

# A Study on Teaching Practice Based on English for Specific Purposes from the Perspective of “Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment”

Xi Ruan

*Department of English, University of Sanya, Sanya, Hainan, China*

**Abstract:** For the college English teaching of students majoring in art in universities, teachers need to seek suitable teaching methods and techniques based on students' professional characteristics and employment needs. Based on the theory of “Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment” (TSCA), this study combines the teaching mode of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It focuses on the practice of translation classes in college English and aims to enhance art students' interests in learning English with the purpose of ensuring their effective use of English skills in their professional fields. The study shows that students majoring in art tend to actively participate in classroom activities that involve teacher-student collaboration, such as collaborative assessment and collaborative learning. Furthermore, based on the development characteristics of the university or college itself and the students' professional directions, the study analyzes the relationship between ESP teaching and professional development, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for high-level ESP teaching and the coordinated development of professions.

**Keywords:** Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment; ESP; Students Majoring in Art; Learning Interests; Professional Knowledge; Coordinated Development of Professions

## 1. Background of the Research

English, as a global language, plays a crucial role in various professional fields. With the advent of globalization, informatization, and digitization, the traditional college English education model aimed at solidifying fundamentals can no longer meet the needs of social development. As educators of English, we need to adjust the teaching objectives of college

English from both teaching methods and content perspectives. This involves shifting from a focus on “general English” to “English for Specific Purposes” (ESP) and from sole teacher evaluation to “teacher-student collaborative assessment.” Through ESP learning, non-English majors can acquire basic English vocabulary, skills, and knowledge relevant to their own fields of study, enabling them to adapt to the demands of employers and the continual progress of society, thus facilitating their own professional development. Incorporating ESP into college English teaching, especially for arts students, serves as a supplement to traditional classrooms. Teaching objectives emphasize practical application, integrating the characteristics of professional English and focusing on enhancing arts students' reading and translation abilities.

## 2. Literature Review

Professor Harmer mentioned a principle of English teaching in his book *How to Teach English*: before class, both teachers and students need to make necessary preparations.<sup>[1]</sup> The teaching process involves not only the participation, guidance, and evaluation of teachers but also the preparation of students, such as pre-reading, speaking, collaboration, and self-assessment, which are equally important. It is worth mentioning that the tasks set by teachers before class, during class, and after class vary, thus the involvement and feedback of students before class, during class, and after class also differ. This requires teachers to change their teaching philosophies and update their teaching methods. “Teacher-student collaborative assessment” is a new assessment method proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang's team in the “product-oriented approach”, aiming to address issues such as low evaluation effectiveness and poor evaluation results.<sup>[2]</sup> Liu found that the “peer feedback plus teacher

feedback” evaluation model is more effective than the single teacher evaluation model.<sup>[3]</sup>

ESP is a branch discipline in the field of English linguistics, originating in the early 1960s in English-speaking countries. Three prominent linguists, Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens, first proposed the concept of ESP: “ESP is the English of civil servants, police officers, judges, pharmacists and nurses, agricultural experts, engineers, and assembly workers.”<sup>[4]</sup> ESP, a teaching approach, starts from the learners’ learning purposes. It is oriented towards professional needs, and implemented for specific purposes. It requires integrating language skills, professional knowledge, and learners’ needs. ESP is considered one of the most mature methods of English language teaching.<sup>[5]</sup> Chinese scholars have been studying extensively on the research. Gu studied English for Specific Purposes at universities on the background of the new *College English Teaching Guidelines*.<sup>[6]</sup> Cai’s investigation and interviews with more than 40 university teachers found that the identity recognition of ESP teachers is crucial for the paradigm shift from general English to ESP model. Therefore, The necessity of reforming English for specific purposes was proposed.<sup>[7]</sup> Subsequent researchers have conducted extensive studies on ESP teaching from various fields such as digital empowerment, educational ecology, “Internet plus”, and curriculum design.

### 3. Research Design

One of the bottlenecks encountered in college English teaching is the low enthusiasm of students in classroom learning. It is generally believed that English is not as important as their major courses. This perception is more popular among students who major in art-related fields. This article focuses on students in art-related fields. During the teaching process, the researcher employs the method of “teacher-student collaborative assessment” and the ESP teaching model in an attempt to change art students’ perceptions of English learning.

#### 3.1 Problems

This study attempts to answer the following questions. First, whether ESP can stimulate the interest and motivation of students who major in art-related fields. Second, how “teacher-student collaborative assessment” efficiently promotes ESP teaching. Third, how teachers can select

appropriate ESP teaching materials and assess students’ learning outcomes. Based on these questions, classroom practices were conducted among art students from Grade 22 who are studying at University of Sanya.

#### 3.2 Subjects

The university that the author is working is undergoing a reform in college English teaching and it implemented ESP teaching in 2021. In the 2023 autumn semester, the author employed the ESP teaching model based on “teacher-student collaborative assessment” among the students. In comparison to those students who do not major in art-related fields, art students tend to exhibit more uncooperative and passive attitudes towards English learning. The subjects of this study are students from Class 2201 who major in Visual Communication Design and students from Class 2203 who major in Environmental Design. In total, there are 86 students, including 30 male and 56 female students. Overall, the students’ English proficiency are poor, with only 15% of students achieving 90 points in English at National College Entrance Examination according to the author’s survey.

#### 3.3 Research Procedures

This study lasts 15 weeks. Besides teaching the prescribed materials, the researcher informed the students of changes in teaching methods at the first class. Students are instructed to visit <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/> and use the search bar to look for keywords related to their majors, such as “arts,” “visual communication design,” “environmental design,” “design,” “aesthetics,” etc. They are required to select and read at least five articles relevant to their majors each week. The aim is to familiarize themselves with professional vocabulary, stay abreast of the latest developments in their field, and enhance their reading skills by increasing their reading volume. The teacher conducts learning assessments and provides feedback through group presentations, note-taking, and translation activities in the classroom. Both teachers and students participate in every activity, including assisting students in finding suitable articles for their majors, assigning and providing feedback on group tasks, and evaluating translation activities in class.

### 4. ESP Teaching Practice from the Perspective of “Teacher-Student

### Collaborative Assessment

University of Sanya is a private school. According to the school's development needs, ESP teaching has the necessary conditions and impetus for implementation. The author takes a translation segment from ESP teaching based on "teacher-student collaborative assessment" as an example to explore the feasibility of this approach.

Students are required to translate a paragraph from *Chinadaily* within 30 minutes in class without using translation software. The original paragraph is as follows.

For most Chinese, Dayu, or Yu the Great, is a household name. His feats blend myth and history, and range from **taming** (xun fu) raging Yellow River floods to starting the Xia Dynasty. Despite legends about him appearing in ancient records like the *Shan Hai Jing* (*The Classic of Mountains and Seas*) and the *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Historian*), **little is written about the hero's childhood or youth.**

Recently, *Shan Hai Chuan Qi* (*Legends of Mountains and Seas*), an animated series consisting of 52 episodes(ji) in four seasons, has found a fresh perspective for chronicling (miao hui) Dayu's youth. It starts with him being raised by Zhulong, a half-human, half-snake deity, after his father is executed (zhu sha) for stealing the Heavenly King's magic soil to stop floods and rescue suffering tribes.

Since its debut (shou bo) on CCTV-1 on March 18, the series has captured attention by bringing to life more than 400 figures and creatures from the *Shan Hai Jing*, including Gonggong, a bad-tempered god who governs the waters, and Xingtian, a mythological figure who continues to fight even after losing his head.

The author's intention in selecting this passage is quite evident. Compared to topics such as technology, environmental protection, and medicine, students majoring in art are more familiar with and interested in this topic. ESP can be effectively applied in translation classrooms to enhance students' language proficiency and translation skills. In the translation classroom, ESP focuses on providing students with specialized vocabulary, terminology, and language structures relevant to the field of translation they are studying. After students have finished their translation, the teacher randomly selects five translations to discuss with the students. Teacher and students work together to analyze typical errors in the

translations, as well as the reasons behind these mistakes and more suitable translations are produced. One phenomenon observed by the author is that when some of the Chinese translations for unfamiliar words are provided, students tend to mechanically use the teacher's translations rather than recombining them based on the language environment, text information, and cultural differences. For example, for "taming," the teacher provides the Chinese translation "xun fu", and students first copy this translation without much thinking, rendering it as "xun fu xiong meng de huang he shui". Considering the achievements of Yu the Great, the teacher guides the students in discussion. At last, everyone agrees that "taming" should be translated as "zhi li", which would be more appropriate. In the sentence "Little is written about the hero's childhood or youth," the majority of students translate it as "hen shao you guan yu zhe wei ying xiong tong nian huo qing nian". During the discussion, adding "shi qi" after "tong nian huo qing nian" are considered more accurate. Also, "xie" could not better convey the original meaning. Taking into account the two classic works mentioned in the short paragraph, "written" is translated as "ji lu", which captures the original meaning more vividly. The phrase "figures and creatures" also sparked considerable debate, with students suggesting it should be translated as "ren wu he sheng wu". After collaborative discussion between the teacher and students, it is ultimately decided to translate it as "ren wu xing xiang", as the word "creature" itself implies "a human being". There are many similar examples, leading the author to arrive to the conclusion that students majoring in arts tend to prefer reading articles with narrative plots, and "teacher-student collaborative assessment" encourages students to participate more actively in teaching activities.

ESP teaching emphasizes collaboration between teachers and students, fostering an interactive and engaging learning environment. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students in exploring language within their specific field of study. Through collaborative activities such as group discussions, project work, teacher-student collaborative assessment, and role-plays, students actively participate in the learning process, applying language skills to real-life scenarios. Feedback is provided in a constructive manner, encouraging students to reflect on their

progress and identify areas for improvement. This collaborative approach not only enhances language proficiency but also develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By working closely together, teachers and students create a supportive learning community where everyone contributes to each other's success. Meanwhile, both teachers and students can enjoy the happiness of cooperation. According to the above example, it is obvious that in the context of digital globalization, college English education should adapt its goals, teaching methods, and curriculum based on its own conditions, faculty, students' features, and regional characteristics, in line with teaching practices.<sup>[8]</sup> At the same time, ESP can stimulate the interest and motivation of students majoring in arts. ESP strengthens communication between students and teachers, shifting students from passive to active learning and allowing them to experience more enjoyment in learning English.<sup>[9]</sup> In the process of teaching, the author found that it was hard to select the proper ESP teaching material for students. Some researchers suggest that teachers should continuously adjust and improve the ESP materials based on students' learning situations.<sup>[10]</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The answer to the first question is positive. ESP can stimulate the interest and motivation of students who major in art-related fields. ESP teaching plays a crucial role in enhancing the English learning interest of students majoring in art. Firstly, ESP teaching emphasizes the integration of students' professional needs and interests by selecting real-life contexts and cases related to the arts field, thereby stimulating students' learning interest. Secondly, ESP teaching emphasizes practicality and applicability, enabling students to directly apply English to solve real-life problems during the learning process, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and appeal of learning with the help of teacher. Additionally, ESP teaching can customize personalized learning content and activities to meet the diverse needs and preferences of different students, thereby increasing their enthusiasm and engagement in English learning. In conclusion, ESP teaching, by integrating the professional characteristics and interests of arts students, creates a more interesting and effective English learning environment, thereby promoting the

enhancement of their interest and motivation in English learning.

Beyond that, ESP focuses on students' professional backgrounds and objectives, designing teaching content and activities according to their needs. Through targeted content and task design, ESP enables students to flexibly apply English in specific fields. Learners also simulate tasks in real work scenarios to enhance language skills and communication abilities through practical experience. ESP has significant benefits for students majoring in art in terms of employment. Firstly, art students often need to work in cross-cultural communication and collaboration environments. ESP teaching focuses on practical application and simulates professional scenarios, enabling them to proficiently use English for communication and collaboration with international peers. Secondly, ESP teaching emphasizes the cultivation of professional knowledge and skills, allowing art students to demonstrate English proficiency relevant to their field when seeking employment, thus enhancing their competitiveness. ESP teaching provides art students with better job opportunities and prospects, helping them achieve success in their careers.

The answer to the second research question is also positive. Teacher-student collaborative assessment is an essential aspect of ESP teaching. In an ESP classroom, teachers work closely with students to identify learning goals, design materials, and develop assessment criteria that are relevant to the specific field of study. This method helps to create a shared understanding of learning objectives and expectations. Students play an active role in assessing their own performance and progress, receiving feedback from their peers and teachers, and setting achievable targets for future learning. Also, they are the ones who can find out the mistakes they would make in the process of learning with the help of the teacher. Students feel more involved in the learning process, increasing their motivation and engagement levels.

Regarding the third research question, from the perspective of students' participation in class and feedback after class, the effective implementation of ESP is promoted by the mutual participation and evaluation of both teachers and students. The selection of appropriate ESP teaching materials presents a

bottleneck. However, the reality is that many schools do not provide ESP materials for teachers and students. Therefore, teachers need to search for suitable ESP teaching materials according to students' professional characteristics. Specially designed ESP materials can help students quickly grasp professional terminology, understand professional literature, and provide practical language skills to meet various communication needs in the workplace. ESP teaching helps students better adapt to the language requirements of their professional fields, enhances their employability, and achieves personal development goals. The selection of ESP teaching materials is based on the professional needs and interests of the students. Using materials such as art exhibition reviews, artist interviews, and artwork analysis, students can better understand and use English to express their views and opinions related to art. In addition, selecting practical materials such as documents, speeches, and discussions will be a better choice, which enable students to directly apply the English language knowledge. In summary, the selection of ESP teaching materials aims to integrate with the professional characteristics and interests of arts students, to create an engaging and effective learning environment, that promotes their interest and motivation in learning English.

Teacher-student collaborative assessment plays an important role in ESP teaching for art students. In such teaching environments, teachers closely collaborate with students to assess learning outcomes together. Through collaborative assessment, teachers and students work together to create a supportive learning environment, fostering students' motivation and creativity, and enhancing their professional competence and language skills in the field of art which may result in the coordinated development of professions.

## References

- [1] Harmer, Jeremy. *How to Teach English*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2000: 99-100.
- [2] Sun Shuguang. A Study on the Classroom Reflection of "Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment". *Modern Foreign Languages*, 2017, 40 (3): 397-406.
- [3] Liu Yonghou. A Study on the Effectiveness of Peer Feedback and Teacher Feedback in English Majors Writing Groups. *Foreign Language World*, 2015 (1): 48-55.
- [4] Halliday M. A. K., et al. *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching*. London: Longman, 1964.
- [5] Anthony, L. *Introducing English for Specific Purposes*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2022.
- [6] Gu Zhizhong. Research on the Reform of English for Specific Purposes in Higher Education under the Background of the New Guidelines. *Journal of University of Shanghai for Science and Technology (Social Sciences Edition)*, 2022 (4): 1-5.
- [7] Cai Jigang. Research on Teachers' Identity Recognition of English for Specific Purposes in the Transition of College English Teaching Positioning. *Foreign Language Learning Theory and Practice*, 2021 (3): 64-71.
- [8] Liu Xiaoya. Research on the Curriculum Design, Training Objectives, and ESP Teaching Issues of English Majors in Private Colleges and Universities: A Case Study of Zhangjiajie College, Jishou University. *Modern Vocational Education*, 2024 (9): 85-88.
- [9] Zhou Haiyan. The Application and Practice of Product-Oriented Approach in English Teaching for Specific Purposes for Art Graduate Students. *Journal of Jilin University of Arts*, 2023 (6): 86-90.
- [10] He Lirong. Research on the Dilemmas and Countermeasures of English for Specific Purposes Teaching Reform in Applied Private Universities. *Industrial & Science Tribune*, 2023, 22 (1): 136-138.