there are professional teachers who are proficient in English, this course will be opened; in contrast, this course will be suspended until this department has qualified teachers.

Most English teachers graduated from normal English majors or English major, they know English, and just English, they know very little about professional knowledge; the professional teachers who are proficient in English do not accept formal English training, they have no idea about the principle of language acquisition and a language learning sequence, and the most of the professional teachers have the plans of personal development and title promotion, they're reluctant to bear this extra course. Therefore, after one year or one semester of Subject-based English learning, most surveyed students have their own principle or standard about their Subject-based English teachers, most of them prefer that the professional teachers who are proficient in English should teach this course.

Through the correlated analysis of whether the students satisfy with their teachers and whether their teacher's teaching methods are flexible, student's satisfaction of Subject-based English teachers is closely related with teaching methods. Subject-based English teachers adopt various teaching methods to allocate the class time and most of the time is used on "Reading-translation method". Connected with students' attitudes, the teachers who are flexible in accordance with the change of teaching factors is the satisfied teacher. Students prefer their teachers using Interaction method, Situational method and Listening-speaking method to organize this class. This point is also in accordance with student's need of upgrading listening and speaking skills in teaching content. Therefore, when organizing Subject-based English teaching, teachers should adopt students' needs and suggestions, so that can really bring the superiority of this course into full play.

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