Analysis and Suggestions on the Current Situation of Specialized English learning of Vocational College students -- A Case Study of Accounting Students in Sino-foreign Cooperative Education

Si Si

School of international cooperation and Exchange, Jinan Engineering Polytechnic, Jinan Shandong Province, China, 250200

silviasi2023@163.com

Abstract. Sino-foreign cooperation education is a new mode of school-running model, which is characterized by introducing high quality educational resources from abroad to promote the development of higher education. In this paper, accounting majors of higher vocational colleges in Sino-foreign cooperative education are taken as the research object, questionnaires are issued, and the collected data are statistically analyzed to understand the problems existing in students' learning of specialized English. The teaching effect of accounting professional English in higher vocational colleges can be improved by optimizing the teaching staff, changing the teaching methods, strengthening the construction of teaching materials and stimulating the intrinsic learning motivation of students.

Keywords: Vocational college, Sino-foreign cooperation education, ESP.

1. Introduction

Sino-foreign cooperative education, an education mode which combines Chinese education with foreign education, is increasingly becoming an integral part of China's educational cause in the new period [1]. The training goal of Sino-foreign cooperative school-running program is to cultivate compound, innovative and development-oriented high-quality technical and skill talents who are firm in their ideals and beliefs, adapt to the construction of market economy and have an international vision [2]. This kind of accountant should not only have solid accounting knowledge and be familiar with international accounting standards, but also be able to use English comprehensively. How to use English to solve accounting practice problems has become a difficult problem faced by students of accounting major in Sino-foreign cooperative schools. The English course of accounting specialty meets the needs of the market and is beneficial to the development of Sino-foreign cooperative education. However, the construction of this course started late, the curriculum system is not perfect, and the professional teachers are insufficient. Through questionnaire survey, this paper mainly discusses the problems faced by higher vocational students in accounting professional English, in order to improve the teaching thought, put forward reform and practical methods, so that higher vocational students are more willing to learn this course.

2. The design of the questionnaire

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses is expected to equipped students with sufficient English skills for their future professional career [3]. This course is generally carried out after general English courses, which is the basis for students to study real foreign courses and be beneficial to them to better understand the foreign courses. Therefore, in order to understand the real situation of accounting students' ESP learning in our school and improve ESP teaching, this survey is carried out.

2.1. Surgery objective

The students of higher vocational colleges are mainly recruited through three channels: college entrance examination, individual enrollment and comprehensive evaluation enrollment. Due to the origin of the students, the English level is at a relatively weak level. In the process of teaching, students are the main body. In order to achieve good teaching effect, teachers need to know the situation of students, understand their personality, learning strategies and learning mentality, so as to carry out targeted teaching. Through questionnaires, real and effective information can be collected to help teachers deeply understand the situation of students, adjust teaching content, improve teaching methods, and improve curriculum construction, so as to improve teaching quality.

2.2. Respondent

The subjects of this survey are students of grade 2017, grade 2018 and grade 2019 majoring in accounting in Chinese-foreign cooperative education of our school. There are about 40 students in each class. A total of 120 questionnaires are distributed. The form of the survey is "Questionnaire on Professional English Learning of Students majoring in Sino-Foreign Cooperative Education in Higher vocational Colleges" released by "Juanxing" software. Students can submit online answers via Wechat or QQ, and finally collect 120 copies of the questionnaire.

2.3. Questionnaire content

In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the author consulted the materials related to the teaching method and revised the contents of the questionnaire for many times. The questionnaire includes two types of questions, namely closed question and open question. The first part is to understand the basic information of the survey object, including the survey object's grade, English entrance score, learning English motivation, etc. The second part focuses on students' current learning situation, such as their understanding of the necessity of learning professional English, their feedback on classroom teaching and professional English teaching materials, the strategies adopted for learning professional English and the evaluation of students' learning effect. The last part is the subjective question, in order to obtain the respondents' personal views, suggestions for the existing teaching methods and expectations for professional English learning.

3. Investigation result and reason analysis

3.1. Basic information about the respondents

3.1.1 Basic information of students' English learning

In higher vocational colleges, the major of Sino-foreign cooperative education charges high fees, and the students are less willing to go abroad. Most of the students choose this major only for the sake of admission, so the admission score of the students is lower than that of the ordinary students. According to the data, most of the subjects in the survey failed in English, and only a few students scored more than 80 points. Students' English learning foundation is quite weak. They can not keep up with the teaching progress, learning enthusiasm decline. However, in Sino-foreign cooperation projects, the teaching of professional English is the foundation for entering foreign courses. At least 1/3 of the core professional courses in the project are taught in English by foreign teachers. Students' weak professional English will directly affect the teaching progress of foreign courses and students' understanding of the content of foreign courses, and the teaching effect will definitely be affected. The students’ English score on admission is shown in Figure 1.

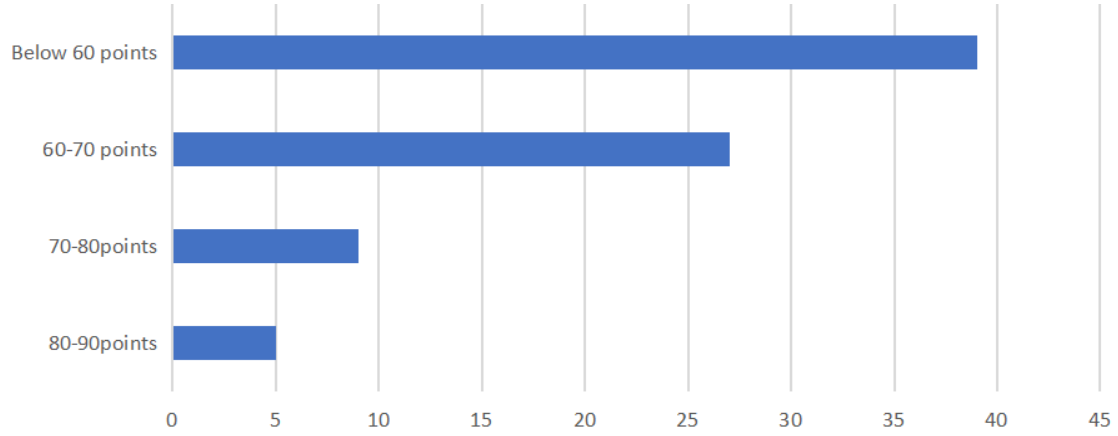


Figure 1. Students' English score on admission

3.1.2 Students' motivation of in learning professional English

According to the survey data, the students' purposes of learning English, as shown in figure 2, are successively upgraded, self-improvement, obtaining English certificates, and studying abroad. Although students are studying in Sino-foreign cooperative program, they have little desire to go abroad for further study. Most students choose to stay in China, pass the entrance examination and enter the undergraduate school. Students who choose employment often take CET-4 and CET-6, in order to help their employment. These data show that students have different motivations for learning professional English. Therefore, it is necessary to help students understand their own goal and promote their English learning.



Figure 2. Students' motivation

3.2. The learning status of the respondents

3.2.1 Students' understanding of professional English

It is found that students do not know enough about professional English courses, and most of them think that professional English courses are optional. Student's understanding about ESP is shown in Figure 3.

This is because the students of Sino-foreign cooperative program have a weak English foundation, do not master the methods of learning English, and their interest and motivation in English learning are weak, so they fail to learn common basic English well. Moreover, there are many professional terms in accounting professional English and the content is boring, which increases the difficulty of learning. Students do not pay enough attention to professional English learning as the basic status of entering foreign courses, and their internal and external needs are not stimulated, so they have a psychological resistance to professional English learning.

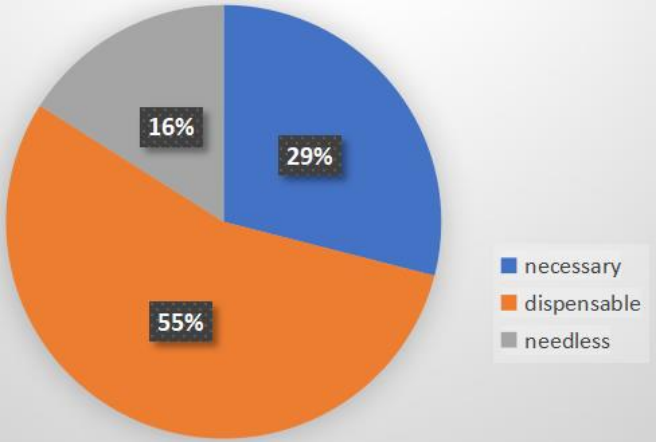


Figure 3. Understanding of ESP

3.2.2 The teaching status of professional English

According to the survey, in the teaching activities, teachers adopt a variety of teaching methods to promote teaching, but students' favorite teaching activity is group discussion, the least favorite teaching activity is personal speech. The teaching methods are shown in figure 4.

This is because students' English foundation is weak. In the process of group discussion, students can discuss and communicate with each other to avoid the embarrassment of personal speech. However, some students do not actively think and do not participate in the discussion in group activities. Through the investigation, it can be seen that although teachers actively use a variety of teaching methods, accounting English teaching is different from general English teaching, and most students have difficulty in learning. In the teaching activities, basic English knowledge should be taught according to the characteristics of English teaching and students' English learning rules, and the accounting professional knowledge should be integrated into English [4]. Therefore, teachers should study more, think more frequently and develop the ability of lifelong learning. They should constantly update knowledge structure and innovate teaching methods.

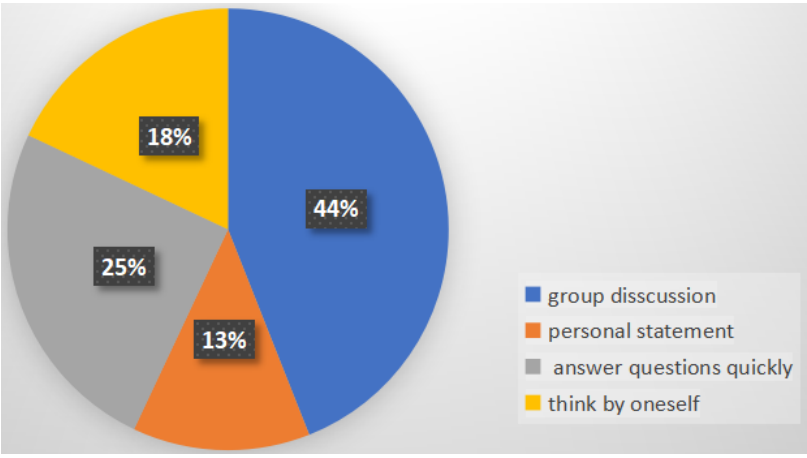


Figure 4. Teaching methods

3.2.3 Professional English textbooks

Textbook is the basis of organizing classroom activities, teachers' teaching and and students' learning. Teaching material is the key to carry out teaching and plays an important role in realizing teaching objectives. Therefore, higher vocational colleges should choose accounting professional English textbooks suitable for students' characteristics. The difficulty of professional English textbooks is shown in table 1. According to the survey data, the current professional English textbooks are too professional for students, and there are too many new words for students to learn.

One of the reason is that students' basic English knowledge and basic accounting knowledge are weak, and the other reason is the stiff combination of professional accounting knowledge and English

knowledge. Due to the limited version of accounting English teaching materials in higher vocational colleges, teachers can only choose by themselves according to their own teaching needs under the guidance of the teaching syllabus, and the selection and use of teaching materials are not scientific enough.

Table 1. The difficulty of professional English textbooks

Sample / Options	Too difficult	Moderate	Too professional	Easy
Students of 2017	43%	4%	51%	2%
Students of 2018	36%	6%	55%	3%
Students of 2019	35%	5%	56%	4%

3.2.4 Learning strategy

Oxford believes that learning strategies are specific conscious behaviors taken by learners in order to obtain expected learning outcomes. Oxford divides language learning strategies into direct and indirect ones. Direct strategy consists of memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensatory strategy and metacognitive strategy. Indirect strategies mainly consist of affective strategy and communicative strategy [5]. The questions listed in the questionnaire are selected from part of the Oxford Learning Strategies Scale.

According to the survey, the students major in accounting most often use the compensatory strategy, the least often use the memory strategy. The detailed data about learning strategy is shown in table 2. It can be seen that students with scores above 70 adopt direct strategies more frequently because they have a good English foundation and clearer learning motivation. Students with scores below 70 adopt indirect strategies more frequently. The reason is that they have low learning initiative and acquire knowledge through listening in class, without forming good learning habits.

Table 2. The learning strategy

Options / Sample	Memory strategy	Cognitive strategy	Compensatory strategy	Metacognitive strategy	Affective strategy	Communicative strategy
Students with 80-90 points	15%	23%	31%	10%	11%	9%
Students with 70-80 points	14%	21%	30%	11%	13%	11%
Students with 60-70 points	16%	9%	26%	6%	24%	19%
Students below 60 points	12%	9%	27%	9%	22%	18%

3.2.5 Learning effect evaluation

Evaluation, a crucial process in ESP, ensures adequate planning, implementation, and continuous improvement of the program [6]. The purpose of evaluation is to understand students' learning situation comprehensively and improve teachers' teaching. Classroom teaching evaluation should be built on the basis of promoting students' all-round development. It should not only pay attention to students' academic record, but also discover and develop students' potentials in the learning process to promote students' all-round development. Through the survey, it is found that the students have a good grasp of knowledge, but the ability of thinking development, problem solving and cooperation and communication needs to be strengthened. The survey data is shown in figure 5.

Therefore, accounting English teaching should understand the needs and characteristics of students, further improve students' English ability and professional knowledge, enhance students' comprehensive practical ability, and improve students' ability to solve practical problems.

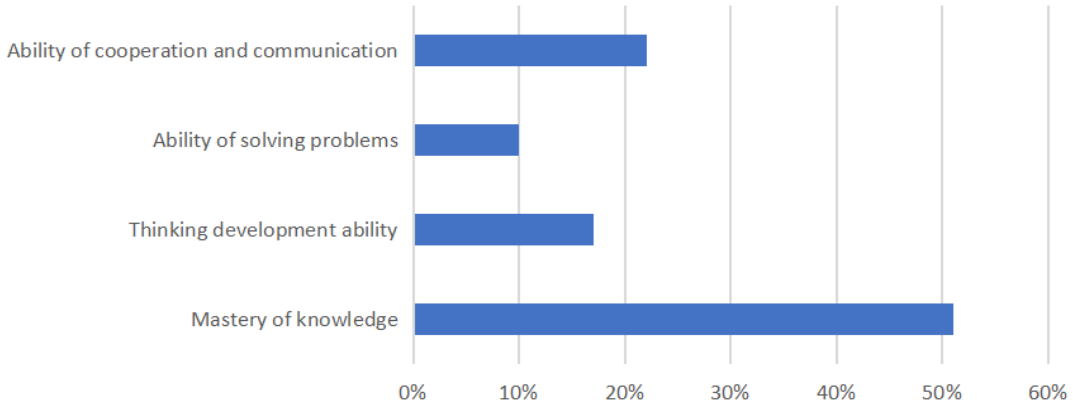


Figure 5. Learning effect evaluation

3.3. Limitations in the investigation

As this survey is affected by some objective factors, the following limitations exist in the survey. First, the number of participants in this survey is limited, so there is a certain sample error. Second, the content of the questionnaire is limited, and the data cannot reflect the real information of all professional English learning, so the research results may be affected. Third, the team still needs to conduct follow-up studies, even case studies, to get more accurate results.

4. Some suggestions on English teaching in higher vocational colleges

4.1. Optimize the teaching staff and update the teaching concept

The construction of teacher team is the basis of guaranteeing teaching quality. The improvement of the teaching level of ESP courses for accounting majors in Sino-foreign cooperative program has put forward higher requirements for teachers. Teachers have to become learners to acquire new concepts and jargon through new materials. Moreover, such a learning process may continue throughout their ESP instruction periods. Most importantly, ESP teachers have to pay attention to how they work with target learners, communicate with these learners, and present their teaching materials [7]. Therefore, it is necessary to optimize the teaching staff.

First of all, the school can strengthen the training of current teachers in the college. Teachers with high English level but lack of accounting knowledge, should be encouraged to learn accounting professional knowledge, attend training courses on accounting knowledge. Through these ways, they can improve their professional quality. In winter and summer vacation, they can go to foreign accounting enterprises to improve the comprehensive application ability. Secondly, we can introduce excellent teachers at home and abroad, hire foreign accounting teachers or recruit international students studying accounting in foreign universities, so as to enhance the reserve of accounting professional English teachers in our school.

4.2. Change the teaching method and form the teaching development view combining theory and practice

ESP in accounting majors have the characteristics of both English language education and accounting professional education. Therefore, the selection of teaching methods should take into account the rules of English learning and accounting professional knowledge learning. The students of Chinese-foreign cooperative education programs have a weak foundation, so teachers need to spend more time and energy on studying teaching content and teaching methods, improving teaching quality. Only in these ways they can lay a good foundation for students to enter foreign courses.

In terms of language learning, combined with the characteristics of accounting majors and English foundation, English learners should follows the rules of hierarchical learning practice and gradual improve the foundation. The second class activities such as English singing competition and English

drama competition are often carried out to stimulate students' interest in English learning and achieve successful experience in practice.

In terms of professional teaching, according to the characteristics of accounting major, project teaching method is introduced. Complete and real accounting projects are used as the carrier, teaching materials are refined, teaching links and tasks are designed, and accounting projects are promoted in situational teaching, so as to realize the effective integration of accounting professional education and English language education.

4.3. Strengthen the construction of teaching materials to adapt to the students' characteristics and training needs of higher vocational college

In order to meet the training objectives of Sino-foreign cooperative educational programs in higher vocational colleges, teaching materials which meet the characteristics of students in higher vocational colleges must be adopted. The original English textbooks can be introduced into the teaching materials, and the original textbooks can be updated quickly, which can reflect the latest accounting knowledge in a more rapid and comprehensive way. The language materials are original, which is conducive to the teaching of accounting professional English.

Higher vocational colleges can also call on teachers with accounting knowledge system and rich experience in English teaching to form an English teaching and research team for accounting majors. They can compile textbooks suitable for the characteristics of students in our school. In designing the material, the designer has to ensure that the material meets the needs of the learners [8]. Paltridge & Starfield suggested recommendations to consider in designing the materials: Context based text and situation taken from the student's core competencies --both real or stimulated. Those will naturally open the access to language needed by students [9].

Based on the level of students in higher vocational colleges, bilingual textbooks can be compiled. English can be used to express accounting professional knowledge, but it should be simple and easy to understand and close to students' actual life. Students should be the main body, cases should be the carrier, and actual foreign business situations should be added. Task-based teaching mode is adopted to incorporate required accounting professional knowledge in the form of dialogue to exercise students' English listening and speaking ability. Practice questions should be added after each chapter of the textbook to further consolidate and test what you have learned. In a word, the content of the textbook should not only include the explanation of accounting knowledge, but also reflect the ability to use financial knowledge in English.

4.4. Stimulate students' inner motivation, arouse students' interest and enthusiasm

According to the characteristics of students in higher vocational colleges, the English teaching of accounting major should focus on cultivating students' subjective initiative and independent thinking ability on the basis of basic knowledge teaching.

To realize classroom transformation, the principle of "student-oriented, teacher-guided" should be adhered to. Teachers and students communicate and interact equally, so that students can learn knowledge, develop themselves in an all-round way, and obtain spiritual pleasure in an environment of respect and trust [10]. Teachers should make a reasonable teaching plan according to students' needs and teaching practice. During the teaching process, they should guide students to compare international accounting rules with Chinese accounting rules, and encourage students to visit relevant English accounting websites, read English books and related materials so as to realize the fun of independent learning.

Thus they can realize the importance and practicability of accounting professional English, experience the achievement of learning, and voluntarily learn accounting professional English.

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