

# Great Achievements Made in College English Teaching Reform between the Years of 2014 -2024

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**Abstract:** According to “College English Teaching Guidance”, college English will transform from basic English to EAP and EOP. First, as for each university and college, they should arrange these courses, select proper textbooks and organize the examinations from their unique characteristics. Second, as college English teachers, we should arm ourselves with scientific and technological knowledge beforehand, familiarize ourselves with scientific documents, improve our teaching skills in this new field. Now it has been nearly ten years since the issue of “College English Teaching Guidance”, have the objectives been accomplished?

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Following a decade of college English teaching reform from 2003 to 2013 sponsored by the Department of Higher Learning of National Ministry of Education, it launched a new round of college English teaching reform from 2014 to 2024 in 2013. What are the focuses of two decades of college English reforms? According to the “College English Teaching Guidance”, in the first decade of college English teaching reform, its main focus was on the improvement of college students’ abilities in listening, speaking and reading comprehension, projecting listening and speaking training. In the second decade of college English teaching reform, its focus has transformed to EAP(English for Academic Purpose) and EOP(English for Occupation Purpose) teaching. Without doubt, this is an important and necessary transformation, meanwhile, it has launched a new challenge to college English teachers.

## 2 <<College English Teaching Guidance>> and Its Characteristics

### 2.1 <<COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING GUIDANCE>>

“College English Teaching Guidance” is a very detailed document, it consists of 9 chapters: 1) preface 2) location and characteristics of college English course 3) teaching objectives and requirements 4) arrangement of college English courses 5) evaluation and examinations 6) teaching methodology and media 7) teaching resources 8) teaching management 9) teachers’ development<sup>[1]</sup>. In this guiding document, it has put forward teaching requirements for three teaching goals: 1) basic goal for the

majority of college students (high school English level 7); 2) raising goal for college students with fairly well English (high school English level 8); 3) developing goal for college students with excellent English (high school English level 9). In particular, it has put forward the arrangement of college English courses in different stages: EGP(English for General Purpose); EAP(English for Academic Purpose) and ESP(English for Specific Purpose); courses for cross-culture communications.

### 2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF <<COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING GUIDANCE>>

Although “College English Teaching Guidance” is still in its discussion stage, it has provoked heated discussions and even debates among famous scholars, educators, college English teachers and college students. To sum up, I think it has the following characteristics:

#### 2.2.1 Projecting EAP and EOP teaching.

College English has been EGP for many years, projecting language usages, grammar, culture and the improvement of basic skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. Most college English teachers are satisfied with their proficiency in English skills, so it has never come to their minds they will teach EAP and EOP.

#### 2.2.2 Equal emphasis on English language’s humanities and academic means.

English has been regarded as one course belonging to the humanities, its teaching content surrounds literature, culture, language etc. Most English texts both in high schools and colleges are adapted from English classical literature

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works. In other words, English course has been one of courses in the humanities. It is a new thing to be academic means to college English teachers.

### ***2.2.3 Each college and university has more power to make their teaching plan.***

College English teaching has been managed by the Department of Higher Learning of National Ministry of Education for nearly 30 years, including the selection of college English textbooks, teaching objectives, arrangement of courses, teaching methodology, evaluation and examinations, even teaching hours and students' English course credits are strictly managed by the organization above. To be honest, strict management has enhanced college English course position and college English teachers' position. All the college students have benefited a lot from its strict management. Most evident performance is the ratio of college students passing CET4 (College English Test, Band 4) and CET 6 (College English Test, Band 6). "College English Teaching Guidance" has given more power to each college and university to select their teaching plan according to their own characteristics.

### ***2.2.4 EAP teaching will make preparations for college graduates in their future careers and provide opportunity to further their study abroad.***

Academic English, as domestic and foreign scholars define: "The use of English in the professional books, is related to the language features of majors", "language teachers and students use to learn new knowledge and skills, describe abstract concepts, and develop the students' conceptual understanding", "language used in academic research articles"<sup>[2]</sup>. To some extent, EAP teaching is not only beneficial to college graduates in their future careers, but also provide more opportunities to further their study abroad.

### ***2.2.5 ESP AND EOP ARE NOT ONLY NECESSARY FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, BUT ALSO FOR VOCATIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES***

According to the National Congress of Vocational Education in 2021, by 2025, the types of vocational education will be more distinctive, the modern vocational education system will be basically completed, and the construction of a skills-based society will be fully promoted. The pattern of running schools has been improved, the conditions for running schools have been greatly improved, the enrollment of vocational undergraduate education is no less than 10% of the enrollment of higher vocational education, and the attractiveness and quality of vocational education have been significantly improved.

By 2035, the overall level of vocational education will rank among the highest in the world, and a skills-based society will be basically completed. The social status of skilled personnel has been greatly improved, the supply of vocational education has highly matched the needs of economic and social development, and the role of vocational

education in comprehensively building a modern socialist country has significantly increased.

As for ESP and EOP courses, we should not only emphasize the cultivation of students in colleges and universities in this field, but also pay more special attention to the cultivation of students in vocational colleges and universities. The reasons are as follows:

### ***2.2.5.1 ESP AND EOP TEACHING PRINCIPLES MATCH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CULTIVATION OF TALENTS IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES***

There are three principles for ESP teaching: students-centered principles, reality principles and social need analysis principles. All these three teaching principles are in line with the requirements of the cultivation of English talents in vocational colleges and universities.

### ***2.2.5.2 THE CONCEPT OF ESP AND EOP TEACHING SATISFIES THE TEACHING GOAL OF VOCATIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES***

Theoretical English teaching for ESP and EOP possesses evident direct and specific characteristics, which can render students to obtain abilities for their future positions in combination with their majors, hence reflecting their practical uses. The combinations of English learning and students' employment are one of advantages for ESP and EOP.

### ***2.2.5.3 ESP AND EOP LEARNING PROMOTES STUDENTS' VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT***

ESP and EOP have very broad ranges in various fields, which fit either ordinary commercial workers, or higher officials in commerce and politics and or undergraduates. Through years of EGP learning, they have already had abilities to adapt themselves to ESP and EOP learning. Therefore, theoretical English learning for ESP and EOP benefits students' future career development.

## **3 Different Perspectives from Famous Scholars, College English Teachers and College Students**

### **3.1 PERSPECTIVES FROM FAMOUS SCHOLARS AND COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS**

"College English teaching content must be restructured, transforming from EGP to ESP."<sup>[3]</sup> "College English teaching must be adjusted, from the present objective of basic English teaching to EAP teaching so as to provide service for major knowledge learning"<sup>[4]</sup>. "As the preparatory and transforming stage, EGP is quite necessary for freshmen. EAP teaching is not necessary and should not be "one size fits all" and can't be directly linked to high school English teaching"<sup>[5]</sup>.

As a college English teacher myself, I discuss EAP and EOP teaching with my colleagues. On the one hand, most of my colleagues think college English is very important and necessary for freshmen, because most freshmen are poor at five basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating). On the other hand, most colleagues think EAP and EOP will not replace EGP. The proper time to teach EAP and EOP is in the second and third year at college.

### **3.2 PERSPECTIVES FROM COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Most college students welcome this teaching reform. They think they will benefit a lot from EAP and EOP teaching, which will help their future career development and their further study abroad, but some college students who are poor at English are very worried about their English learning, because EAP and EOP are more difficult to learn, they feel afraid they will fail to pass EAP and EOP examinations.

### **3.3 WHAT DO EAP and ESP CONSIST OF ?**

Academic English can be subdivided into general academic English (English for general academic purpose) and specific academic English (English for specific academic purpose) two categories. General academic English emphasizes academic English learning skills and practice, including the cultivation of comprehensive learning skills to read, write, take notes when attending academic lectures, make academic reports and consult academic English documents relevant to students' majors. ESP, as it indicates, emphasizes language learning, including vocabulary, grammar, contexts and different types of academic essays [6].

## **4 ESP, EAP, EOP, GREAT CHALLENGES TO COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS**

Nearly all the college English teachers have learned general English with the background of language, literature, translation and business, they are not familiar with ESP, EAP and EOP. After they have become college English teachers, they have been accustomed to general English teaching, tutoring students to pass CET4 and CET6. When "College English Teaching Guidelines" have been issued and begun to implement, they are at a loss how to teach what they have never learned. It is really a challenging and tough task. To sum up, they have the following difficulties and challenges:

### **4.1 CHALLENGES OF COURSES OF APPLICABILITY TEACHING**

First, the teaching objectives of college English courses should be set from the perspective of quality cultivation and applicability. The so-called quality cultivation means that English course as a general education course plays an

extremely important role in cultivating students' international vision and communicative ability in English. On the other hand, the applicability of college English should reflect that it serves students' professional learning and development. [7]. Therefore, simple general English teaching can no longer meet the requirements of the Times. Instead, English courses and teaching contents should cultivate students' ability to read foreign language literature, write academic papers, participate in academic conferences and discussions. The CET-4 or CET-6 certificates should not be the teaching goal of college English courses.

### **4.2 CHALLENGES OF UNEVEN ENGLISH LEVELS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Second, it is an objective phenomenon that the English level of Chinese college students is uneven. The concept of establishing different levels of course requirements according to the actual situation of students proposed in the 2007 edition of "College English Curriculum Teaching Requirements" is still reasonable. However, the level of the approved curriculum requirements does not mean that special purpose English teaching can only be carried out for students with higher English level, while general English teaching aiming at passing CET-4 for those with lower English level can continue. The right approach should be to carry out hierarchical, project-driven English teaching methodology according to the relevant research results of applied linguistics, so as to improve the level of general English and special English for all students, because the relationship between the two is not one or the other, but complement and promote each other.

### **4.3 CHALLENGES OF COMPLEX CURRICULUM SYSTEM**

Third, the general English curriculum system consisting of comprehensive English, rapid reading, grammar and listening can no longer meet the needs of college English teaching reform. In terms of the construction of the curriculum system, colleges and universities should follow the principles of combining basic English with English for special purposes, cross-cultural communication, combining compulsory and elective courses, and combining input and output courses to set up college English courses with rich contents and various categories. In addition, institutions of higher learning should also offer specialized English courses (such as medical English, IT English, legal English, etc.) according to their professional needs. All these work is the development or expansion of college English courses, which can promote the deep integration of college English and professional teaching and construction.

### **4.4 CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND UNIVERSITY**

Fourthly, the reform of college English teaching poses great challenges to college English teachers, which is the main reason why some college English teachers call the issuing of the "College English Teaching Guidelines" as

“Wolf is at the door”. Indeed, the reform of college English teaching is no longer a matter for English teachers, and the problems involved cannot even be solved by the School of Foreign Languages. Instead, it should be systematically investigated and planned by the decision-makers of colleges and universities. For example, from the perspective of communicative teaching method, teaching professional knowledge in English should be able to improve the overall English level of students through bilingual teaching, but professional teachers are unable to do so because they have not received professional training in foreign language teaching, and English teachers are unable to do so because they do not know professional knowledge. This requires schools to make overall plans for teacher development, improve the professional level of college English teachers, and render them to adapt to the teaching of English for special purposes and even professional English. Rather than simply shift the task of reform to foreign language schools or foreign language teachers. On the other hand, college English teachers should take the initiative to adapt to the requirements of reform, strengthen continuing education, and re-establish the direction of personal development. Of course, the transformation process is bound to be tortuous and difficult.

Regardless of all the difficulties and challenges, college English teachers have had some training to get to know some scientific and technological vocabulary, grammar and contexts and read some scientific and technological documents which are not familiar with them. They have been strictly abiding by the requirements of <<College English Teaching Guidance>>, learning from teachers in other professional fields, hence graduates with EAP and ESP professional English. From the feedback both from joint ventures and our graduates, they have both shown their satisfactions. Most of the graduates of our institute say EAP and ESP have benefited their career development and further study abroad in professional fields.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Thanks to “College English Teaching Guidance”, our college English teachers have got to know some scientific and technological English vocabulary, skills in writing academic reports and broaden our horizons in scientific research. Graduates, in particular, have benefited a lot from our college English teaching reform.

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