

# A Probe into the Optimization Path of College English ESP Curriculum under the Background of Professional Certification

## -- Taking Undergraduate Majors of Economics and Management as an Example

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**Abstract:** The professional certification of higher education has facilitated the globalization and internationalization of Chinese education, creating new opportunities for reform in college English teaching. Guided by the principles of professional certification, this paper examines the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum for undergraduates majoring in economics and management, based on an analysis of the needs of both students and society. This study aims to develop a targeted and effective curriculum system, enhancing the training quality of undergraduates in these fields and improving their readiness for their first jobs.

**Keywords:** Professional Certification; College English; ESP Curriculum; Optimization Path

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## 1. Introduction

In the context of professional certification, college English teaching must not only focus on imparting language knowledge but also emphasize enhancing students' application abilities to meet the evolving demands of society. In recent years, following the release of the College English Teaching Guide by the Ministry of Education (2017), English instruction in higher education has increasingly shifted towards English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to address the distinct needs of various disciplines. This shift is particularly relevant for undergraduates majoring in economics and management, as the ESP curriculum can significantly improve their professional skills and enhance their competitiveness in the job market (Wang Zhongrui, 2020). Given this context, it is crucial to investigate the optimization of college English ESP curricula within the framework of professional certification. The aim of this study is to explore strategies for enhancing the construction of ESP curricula to improve students' English application abilities and professional competencies. Furthermore, this study will examine how the development of ESP courses can promote the holistic growth of students, enabling them to adapt more effectively to future work environments and achieve personal career success.

## 2. The Present Situation of College English ESP Teaching

Currently, the promotion and implementation of professional certification are driving significant changes in college English teaching. This is particularly evident in the construction of English for Special Purposes (ESP) courses, where numerous scholars and educators are actively exploring ways to enhance students' English application abilities and meet the requirements of professional certification. Firstly, in light of the development of ESP curricula, the deepening of globalization and the advancement of professional certification have resulted in an increasing demand for students' English application skills. Consequently, ESP, as a teaching approach focused on improving students' professional English, has garnered heightened attention. For instance, the college English knowledge system centered on core literacy proposed by Chen Yingfang and Ma Xiaolei (2018) highlights the significance of ESP curriculum design. Concurrently, Wang Beilei (2004) emphasized the necessity of offering ESP courses and highlighted the importance of aligning the needs of ESP teachers, students, and society. Secondly, regarding the current teaching situation, although many colleges and universities have implemented ESP courses, several challenges persist in teaching concepts, content design, and instructional methods. Liu Qingbo (2017) pointed out that current ESP teaching primarily focuses on language knowledge and skills, while the development of students' professional knowledge and intercultural communication competence requires further enhancement. Additionally, despite advancements in the ESP curriculum, deficiencies remain in teaching resources

and teacher training, like out of touch with the needs of students, lack of industry participation, lack of feedback mechanism, lack of interdisciplinary cooperation, etc (Liu Weifeng, 2023).

In light of the current shortcomings, scholars advocate for increased investment in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. This includes augmenting class hours and credits, enhancing the professional training of instructors, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration between college English educators and subject-specific teachers. For instance, the development of an ESP curriculum system is supposed to be centered on students' needs, highlighting the importance of aligning teaching content with students' individualized developmental requirements. In summary, while some progress has been made in the construction of college English ESP curricula, numerous challenges persist. Future developments must prioritize the practicality and relevance of curriculum content, as well as the professional development of educators. Through ongoing exploration and practical application, we can effectively enhance students' English proficiency and meet the rigorous standards of professional certification.

### **3. The Basic Principles of College English ESP Curriculum Optimization**

**3.1 Requirements Analysis Principles:** The design of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum should be grounded in a comprehensive analysis of students' needs. Literature indicates that the syllabus and teaching methods for an ESP course must be informed by a pre-class needs analysis. This necessitates that educators gain an understanding of the specific contexts in which students will use English, particularly in professional domains, to effectively tailor teaching content and methodologies (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The principle of needs analysis in the construction of a college English ESP curriculum underscores the importance of prioritizing learners' needs. It is essential to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of teaching content and methods through ongoing evaluation and analysis. Specifically, needs analysis encompasses both target needs analysis and learning needs analysis, which involves assessing learners' existing knowledge structures, anticipated learning levels, specific curriculum requirements, and expectations regarding the role of instructors. Additionally, it includes a thorough understanding of the specific language proficiency requirements pertinent to students' future careers. For instance, in designing an ESP curriculum for economics and management, educators can utilize surveys, interviews, and other methods to evaluate students' professional knowledge, English proficiency, and career aspirations. This information aids in establishing targeted curriculum objectives and content. Such a needs analysis can guide ESP instructors in devising effective teaching strategies, such as implementing task-based teaching methods, thereby enhancing students' language application skills and professional communication abilities required in the workplace.

#### **3.1 Student-centered principle:**

ESP teaching emphasizes student-centered, choosing the teaching content that matches the needs of students, and designing the corresponding teaching activity. The student-centered principle of college English ESP curriculum construction emphasizes the design and implementation of teaching activities according to the specific needs of students. This method holds that students' language ability comes from a variety of activities, so teachers need to choose appropriate teaching content according to students' needs and design teaching activities that match students' ability. For example, an ESP teacher may choose real materials related to the career according to the students' future career plans, so as to enhance the students' language practice and professional knowledge, and then improve their professional English communication and communication skills. This student-centered curriculum design not only helps to improve students' English ability, but also enhances their preparation for future careers.

#### **3.2 Principles of interdisciplinary cooperation:**

In the process of ESP curriculum construction, interdisciplinary cooperation between college English teachers and professional teachers should be established. This is because ESP courses involve not only the teaching of the English language, but also the transfer of professional knowledge. The interdisciplinary principle of college English ESP curriculum construction emphasizes the combination of English teaching and professional knowledge to meet the professional learning needs of students. This teaching model requires teachers not only to have solid language skills, but also to master relevant professional knowledge. Through interdisciplinary cooperation, such as the cooperation between English teachers and professional teachers, we can effectively analyze students' needs, customize teaching goals and contents, and improve

classroom efficiency. For example, English teachers can enhance their understanding of specific subjects by attending professional courses and reading professional literature, so as to integrate language knowledge and professional information more effectively in ESP teaching. This kind of curriculum design helps students not only master a foreign language, but also deeply understand and apply professional knowledge, and realize interdisciplinary knowledge integration and ability improvement.

#### **4. The Optimization Scheme of College English ESP Curriculum**

Based on the aforementioned results, the research group has redesigned and optimized the college English English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum system. This revised curriculum not only emphasizes the humanistic aspects of college English but also highlights its instrumental characteristics. General college English is retained to ensure that graduates possess fluent daily English communication skills, while also enhancing students' professional English proficiency and academic English reading capabilities. Firstly, the course content has been updated to align with the actual needs of students majoring in economics and management. This includes the incorporation of business English, management English, and other relevant subjects. Additionally, the latest industry terminology and practical case studies have been introduced to ensure the currency and applicability of the course material. Secondly, the curriculum structure has been optimized by developing a multi-teaching model that integrates English for General Purposes (EGP), ESP, and English for Intercultural Communication (EIC). This model ensures that students not only achieve basic English proficiency but also meet the demands of English application in their professional fields. The courses are designed in stages: EGP courses are offered in the first and second semesters to solidify foundational skills, followed by ESP courses in the third semester that aim to enhance English application in professional contexts and strengthen integration with the course content and practical activities relevant to economics and management, such as accounting English and management English. This approach enables students to master the language while simultaneously improving their professional knowledge. In the fourth semester, additional courses in ESP academic English and cross-cultural communication are introduced to bolster students' capabilities in academic research and international communication. Furthermore, interdisciplinary curriculum development with other fields, such as international business and cross-cultural communication, is encouraged to broaden students' international perspectives. Simultaneously, it is essential to establish a feedback mechanism for students to promptly gather their needs and suggestions regarding the curriculum, allowing for continuous optimization and enhancement of the curriculum design.

Through this optimization strategy, we can significantly improve the English proficiency of undergraduates majoring in economics and management, thereby enhancing their communication skills and professional capabilities to align with the evolving demands of society and the workforce.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the development of college English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curricula, set against the backdrop of professional certification, is essential for enhancing students' English application skills and professional competencies. This paper presents research conducted on undergraduates majoring in economics and management, highlighting the significance of effective ESP curriculum design and implementation, which has demonstrably improved students' readiness for their first jobs. The findings indicate that curriculum design informed by the principles of professional certification can significantly enhance students' English application capabilities as well as their professional skills and overall accomplishments. However, this paper also identifies challenges faced in the construction of ESP curricula, including insufficient professional knowledge among teachers and the critical need for interdisciplinary collaboration. These issues warrant attention and resolution in future ESP curriculum development. Additionally, future research and practice should focus on the effective integration of ESP and English for General Purposes (EGP) to devise a more scientifically sound and rational curriculum, ultimately fostering versatile talents that meet societal demands.

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