

Study on the Integrated Undergraduate-Postgraduate Curriculum Construction of English for Academic Purposes

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Abstract: On the background of New Engineering construction and higher education internationalization in China, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has become a core course to cultivate innovative interdisciplinary talents capable of international academic communication. However, the disjointed arrangement of EAP teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate stages has restricted the continuous improvement of academic English competence. Based on analyzing EAP disciplinary and generic characteristics as well as the structural model of postgraduates' academic English literacy, this study explores the construction path of integrated undergraduate-postgraduate EAP curriculum and proposes that layered curriculum design, optimized teaching modes, formative evaluation system and digital teaching platform configuration contribute to realizing seamless connection of EAP teaching stages from undergraduate to postgraduate.

Keywords: *English for Academic Purposes; integrated undergraduate-postgraduate curriculum; academic English competence; curriculum construction.*

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Introduction

In accordance with China's higher education development requirements of New Engineering and Double First-Class universities construction, domestic universities are committed to cultivating high-level innovative scientific talents with international academic research capabilities. As an indispensable tool for reading frontier literature, publishing international papers and participating in global academic conferences, EAP has gradually replaced general English and become the focal point of college English teaching reform (Cai, 2017; Jiang, 2024). Nevertheless, current EAP teaching in most Chinese universities is divided separately at undergraduate and postgraduate stages, lacking top-level curriculum design and continuous teaching layout. Undergraduates finish compulsory general English courses with fragmented EAP learning, while postgraduates face insufficient studying hours to systematically polish academic writings and improve oral presentation competence, resulting in prominent disconnection in language learning continuity (Liang, 2024).

Existing academic research has verified that EAP differs essentially from general English and discipline-specific professional English: its core teaching target focuses on disciplinary discourse rhetoric rather than specialized professional content, with distinct disciplinary and generic features reflected in lexical selection, citation norms and discourse structure (Jiang, 2024). Meanwhile, empirical research on non-English major postgraduates constructs a three-factor structural model of

academic English literacy and identifies four dimensional influencing factors, providing empirical basis for graded and continuous curriculum design (Liang, 2024). In view of the above practical predicament and theoretical foundation, this study focuses on integrating undergraduate and postgraduate EAP curriculums development, aiming to put forward feasible curriculum construction strategies for English course instructors in university.

Theoretical Basis of Integrated Undergraduate-Postgraduate EAP Curriculum Construction

The Characteristics of EAP Teaching

EAP is neither the simple extension of general English vocabulary and grammar nor equivalent to discipline-based professional English courses. Rooted in specific disciplinary discourse communities, EAP carries obvious disciplinary and generic specificity in discourse practice. From disciplinary dimension, arts and science disciplines show significant divergence in using citation, hedges etc. in academic writing: humanities and arts disciplines employ far more self-reference and citations while science and engineering disciplines rely more on objective data description and directive expressions. From generic dimension, research papers, research proposals, essays and lab reports follow differentiated discourse rules with unique linguistic features constrained by communicative purposes, which determines graded teaching contents across undergraduate and postgraduate stages.

The core goal of EAP teaching is to help learners master disciplinary rhetoric behaviors including definition, comparison, data interpretation and argumentation, gradually integrate into disciplinary discourse communities and construct complete academic identity. Such inherent features lay theoretical groundwork for hierarchical progressive curriculum arrangement between undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

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Structural Model of Academic English Literacy

Based on mixed qualitative-quantitative research, Liang (2024) verified that academic English literacy consists of three interrelated core components: academic English knowledge, academic English skills and academic English competence. Academic English knowledge covers disciplinary academic vocabulary and syntactic rules; academic English skills refer to integrated listening, reading, writing and speaking abilities used in literature review and academic presentation; academic English competence includes disciplinary critical thinking, cross-cultural academic communication and academic cultural cognition capacity. The three dimensions form a progressive developmental relationship: knowledge foundation promotes skill improvement, and further drives the formation of comprehensive academic competence.

Four exogenous factors affect the development of academic English literacy: academic English belief exerts comprehensive positive effects on all three literacy dimensions; academic practice and academic learning environment jointly boost learners' language skills and competence; previous English learning experience has a direct influence on academic English skills (Liang, 2024). The hierarchical development law of academic literacy matches the staged learning characteristics from undergraduates to postgraduates, which becomes the core theoretical support for integrated curriculum development.

Necessity and Feasibility of Undergraduate-Postgraduate Integrated EAP Curriculum

Construction Necessity

First, integrated curriculum remedies the flaw of disjointed talent cultivation existing in college English teaching. At present,

undergraduate EAP teaching concentrates on teaching basic academic norms, while postgraduate EAP courses focus on practical paper writing and international conference communication. Separated curriculum settings break the natural progressive learning law of academic language, leading to repeated learning or knowledge gap. Second, it conforms to New Engineering talent cultivation orientation capable of using English to conduct direct disciplinary research. Third, from learners' individual characteristics, undergraduates own strong learning willingness and innovative thinking but lack academic awareness and experiences; postgraduates accumulate certain research experience yet suffer from insufficient oral and written academic expressions. Therefore, continuous integrated teachings can make up for respective deficiencies of the two groups.

Construction Feasibility

In terms of teaching content, undergraduate and postgraduate EAP syllabus forms progressive hierarchical content system: undergraduate stage focuses on basic academic literacy cultivation such as literature retrieval and citation specification; postgraduate stage targets practical application including manuscript submission and academic debate, with coherent and mutually connected knowledge structure. In terms of curriculum objective, both stages aim at improving learners' academic English literacy and disciplinary research capacity, only differing in training depth and practical requirement. In terms of technical support, Education Informatization 2.0 promotes the construction of intelligent online EAP learning platform, which can classify teaching resources according to undergraduate and postgraduate competence levels and realize online-offline blended teaching across learning stage. Besides, existing domestic EAP teaching reform practices and empirical research data provide abundant practical experience for integrated curriculum design.

Specific Construction Path of Integrated Undergraduate-Postgraduate EAP Curriculum

Set Transitional Bridging Courses and Optimize Teaching Modes

Table 1: Integrated Curriculum and Teaching Modules for EAP

Core Modules	Undergraduate Requirements	Postgraduate Requirements
Academic Reading	Textbooks, introductory review articles, and short-length literature; master the ability to identify main ideas and sort out details	Top journal papers, cutting-edge monographs, and classic foreign literature; master critical reading, viewpoint differentiation, and literature tracing
Academic Writing	Abstracts, course reports, short essays, and basic literature reviews	Full-length literature reviews, journal articles, dissertation chapters, and conference papers
Academic Speaking	In-class Q&A, small-group academic discussions, and short in-class presentations	Academic presentations, thesis defense, international conference speeches, impromptu academic discussions, and Q&A interaction
Academic Norms & Integrity	Basic citation rules, format standards, and introductory anti-plagiarism training	Multilingual citation formats, copyright regulations, academic ethics, and response to review comments
Academic Tools	Basic literature retrieval, dictionary use, and simple typesetting	Advanced database retrieval, reference management software (EndNote/Zotero), academic paper typesetting, and illustration & annotation

With the reference to Table 1, for senior undergraduates with preliminary general English foundation and postgraduates lacking systematic undergraduate EAP training, universities can set general

bridging courses focusing on academic paper reading and fundamental academic writings. For instance, project-based teaching and cooperative learning are adopted as core teaching

approaches, mixed learning groups composed of undergraduates and postgraduates are organized to complete themed academic research from topic selection to paper drafting. Combined with EAP generic features, teachers guide students to distinguish discourse differences among research proposals, literature reviews and experimental reports in different disciplines, linking theoretical language instruction with disciplinary research practice. Blended online-offline teaching is also adopted to break class hour and space restriction for supplementary learning.

Design Two-Tier Layered Curriculum System

Divide integrated EAP courses into foundation building stage and advanced development stage adapting to differentiated learning demands (Chen, 2023).

Foundation building stage: This stage is available for all undergraduates and new-entry postgraduates without clear research orientation. The teaching contents center on universal academic norms, basic paper framework, common academic rhetoric rules, helping learners master standard literature reading and introductory academic writing skills. Combined with disciplinary EAP features, teachers distinguish linguistic disparities between arts and science academic texts in class. In this stage, students are expected to comprehend introductory foreign literature, write course papers, abstracts and reports, and develop academic thinking as well as a strong awareness of academic integrity.

Advanced development stage: This stage is open to postgraduates and high-level senior undergraduates with definite research directions and preliminary thesis writing experience, covering disciplinary discourse skills, journal submission specifications, international academic oral presentation and debate tactics, focusing on polishing learners' disciplinary academic argumentation and advanced expressing competence. This stage emphasizes domain-specific academic English and international academic competence. Students will conduct in-depth reading of cutting-edge foreign literature, compose journal articles and dissertations, design academic posters, deliver oral presentations and participate in international academic seminars. Through the integrated study, students are expected to be equipped with the ability to disseminate academic achievements globally and write and publish essays based on their research.

Establish Unified Formative Evaluation System

Teachers should not rely on final written examination, but build integrated formative evaluation system covering undergraduate and postgraduate phases. For general courses, it is appropriate to combine regular classroom performance, online platform learning data and terminal written test to assess students' mastery of basic academic knowledge. For advanced expanding courses, it is fit to take complete English academic paper, academic conference presentation and themed argumentation as core evaluation indicators to inspect learners' practical academic application capacity. Evaluation criteria are formulated hierarchically according to academic literacy developmental law: undergraduate evaluation leans toward knowledge and basic skill examination, while postgraduate assessment focuses on comprehensive academic competence output.

Optimize Resource Allocation on Digital Teaching Platform

Construct integrated EAP online teaching platform with four functional modules: audio-video course resources, collaborative literature reading & writing, themed online tests and interdisciplinary team research interaction. We should classify

platform resources by discipline, academic stage and EAP skill category. Besides, we can also configure graded learning materials matching undergraduate foundational learning and postgraduate practical research needs. In a word, it is suggested to build long-term interactive communication platform among teachers, undergraduates and postgraduates, realize real-time problem solving on academic language and disciplinary writing, cultivate students' autonomous learning habit and extend in-class EAP teaching to extracurricular independent research practice.

Conclusion

The construction of integrated undergraduate-master EAP curriculum is an important measure to deepen college English teaching reform under New Engineering and internationalized higher education background. Rooted in EAP's unique disciplinary and generic discourse characteristics as well as the three-dimensional structural development law of academic English literacy, the integrated curriculum system realizes continuous progressive EAP teaching from undergraduate basic training to postgraduate practical application via transitional bridging courses, two-tier layered curriculum, unified formative evaluation and digital platform resource optimization.

The integrated teaching mode can effectively stimulate learners' positive academic English belief, enrich diversified academic practice activities and build favorable bilingual academic environment, thus comprehensively boosting the development of students' academic English knowledge, skills and comprehensive competence. For university English teachers, this curriculum construction path breaks the separated undergraduate-postgraduate teaching barrier, helps EAP teaching align with disciplinary talent cultivation goals, promotes the internationalization progress of university disciplinary construction, and provides replicable practical reference for domestic colleges to carry out EAP integrated teaching reform. Future research can carry out long-term follow-up empirical research on curriculum implementation effect, adjust curriculum details according to differentiated disciplinary characteristics of various universities.

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