

Research on the Teaching Effect of General Academic English Course in NCEPU from the Perspective of PCT

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Abstract

General academic English has been attached greater importance in higher education in China. This paper focuses on the teaching effect of general academic English in North China Electric Power University (Baoding) from the perspective of PCT (Projects+Cases+Texts). Through the analysis of students' questionnaire and interview, it is proved that PCT is an effective way in general academic English teaching. This paper aims to provide practical experience for the further development of general academic English curriculum.

Keywords: General academic English, PCT Projects+Cases+Texts, teaching effect.

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1. INTRODUCTION ABOUT GENERAL ACADEMIC ENGLISH

As the largest branch of English for specific purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purpose (EAP) has been studied intensively since it was proposed in the 1970s (Jordan, 1997). It is generally believed that academic English teaching should be guided by the practical application of English and focus on cultivating students' English application ability. Hyland (2013) pointed out that academic English teaching has set competence training objectives around demand analysis. In China, the traditional English language teaching in higher education has been changed, and academic English has been put on the teaching agenda. Cai Jigang (2010), a famous Chinese scholar, emphasized that the orientation of college English teaching should convert to academic English required by students and society. Cai Jigang (2012) underlined the necessity of developing academic English under the specific background and conditions of college English teaching in China from the perspective of needs analysis.

At present, general academic English has been the trend of college English teaching for non-English majors. It focuses on the cultivation of writing and speaking abilities which are helpful to learn all disciplines and majors. The cultivated abilities can be used in academic activities such as listening to lectures,

participating in seminars and international conferences, collecting materials, writing papers, etc. Through learning academic skills, students can avoid being cheated and manipulated by false information in the information age, develop the habit and ability of independent thinking, and cope with the challenges brought by internationalization.

2. PCT Teaching Mode

Academic English teaching abroad mainly focuses on three aspects: language research; texts research; practical teaching research. Most foreign scholars believe that the academic English teaching model should take situational factors into account and combine a variety of teaching methods to provide students with a wide range of necessary skills and the latest knowledge.

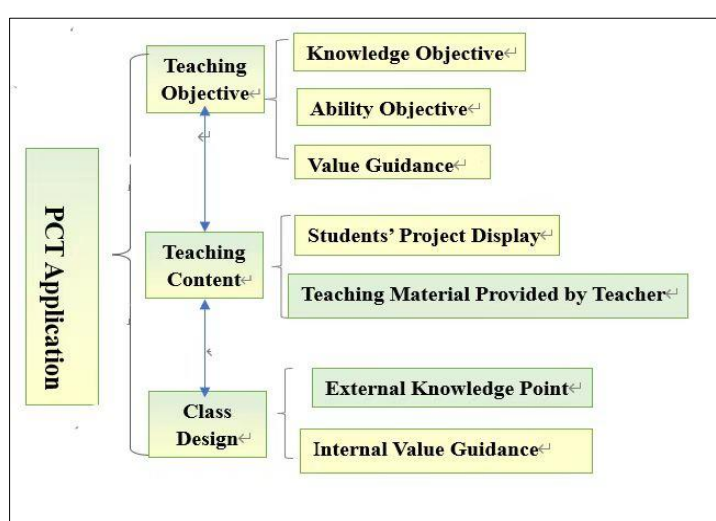
The domestic academic English research mainly focuses on summary articles, and empirical articles are limited. Domestic scholars believe that academic English must have new teaching methods that are different from the traditional ones. Lu Weicheng (2009) believed that academic English should implement task-based and case-based teaching methods and procedures to "approach language behavior in real language application". Sun Youzhong and Li Liwen (2011) suggested to adopt the process-centered and

topic-oriented inquiry teaching method. Xiong Shuhui and Zou Weicheng (2012) believed that academic English can help students improve their cognitive ability and promote the development of academic language by allowing students to study problems and experience the process of creating new knowledge through classroom design.

Cai Jigang (2019) proposed P (projects) C (cases) T (texts) teaching model, which is mainly a combination of two teaching methods: project/case teaching and text analysis. The main difference between project teaching method and case teaching method is that the former is more suitable for some science, engineering and social disciplines, while the latter is more suitable for law, business, economics and other

disciplines. In view of the reality of North China Electric Power University (NCEPU), the research group analyzed the text analysis method and project teaching method, and applied the combination mode of the two in the research. In the PCT teaching mode, text analysis is interspersed with case teaching activities or project teaching activities. Text analysis method aims to discover the deep meaning that cannot be grasped by ordinary reading, and emphasizes the excavation of the metaphorical meaning behind the text.

PCT has been applied in the teaching process in NCEPU. The relationship between teaching objectives, teaching content and class design is as follows:



In teaching content, moral elements have been delicately designed into general academic English course as follows:

| Moral Elements in General Academic English Course | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Unit Theme | National Level | Social Level | Individual Level |
| Unit 1 Health and Cigarette Smoking | Understand the laws and regulations formulated by Chinese government. | Care about others; Establishment of smoke-free public places. | Quit smoking; Develop a healthy lifestyle. |
| Unit 2 Understanding of Global Warming | China's efforts to achieve the goal of global carbon neutrality. | Build a community with a shared future for mankind". | Start with me and save energy and reduce emissions. |
| Unit 3 Breast Feeding Practice | Care about next generation. | Construct the responsibility of parents. | Care about mothers. |
| Unit 4 Genetically Modified Foods | Recognize that food safety is related to national stability and development. | The use of science and technology should comply with national laws, regulations and social ethics. | Develop a healthy eating habit. |
| Unit 5 Scientific Fraud | Standardize intellectual property rights. | Establish a fair and just ecological environment. | Establish the concept of academic integrity; individual integrity. |

3. Teaching Effect on General Academic English Course in NCEPU

As a national key university, NCEPU (Baoding) has adopted many measures to adapt to the

new reform trend in recent years. As a compulsory course for freshmen, general academic English is set in the second semester and has 64 class hours and the current textbook is *English for General Academic*

Purpose-Integrated Course published by FuDan University Press. The research group adopted PCT teaching mode in a semester's teaching from March to July in 2022. How is the teaching effect? After completing the teaching practice, the research group conducted a survey on 436 students of non-English majors in July 2022. The questionnaire set up 17 questions. Some of the questions are in the form of Likert's five level scale, representing "Strongly Agree"

to "Strongly Disagree" respectively. Descriptive statistical analysis is used for objective questions, and thematic analysis based on word frequency is used for open-ended questions.

3.1 Survey Results and Analysis

3.1.1 Respondents

The main statistical characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Sample Characteristics (n=436)

| Variable Name | Variable Attribute | N | Percentage |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----|------------|
| Grade | One | 394 | 90.37% |
| | Two | 41 | 9.4% |
| | Three | 0 | 0% |
| | Four | 1 | 0.23% |
| Professional Category | Liberal Arts | 54 | 12.39% |
| | Science | 92 | 21.1% |
| | Engineering Course | 290 | 66.51% |

Table 1 can show the respondents have significant group characteristics. Taking science and engineering as their major, this group of students tend to ignore humanistic study and lack English proficiency. When they enter university, they cannot fully adapt to college English, which requires teachers' active guidance to change their thinking mode and promote the development of students' scientific research ability. Therefore, this survey has certain practical significance.

3.1.2 Survey on Academic Writing Ability

English writing is a common form of language output in English learning, and integrating moral education into English writing is a major measure to enhance students' moral awareness. It can be seen from the full sample matrix analysis of the dimension of Table 2. Nearly 80% of the students agree with the specific evaluation indicators of academic writing ability, such as "normative citation", "formality of academic English texts" and "basic writing skills for writing literature reviews and papers".

Table 2: Survey on Academic Writing Ability

| Indicators | Strongly Agree | Relatively Agree | Uncertain | Relatively Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------|
| I learned how to standardize the reference (such as paraphrasing, summarizing, direct quotation, and synthesizing) | 48.62% | 35.55% | 14.45% | 0.46% | 0.92% |
| I learned how to use nominalization, passive sentences, etc. to improve the formality of academic English texts. | 49.54% | 35.55% | 12.84% | 1.38% | 0.69% |
| I have mastered the basic skills of writing literature reviews and papers. | 44.72% | 35.09% | 17.89% | 0.69% | 1.61% |

Through the above three questions, it shows that in the curriculum of general academic English, the knowledge about moral education is internalized, and the practical operation of the integration of moral education and professional knowledge is realized, so that students are expected to become familiar with rules of international thesis.

3.1.3 Survey on Academic Thinking Ability

The cultivation of students' theoretical thinking ability is of great significance to the

implementation of the goal of "building morality and cultivating people", the provision of ability and quality guarantee for the future talent team of national rejuvenation, and the response to the risk challenges in the ideological field. General academic English plays a unique and irreplaceable role in the process of cultivating and improving students' theoretical thinking ability. Through analysis of the full sample matrix of Table 3, more than 80% of the students believe that the current courses have played an important role in evaluating academic thinking ability indicators.

Table 3: Survey on Academic Thinking Ability

| Indicators | Strongly Agree | Relatively Agree | Uncertain | Relatively Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------|
| I have mastered the structural characteristics of academic articles and improved my ability to read English academic articles. | 45.18% | 36.24% | 16.74% | 0.92% | 0.92% |
| My logical thinking ability and critical thinking ability have been improved. | 47.71% | 33.49% | 16.28% | 1.38% | 1.15% |
| I have established the concept of academic integrity and consciously adhere to the bottom line of academic integrity. | 57.57% | 30.73% | 10.09% | 0.69% | 0.92% |

Through the above three questions, students' ability to read English academic articles, logical thinking and critical thinking has been improved, and their theoretical thinking ability has been cultivated. Meanwhile, the concept of academic integrity of students has been established, which is of great significance for improving their comprehensive quality and providing future talent guarantee for the great rejuvenation of China.

3.1.4 Survey on Unit Themes

Textbooks can not only cultivate students' language skills, but also enable students to acquire

knowledge, expand their horizons, improve their abilities and cultivate their sentiments through rich content. Teachers use the unit theme to integrate the moral education with teaching content. From the full sample matrix analysis of Table 4, more than 80% of the students believe that the teaching of unit theme is of great significance in establishing the concept of healthy life, climate change, social issues, food safety and cultivating academic ethics. They can also consciously transform theoretical knowledge into practical action in daily learning life.

Table 4: Survey on Unit Themes

| Indicators | Strongly Agree | Relatively Agree | Uncertain | Relatively Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Through Unit 1 I learned about the dangers of smoking, which helps to establish a healthy lifestyle. | 60.09% | 28.9% | 9.17% | 0.23% | 1.61% |
| Through Unit 2, I can understand the relationship between greenhouse effect and global warming and their impact on global climate. | 58.26% | 29.59% | 10.09% | 0.69% | 1.38% |
| Through Unit 3, I began to pay attention to the benefits of breastfeeding, and can analyze the reasons for the declining trend of breastfeeding from the economic and social aspects. | 56.19% | 29.13% | 11.93% | 1.38% | 1.38% |
| Through Unit 4, I began to pay attention to the safety of GM food, and learned to dialectically view the advantages and potential hazards of GM food. | 56.88% | 28.67% | 11.7% | 1.38% | 1.38% |
| Through Unit 5, I can understand the consequences and impacts of academic misconduct. | 59.4% | 28.67% | 9.86% | 0.69% | 1.38% |

Through the above three questions, it shows that the general academic English curriculum takes each unit theme as a foothold, integrates the explicit and

implicit goals of moral education, enables students to deepen their thinking on relevant content.

3.1.5 Survey on the Effect of Moral Education

Table 5: Survey on Moral Teaching Effect

| Indicators | Strongly Agree | Relatively Agree | Uncertain | Relatively Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Teachers can integrate moral elements into pre class, in class and post class according to the unit theme. | 58.26% | 29.59% | 10.09% | 1.15% | 0.92% |
| Teachers can naturally integrate the moral elements into the teaching of academic English and the values conveyed by teachers are closely related to the teaching theme. | 60.78% | 26.83% | 10.55% | 0.92% | 0.92% |
| The videos and materials are closely related to the teaching content, which improves the students' understanding of the theme and stimulates their interest in learning. | 60.09% | 27.06% | 11.01% | 0.69% | 1.15% |

Through the above three questions, it shows that teachers can find the right entry point to connect

moral elements, guide students to complete the learning content through videos or materials.

3.1.6 Survey on Moral Teaching Methods

Table 6: Survey on Moral Teaching Methods

| Indicators | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Teachers explained the knowledge points in detail, supplemented by a lot of practice | 36.7% |
| Teachers and students put forward questions together and explore the answers | 32.8% |
| Each unit presents a project and integrates the knowledge | 16.97% |
| Students practice some knowledge points and teachers comment on them | 8.49% |
| Increase unit quizzes to consolidate the knowledge | 5.05% |

It is shown that in the teaching process, teachers' moral ability is directly related to the quality of integrating English materials. Therefore, teachers should improve their quality and set good example for students.

3.2 Students' Feedback through Interview

Questionnaire has some limitations. In order to get more accurate information, the research group interviewed 25 students to know more concrete comments on the teaching effect of PCT. The interview was conducted online in September, 2022.

Interview Questions

- 1) What is your greatest gain from learning general academic English?
- 2) What are your suggestions on the teaching methods of this course?

Answers for Q1:

- a. Master literature reading methods to improve information acquisition ability.
- b. Master the basic writing skills of writing literature reviews and papers in English.
- c. Understand the difference between academic English and general English, understand the structure of the paper, and learn to use English words, grammar and tone to better express the content of the paper.
- d. Master more abundant vocabulary and try to rewrite some sentences with the learned methods to make them closer to the formal paper expression, and learn to identify academic plagiarism.

Answers for Q2:

Before Class:

- a. It is recommended that teachers should inform students to preview the specified content before teaching, and read the article in advance to understand the general situation.
- b. The difficulty of selecting materials for classroom teaching should be adjusted appropriately, and it would be better if the examples were simpler and more refined.

In Class:

- a. Spark students' interest by explaining some phenomena in daily life, or provide real cases for analysis to achieve the purpose of practical application.
- b. Teacher is suggested to help students with the difficult exercises.
- c. Due to the large volume, the teaching content can be selected and appropriately reduced.
- d. Combine contents and knowledge with extracurricular activities of corresponding majors.
- e. Set up various assessment methods according to different tasks.

After Class

- a. Share more elementary extracurricular academic articles.
- b. Academic writing is subjective and there is no single standard answer, so teachers' guidance to students can provide personalized help for students, which is very meaningful in improving students' academic English writing ability.

4. SUMMARY

Here are the follow-up suggestions:

As for curriculum objectives, students' understanding of academic articles has been significantly improved. They can improve the formality of articles by modifying vocabulary and syntax, standardize references, master the characteristics of passage structure and improve their reading ability of academic articles. In contrast, there are still some obstacles in the practical application of the paper writing, which also enlightens us that teachers need to allocate more time and energy to the cultivation of writing ability.

As for teaching objectives, students can achieve the basic goal of establishing academic integrity concept, but they do not perform well in cultivating critical thinking in English for the following three reasons:

- a. Due to the abstractness of critical thinking itself, it is difficult to understand.

- b. Students have insufficient understanding of critical thinking.
- c. The academic English curriculum itself does not provide relevant guidance for the cultivation of critical thinking.

In terms of course content, students are more interested in some content closely related to their own lives, such as healthy life and academic misconduct. Therefore, in topic selection, teachers should pay more attention to students' interest, explore its internal moral elements and improve the teaching effect.

In terms of teaching evaluation, most students approve PCT teaching mode and hope to have more interactive teaching with teachers.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, through analysis of students' questionnaire and interview, it is proved that PCT is an effective way in general academic English teaching. However, due to the differences of the students' levels and teachers' quality, the implementation effect has been compromised. How the teaching effect gets improved still needs further research.

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