

Curriculum Assessment Reform for Convention and Exhibition English

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Abstract: Convention and Exhibition English is a typical course in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). With Chinese business activities increasing, there is a growing demand for convention and exhibition-related talents, since most businesses are in connection with these events. To cultivate competent graduates, Guangdong Technology College has tried replacing traditional written test with a video in the assessment of students' performance after their learning of this course to stimulate practice and self-exploring. Role play in the videos can inspire students' interest in this field and build up their confidence in English. This article will introduce the background information on the development of the course, the necessity of its reform, and how it has been implemented. This paper aims to attract attention to the creative reform of teachers and hopes to contribute to more studies on ESP teaching for the better cultivation of English talents that the growing Chinese economy requires.

Keywords: Convention and Exhibition; ESP; Guangdong Technology College

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1. Introduction

On April 13, 2020, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce officially issued The Notice on Innovating Exhibition Service Models and Cultivating New Momentum for the Development of the Exhibition Industry requiring that “actively build a new platform for online exhibitions and promote the integrated development of online and offline exhibitions.” Under the policy advocacy of the state, exhibition enterprises have tried to use network platforms and adopt digital technology for online product display. This new development trend puts forward new requirements for the knowledge and ability of exhibition practitioners. To better train the professionals needed for the development of the new era, it is urgent to adjust and reform the existing teaching mode of Convention and Exhibition English course^[1].

With an eye on the cultivation of related talents, Convention and Exhibition English course has been introduced in some college education plans, and Guangdong Technology College is one of them. In the study

of this course, it is noticed that the traditional assessment plan needs some amendments to well reflect the real needs of the talent market since a competent conventional employee should be multi-faceted instead of only being rich in textbook knowledge. In this context, the curriculum assessment reform has been conducted.

As an English for Special Purpose course, Convention English is not only featured with its wide range of typical industry knowledge, unique terms, as well as language style but also requires abundant practice to turn knowledge into experience, so that the students are capable of undertaking convention-relevant work after their graduation, which is a necessary preparation for those ready to work after getting their Bachelor degree.

2. Convention and Exhibition English course at Guangdong Technology College

Convention and Exhibition English is a selected course for Business English major students. The instructors teach exhibition-related knowledge in English to provide learners with an understanding of the development trends and trajectories of exhibition-related professional practices abroad. The basic objective of this course is to cultivate learners' ability to read exhibition-related books in English and engage in academic exchange in the field. The ultimate goal of exhibition English teaching is to train talents who can use English for work and communication in the exhibition industry and enterprises ^[2]. As an application-oriented university, Guangdong Technology College highlights the practice of specialized knowledge and advocates the combination of class with industry operations.

Yan Xiaoli has pointed out that cultivating exhibition talents the market needs means:

- (1) optimizing the curriculum system and providing more practical teaching
- (2) combining production, university, and research to achieve a win-win situation between schools and enterprises
- (3) constructing off-campus practice and training bases
- (4) learning more about convention and exhibition ^[3].

In Yan's article, she noted that the practice teaching should take typical convention and exhibition related cases as the cutting point. Presentation, analysis, and even role-playing of those Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) projects will help students form a broad understanding of the transference from abstract and concrete, and from theoretical to practical. Under such circumstances, it is necessary to undertake the reform of this course.

"Ability-centered" is increasingly a guide for education. Students have been educated to master theories and textbook knowledge all the way, a solid foundation for their excellent performance in the future. However, the transference and application of what they have learned may not be easy for most of them, which requires sufficient practice during their growth. Based on its characteristics and social positioning, the development orientation of an application-oriented college should focus on serving the local economic construction, promoting social and cultural development, and cultivating applied talents with practical application skills and innovative spirit for various fields in society ^[4]. Zhaoqing, the location of Guangdong Technology College, is a part of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Naturally, there are a lot of opportunities for graduates to work in the MICE industries. Developing MICE talents in the college is not just driven by the vibrant industry, but also a result of the favorable position. Talents support will attribute to the growth of surrounding economy. Consequently, the booming demand for such kinds of talent contributes to the growing interest of students to take the course and also raises the universities' attention to reforming to allow the students

to quickly adapt to the MICE industry and be competent in their careers.

Application-oriented colleges should clearly define the objective of cultivating students' practical English application abilities. They should actively launch a variety of on-campus and off-campus English communication activities, emphasizing the communicative aspect of English learning and encouraging student initiative in participating in these practical activities. Practical teaching activities constitute a significant component of the teaching work in higher education, serve as an important means to cultivate students' innovative spirit and practical ability, improve their comprehensive quality, and are key links in nurturing innovative talents^[4]. Guangdong Technology College has cooperation with some exhibition companies, therefore the reform can be conducted with intellectual support from those enterprises, which will make the practical teaching more operational. Meanwhile, the popularity of this course in the college makes those educators deeply think about the learning effect and the reform has been put into the agenda as a result of it.

3. Guiding theories for the curriculum reform

Under the background of nationwide curriculum reform, teachers are devoted to the exploration of education. According to what society needs and what improvements are needed, adjustment and innovation are inevitable for the current college students' cultivation. With the guidance of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), teaching goals are the instruction for various teaching activities. What kind of skills and competence will the students get after the course is a frequently asked question for educators.

Outcome-Based Education is student-centered, which means the core task of the teachers is to help the students succeed. In the process, each course should inspire students' motivation for self-learning and provide proper methods and ways to better realize the goals. At present, future successful employment is what college students care about most. The course therefore should be designed and reformed relatively. Just as Smith and Webster have pointed out, today's employers expect employees with "suitability," "capability," and "acceptability"^[5]. All of these mean that there are more things than skills that matter for employment, such as communication, problem-solving, quality, and so on. In terms of the MICE industry, the complexity of relevant jobs makes course reform necessary. The assessment of the convention course is highly focused here. With the combination of teaching goals, this course is creatively assessed with new forms to drive the students to foster the capabilities and minds that their future work may require.

According to Ning Chunyan, ESP teaching should follow three rules:

- (1) Based on the actual demand of the learners: The course design should consider their motivation. For students from applied universities, the drive for their English learning mostly is to get an ideal job after graduation.
- (2) Student-centered: It is also in line with the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) idea. The educators should always put the learners in the first place and try to mobilize their initiatives, with which they can learn more effectively.
- (3) Creating connection with real practice: Teaching content and materials coming from real cases will be more attractive and can help students get real useful experiences. In the age of big data, students tend to do autonomic learning. Driven by tasks, they will actively explore what they need to know and master it, which is more highly efficient than traditional teachers lecturing^[6]. Lin Yi and Gao Xinming has suggested that ESP teaching in Convention and Exhibition should guide the students in self-

teaching and improve their English as a working language with application ability, practical ability, and professional competence for the sake of their success in the convention and exhibition industry, which is what the reformer of this course is concerned with^[7]. As the students' guide in this field, the teacher should shoulder responsibility for the students' trust and create favorable conditions to support them in the way of exhibition employment.

4. LEAP teaching

With the study on Convention English teaching, Zhou Minyi has put forward the LEAP teaching mode, which includes Learning, Experience, and Action Project^[1]. In this course, students will get in touch with something new. Therefore, at the very beginning, it is necessary to impart them with industry information and relevant English expressions. It can build up students' confidence for later employment if they have a thorough understanding of the industry overview and learn the activities and events in Convention and Exhibition. During this period, lecturing with real exhibitions will make teaching more attractive and make the industry seem more appealing. Experience not only concerns the teaching content but also should involve students' participation in some tasks. In this reform, video shooting is also a part of the ordinary assignment, which works as a rehearsal of the final work. The teacher will collect all paired homework and give targeted suggestions, which will benefit them in treating the assignment seriously, let alone improving the final role-play performance. As to the final assessment, it is the production after this course study. In this section, students should demonstrate they have mastery of routine in Convention and Exhibition knowledge with their words and actions, which will bring the audience the feeling of reliable professionals.

The feature of this course makes the LEAP teaching applicable. Most students may have never gotten in touch with professional knowledge of Convention and Exhibition before. Naturally, the learning-experience-action process aligns with the natural progression of students' development, providing step-by-step guidance toward success. Each part is inseparable and deserves the instructor's attention. However, the action, as a demonstration of learning outcomes, requires more strategies, which is why a new form of assessment has been proposed and implemented.

5. The construction and implementation of the reform

This assessment reform is to replace traditional written tests with videos. The traditional assessment highlights the mastery of knowledge. Therefore, words and expressions of the Convention industry are what the paper concerns. Reading, translation, and writing are the main parts the test covers. However, in Convention practice, listening and speaking are of great importance and require sufficient training for those taking this course, as they are the weakest areas for most students. Under the motivation from the school's systematic reform, the teacher advocated role-play videos as a way of assessment. Students are required to comprehensively show what they have learned from this course and fully present the look of a professional through their performance. Role-play is a useful method in situational teaching, which can create a sound language environment, boost interaction in English, and improve the creativity of English teaching, all combined to stimulate the interest in learning and improve the study effect^[8].

The amended assessment will list the requirements the students should meet, including the theme, the word numbers, dress codes, props, eye contact, body language, camera language, etc., and all videos will

be accomplished within group work. A real exhibition scene imitation will be expected in the videos with professional performance and fluent English in their dialogues. The plan and its implementation are based on a common phenomenon: role-play and cooperation are increasingly adopted in the teaching process. In group work, there are five key features as follows: Positive interdependence; Small group and individual accountability; Face-to-face promotive interaction; Small group skills; Group processing^[9]. Pair learning helps develop competencies required in the future work environment, such as improved communication, growing independence, and responsibility. In application-oriented universities, this new form of assessment contributes to the cultivation of market-ready talent. After the reform was implemented, most of the videos submitted showed students' achievements in the course and highlighted their creativity. It's a step forward toward their desired careers.

6. Advantages and challenges of the amendment

Just as mentioned before, the video assessment is helpful in the following aspects: Firstly, it can stimulate students' interest and passion for this course learning. Unlike traditional teaching, this reform brings students more chances to practice their oral English and realize self-teaching through role-playing. Instead of passive learning, this course highlights active learning and constructive learning. Just as Ji Qinghua pointed out, the effects of different learning modes vary with C(constructive) > A(active) > P(passive)^[10]. The educators' choice of reform also well reflects the principle of the OBE idea. In video production, the knowledge students have learned is processed from books to memory, application, and transfer, becoming deeply ingrained over time.

Secondly, it can develop students' professional qualities. The video is oriented toward exhibition events where the students will act as exhibitors, buyers, or reporters. To have an impressive performance, they will learn some etiquette and role-play as a real employee, which means that they will pay attention to some business activities, such as how to communicate and bring their guests a nice experience. With such a role, they will better understand the job they may take in the future.

Thirdly, the arrangement of the new assessment form allows the students to challenge themselves. Some of them are timid to show themselves in the classroom. However nowadays, with the advance of business activities, a lot of English major students will devote themselves to foreign trade or other commercial work. In this case, it is important for them to express themselves well. The paired task allows them to learn from each other, debate, and eventually produce a satisfying video end product.

In the implementation of the new form of assessment, it is found that there are some challenges in need of solving. For example, some students are still not confident enough to freely conduct the role-play. It deserves the lecturer's attention to encourage these students and praise their progress in self-expression. Such students need more opportunities to build their confidence. According to Rajib Ahmed Faisal, extraversion character has a statistical relationship with English learners' performance^[11]. In a successful classroom presentation, the presenter should be confident and poised, full of enthusiasm, have a loud and clear voice, exhibit natural deportment, and conduct appropriate interaction and eye contact with the audience^[12]. To achieve active adjustment in their presentation, it is helpful to set up model pairs and analyze with other students why the work is successful. Former exercises and presentations are considered as the preparation for the final videos. Undoubtedly, all students can achieve good marks if they prepare enough for the survey and polish their work again and again. The process will witness the students' improvement to be independent problem solvers and

satisfy the talent market needs.

7. Conclusion

This article shares a case of curriculum assessment reform in Guangdong Technology College of China about replacing written tests with video shooting for the Convention and Exhibition English course. With the guidance of the OBE idea, the situational teaching method brings the students a good opportunity to active learning with the final video task as a production of their learning. The performances in their works can better consolidate the knowledge they have accessed to in this course. This paper intends to bring some inspiration for other curriculum reformers and attract more attention to ESP teaching for potential improvements. In the exploring exhibition talent cultivation, the teachers need to participate in more practical projects so that they can provide real meaningful instruction and reform which is eagerly needed for application-oriented universities.

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