Graduate Integrated English Teaching Model Based on Cultivation of Academic Ability

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Abstract: Under the background of internationalized high education, English must serve the graduates’ research directly, and thus plays the true role of instrument. It is a tendency to choose a new teaching design which helps the cultivation of academic ability because of the urgent need of society. The article constructs an integrated English teaching model to cultivate graduates’ academic ability. The teaching model includes the combination of specialty with reading, writing and translation, the combination of class learning and internet autonomic learning and the team work of academic writing and oral presentation.

Introduction

With the increasing demand of innovative talents from society, there arises a new requirement of improving graduates’ academic quality and potentials for graduate education. The Academic ability cultivation or innovative ability cultivation is the key task of the graduate education in the 21st century because academic ability is the indicator of good graduate education. In addition, our high education targets to cultivate internationalized talents. Graduate Education must aim to cultivate professional talents with international view, specialty knowledge and international communicative capacity.

Internationalized talents need to have academic communication with other scholars in their fields. Today we also try to build the world first-class universities, so the importance of English is more self-evident than before. English as lingua franca not only helps graduates get the most advanced research and exchange their own study with researchers in other countries, but also helps our research findings to go outside of the country to exert influences. English should be the students’ working language to read academic literature and write English essays.

Since it is urgent to cultivate academic ability of graduates, it is urgent to reform our graduate English teaching today. The traditional teaching often pays attention to language skills instead of language application. The graduate English teaching must improve students’ language application ability which is related to their specialty by changing its humanity orientation to the research orientation. In other words, the new English teaching model should focus on the instrumental function of English and make English serve the graduates’ research directly.

Graduate English is the continuation of college English which is often English for General Purposes (EGP). College English usually focuses on improvement of listening, speaking and reading abilities based on humanity-orientated materials, such as story, history, person and culture. Such a teaching design does not fit the target of graduate education, therefore more graduate English teaching begins to turn to English for Special Purposes (ESP), English for
General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and even English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). The graduate English teaching should change from the single language skill teaching to academic English teaching. Thus, English will become a powerful instrument for the study and research for graduates\(^1\).

We hold that it is a tendency to choose the teaching design which helps the cultivation of academic ability, but the details of teaching design should take the students’ English level into consideration. Take Qingdao Agricultural University as an example, the students do not study English well and some students even have not passed CET 4, therefore, the teaching design for them must consider their academic ability as well as language competence.

**Graduate English Teaching Model Design**

According to students’ English level and the cultivation target of graduate education, we construct the curriculum system of the combination of EGP, ESP and EAP, that is, the system of the integration of English for general purpose, English for Specific purpose and English for academic purpose to cultivate language skills and academic ability.

The content of the curriculum is divided into three subjects: oral English, listening and integrated English. Speaking is the weakest ability of graduates who cannot open their mouths to express themselves. They had no chance to talk with foreign teachers and experience communication with English native speaker in college period, therefore we arrange foreign teachers to teach oral English to cultivate their confidence of speaking English. The speaking is EGP. Foreign teachers focus on everyday communication which can lay foundation for academic communication in the international conferences.

Listening is also a weak point for graduates. The listening content is not about everyday topics but about agriculture-related topics, such as food science, green agriculture and agriculture policies. Listening ability is the very important step for successful international communication. The listening is mainly ESP. By speaking and listening training, the dumb and deaf English is improve and thus communication ability is improved.

According to the survey of learning demand of graduates, what they need most in their study is reading, writing and translation, among which reading is their strong point and translation is the most necessary subject\(^2\). In the course of integrated English, the teaching content is divided into three parts: agriculture-related popular science materials reading, agricultural technical translation and writing research papers. The integrated English is the combination of ESP and EAP and plays the most important role in cultivating academic ability of all courses. Therefore, this paper focuses on the integrated English teaching model to see the efficient specific methods to cultivate academic ability of graduates.

Academic language ability is one important part of academic ability, which includes language skills, genre mastery, reasoning/argumentative strategies and disciplinary knowledge\(^3\). Therefore, the integrated English teaching model must take these factors into consideration in the process of design.

**Integrated English Teaching Model**

In the traditional integrated English teaching, we used to teach graduates EGP which is difficult to improve greatly and at the same time cannot meet the need of academic tool for graduates, so that we change the reading materials of EGP into the materials of ESP which lays academic foundation for EAP. Taking the students as the center and ability as the focus,
academic English teaching aims to cultivate the language application ability\textsuperscript{[4]}, Application ability of academic reading, writing and translation together serve to cultivate the academic ability in the end.

The teaching model of integrated English follows the following principles: the combination of specialty with reading, writing and translation; the combination of class learning and internet autonomic learning; the team work of academic writing and oral presentation.

**ESP Reading Materials**

Academic articles have special language features, such as technical terms, complex sentences and special discourse structure. The graduates are demanded by their supervisors to read articles in the international journals, yet they can not handle these articles very well at the very beginning because of their poor English and little knowledge about academic articles. Therefore we choose ESP as the first step to get familiar with academic articles. The reading materials come from the latest magazines or academic journals on internet, such as http://moderfarm.ca, http://theguardian.com, https://www.nature.com, http://www.who.int. The articles are all about agriculture in the broad sense, such as biodiversity, genetic modified food, pest control, green agriculture, and agricultural tourism. They belong to popular science articles.

The content of these articles is very familiar to students because they have a lot of knowledge of specialty, yet they do not know how to express the specialty knowledge in English. The combination of specialty and English make English learning very easy and helpful for specialty. They understand the materials very well. Agricultural English can be applied to their study directly. What the teacher emphasizes in class is genre of technical articles, especially lexical and syntactic features and discourse structure.

We have four units of reading in the whole semester and some students are required to give a lecture about some aspects of agriculture in each unit, such as GMO, pesticide and biodiversity. They can explain the phenomena better than the teacher because they have specialty knowledge. Therefore they earn much confidence and gain the sense of achievement. Most students hold that although the reading materials are easy for them, yet they improve their English a lot, especially academic English. ESP reading leads to EAP reading. And they are not puzzled any more about the use of English learning because English is a good helper for their study. ESP learning is conducive to their academic reading and writing and finally to their academic ability.

**Internet-based Writing and Translation**

In addition to reading, we focus on writing and translation of technical English. Firstly, the students learn writing and translation theory. We give lectures about writing skills and translation skills. The writing skills include paragraph writing, abstract writing and paper writing, such as the structure of paragraph and topic sentence writing, the organization of paper and abstract and the sentence patterns of each part. The translation skills include the lexical and syntactic features of technical articles and the corresponding translation skills, such as literal translation, free translation, translation in regular sequence and reversed translation and so on.

Secondly, the students put the theory into practice based on production-oriented approach. According to Wen Qiufang, production is using, and learning and using can not be separated\textsuperscript{[5]}. The students are required to apply the skills onto paragraph writing and translation, that is, the
application of theory onto practice. The writing is based on graduates’ study and they write compositions about agriculture, such as introduction of their field, how to maintain biodiversity and discussion on GMO. Also the students are required to write an abstract of their papers. As for the translation practice, the students are required to translate the paragraphs in the reading materials into Chinese and translate their Chinese specialty introduction into English. The translation is aided by machine translation, such as google transmate, Tmxmall online translation. By machine translation, the students can translate the technical materials very efficiently, and they are translator and editor at the same time.

Thirdly, students are encouraged to take a blending learning. The blending learning is a new learning strategy that combines on-line learning and face-to-face instruction \[6\]. We make use of the composition correction internet to assign students the writing and translation homework. This process is a self-access study. The students submit homework and the internet corrects the compositions and translation autonomously. The students are very active in such homework and they submit the homework many times, even as many as 31 times until they get an ideal score, thus they make great progress by correcting grammatical mistakes, selecting high level vocabulary, rearranging the structure of composition and so on. The diagnoses by the internet give the students the real time feedback and they get the score of 85 on average. The teacher summarizes the common mistakes in writing and translation and focuses on them in class instruction. The students are very interested in this learning style and they can see their weakness in writing and translation and make progress very quickly. We have made use of the correction plat since 2014 and the students give a very good comment on this personal learning style. They often continue to use this platform after they finish English course study.

Oral Presentation of Study

In order to practice the English integrated academic ability, there is a group work at the end of semester. We adopt team cooperative learning strategy. The team cooperative learning is also a kind of autonomous learning like composition correcting online, but more effective because they can learn each other in doing the project. The class is divided by 8 groups with 5 five students in each group. The group finishes a collaborated homework by writing a paper in a concise version and then makes a report before class. Each member of the group is responsible for a part of homework, for example, some students write the paper, some students make PPT and some students give oral presentation. This homework seems difficult, yet the students do not complain about it because that is what they usually do in the laboratory as a team work. They just put their experiment into English and pave the way for publishing papers in the international journals. Our English class has already become one part of their laboratory. In writing the paper, the students apply the writing skills, translation skills, abstract writing skills, paper format knowledge and so on onto the same homework.

After finishing a paper with 1500 words, each group will give an oral presentation just like the conference report. The students pay much attention to this part of homework which is full of imagination. They make PPT elaborately which usually contains pictures, music, and even short movies, get oral presentation very well and prepare the teacher’s questions adequately. Every time we demonstrate their study, it is like a festival. There are laughs and cheers in classroom. As long as they take pains to finish the homework, they must get lot. Such kind of teaching must be successful since the students get what they want in output. This team work has been carried out for several years, and they usually are awarded a high score for their diligent attitude and high quality. The students are very proud they can do such a big job.
4. Conclusion
The academic ability can be cultivated in English study by ESP and EAP practice of reading, translation, writing and publishing academic papers. ESP and EAP help the students’ specialty study and research, and language academic ability is a part of academic ability. The combination of English and specialty fits the target of graduate education very well. In this way, the students can find the real function of English. They learn English not for examination but for research, thus they change their attitude to English from uselessness to an instrument of research. The students will not complain that English learning is the waste of time. English does not interrupt specialty study any more. The application of integrated English model for 5 years proves that this model is suitable for graduate English study. A lot of students publish SCI international articles and English must play an important role in it.

Our English teaching must be reformed to meet the academic need of the graduates, yet graduate English teaching based on cultivation of academic ability has more space to improve. For example, there is no appropriate textbook and we have to compile the teaching materials by ourselves, so that there is an urgent need of authoritative textbook to be conducive for cultivating academic ability of graduates.

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