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The Best Practice of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities in Improving College Students' Communicative Competence: A Case Study in Wenzhou University

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Abstract: *In the 21st century, China is on the way of transforming into an "International Country". The fast development of economy and the revolutionary educational reform policy of transiting provincial level (or local universities) into Universities of Applied Science call for the creation of a new Adaptive Learning System to promote active learning by students. To adapt to the tremendous change, the college English course in China has been undergoing significant reform towards English for Liberal Education (ELE), English for Professional Purposes (EPP), English for Special Purpose (ESP) and English for Academic Purpose (EAP). In Wenzhou University, ESP has been carried out since 2009 and the test result shows that students' English proficiency has been improved. However, a survey for graduates carried out in Wenzhou University indicates that a good number of graduates declare that their English are incompetent for their professional work especially their weak communication competence and inquiring ability. The purpose of the paper is to introduce the best practice of a new ESP Classroom teaching design which tries to improve students' English communication competence through Inquiry-based active learning. Altogether, 118 students of first–year bachelor majored in Computer Science in Wenzhou University have taken part in this experiment. The result of the questionnaire survey shows that the majority of the respondents is satisfied with the remastered course teaching, and believes that the new format of learning can greatly inspire their learning interests, gradually improve their communication competence and inquiring ability, and help them to adapt to the collaborative learning model.*

Keywords: *College English reform; the Best Practice; Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities; Communicative Competence; questionnaire survey*

I. Introduction

Since 21st century, China has been on the way to shift from the "native country" to the "International Country". Accordingly, to improve personal quality, or to practice the basic

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language skills such as speaking and writing are no longer the purpose of foreign language teaching. Developing students' academic English skills and professional English to realize the use of English in professional learning or international contacts in future work become the new teaching goals. This change adapts to the needs of the national strategy for personnel training, so the college English teaching content should be reorganized, shifting from general English to ESP. (Cai, 2013)

College English reform in China has been starting decade ago. Comparatively speaking, the English proficiency of college students has generally improved. Under this circumstance, General English Course designed for improving students basic language skills is no longer necessary (Cai,2010; Wang,2010; Shi,2011; Zhang, 2011). Zhao Qinghong, Lei lei & Zhang mei (2009) have carried out a survey on students English learning interests among 2283 freshmen and sophomores in 12 universities, the result shows that 34.8% students have no interest in English learning. A survey made by Yu Liming & Yuan Duping (2005) shows that the major obstacles students met in college English learning are lack of goals, interest and pressure in learning. The British Culture Committee had carried out a wide range survey named "English 2000" in the end of last century, the result of which shows that nearly 90% experts believe that English teaching in the 21st century should be combined with other disciplines rather than English as a language (Liu, 1996). Only by combining English skills and expertise in College English teaching, will it stimulate learners' interest and motivation to improve learning efficiency (zhang, 2011).

Wenzhou University has chosen ESP since 2010. ESP is the continuation or expansion of basis English teaching, which aims to further develop students' practical language abilities based on general English teaching when students language knowledge and skills have developed to a certain stage (Cai, 2004). ESP teaching objectives and teaching content are determined by learner's pragmatic language capabilities or actual use of English rather than general education (English as a discipline) (Strevens, 1977). ESP aims to train students to use English when carry out their professional work, which meets the needs for the compound talents under the economic globalization background.

However, a survey (2013) for graduates carried out in Wenzhou University indicates that students' English Communicative Competence and inquiring ability are their Achilles' heels in their work. The result is not unexpected. Quite a few experts have been concerned about the communicative competence acquired by students in China, and pointed out the two reasons of why Chinese students are so weak in communicative competence. Firstly, students lack of clear instructions on the communicative rules; secondly, they lack of knowledge on the communicative rules and models of the foreign language (Shu & Zhuang, 2001). The third reason to be added in is that students in traditional classroom used to be a passive knowledge absorber but an active learning master, and they are deprived of the importunities to cultivate the ability to learn and solve problems.

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Our awareness of the importance of English Communicative Competence is not to be blamed for the weakness of Chinese students' Communicative Competence. Since long, developing the communicative competence of students has been one of the major goals of English teaching in China. There are even views that "the essence of English teaching is communication" (Wang, 1996), and that "communicative competence is the initial and ultimate goal of English teaching" (Wang, 1996). The latest College English Curriculum Requirements has been making efforts to enhance the listening and speaking abilities of the students. Thus, the problem we confront is the way to enhance students' Communicative Competence in ESP teaching. Another question comes as can students' inquiring ability developed along with their communicative competence? Through a year and a half's Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities experiments in Wenzhou University, the answer is yes. The questionnaire survey and test results show that the participants involved in the experiment have benefited significantly from the new teaching design in improved communicative competence (especially sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence), and better sense of problem solving. The results are in line with those of previous studies (Bejarano, 1987; Sugino, 1994). This paper suggests that inquiry-based activities should take roots in ESP classroom teaching, and the formative assessment should replace summative assessment to match up this new teaching design.

II. Literature Review

Definition 1: Inquiry-based Learning

IBL is advocated as an approach that engages students explicitly with the processes of knowledge creation and co-creation, and that develops dispositions and capabilities of particular relevance to life and work in a highly complex and challenging world (Brew, 2006). The term IBL used in this paper refers to pedagogic approaches in which students explore, investigate or do research to drive the learning experience, meanwhile, the teaching activities and resources are designed to support the inquiry process. The key factor for IBL is questions, which can stimulate students learning through exploration and discovery, individually or collaboratively, with or without teachers facilitate. Besides, the theory of absorptive capacity (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990), which claims that if individuals have ability to learn and solve problems, they will intend to perform a certain behavior proves the effectiveness of cultivating students' inquiring ability.

Definition2: Communicative Competence

There are three models of communicative competence: the model of Canale and Swain, the model of Bachman and Palmer and the Common European Framework (CEF) which describes components of communicative language competence. Basically speaking, communicative competence remains the ability to use language appropriately, both receptively and productively,

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in real situations. This study is rooted in Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence which have great influence on L2 teaching and learning (See Fig.1).

The communicative competence model of Canale and Swain (1980) consists of three components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. For a time later, Canale (1983, 1984) declared the fourth component the discourse competence which derives from some elements in sociolinguistic competence. Some theoreticians (e.g. Savignon, 1983) use the term "linguistic competence" instead of "grammatical competence" because the grammatical competence here is mainly defined in terms of Chomsky's linguistic competence.

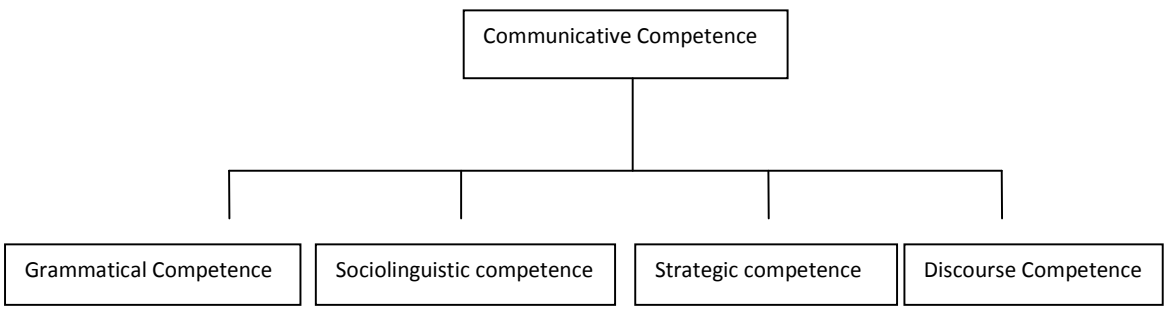
Grammatical competence can "be understood to include knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammatical semantics, and phonology" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 29). With this competence, speakers can use knowledge and skills to understand and express the literal meaning of utterances.

Sociolinguistic competence consists of two sets of rules: sociocultural rules and rules of discourse (Canale & Swain, 1980). Sociocultural rules refer to the ways in which speakers' utterances are produced and understood appropriately in certain sociocultural context, and rules of discourse refers to "the extent to which appropriate attitude and register or style are conveyed by a particular grammatical form within a given sociocultural context" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30).

Strategic competence is "made up of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). These strategies include paraphrase, repetition, avoidance of words, structures or themes, guessing, changes of register and style etc.

Discourse competence is a mastery of rules that determine ways in which forms and meanings are combined to achieve a meaningful unity of spoken or written texts (Canale, 1983, 1984).

Fig. 1: The communicative competence model of Canale and Swain (1983,1984)



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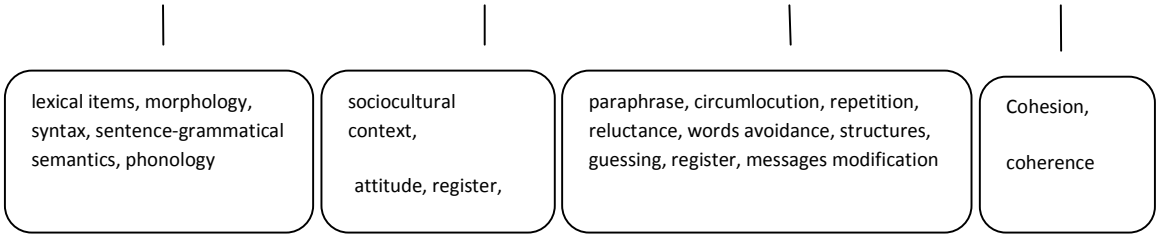

Principles underlying Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities

The principles underlying Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities are set based on Mustadi's (2012) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):

1. Authentic and meaningful inquiring tasks should be the content of classroom activities;

2. The primary focus of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities is meaning;

3. Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities involve the practice of integrated language skills;

4. Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities are creative in construction and involve trial and error.

The emphasis here for the inquiry-based activities is on the real-world activities which relate to the domain of life or the typical field of work the students will do in the future. We believe that what the students learn in the classroom can be transferred to the real world beyond the classroom.

III. The Best Practice

After many rounds of fails and tries, this paper intends to provide the best practice of Inquiry-based Classroom Activities for other enforcers to avoid detours in future.

3.1 Evaluation of the Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities

The teaching methodology of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities has been adopted since the first semester of 2012-2013 school years in Wenzhou University for freshmen majored in Computer science. Altogether, 118 students have taken part in this program which lasts a year and a half (3 semesters) until the first semester of 2013-2014 school years. During these years, three rounds of questionnaire survey (once per semester) and corresponding teaching adjustments have been carried out. The questionnaire is made on the basis of communicative competence identified in the model of Canale and Swain as well as the key elements of IBL. The communicative competence include: 1) grammatical competence, 2) sociolinguistic competence, 3) discourse competence, and 4) strategic competence. The IBL elements include critical

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thinking, interpersonal skills, creative thinking, self-monitoring and cooperation ability. The result of the questionnaire survey is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities Satisfaction Questionnaire (N=118)

Questions	Completely satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Mostly Dissatisfied	Completely Dissatisfied
Grammatical competence	9%	29%	55%	7%	0
Sociolinguistic competence	12%	51%	37%	1%	0
Discourse competence	11%	35%	53%	1%	0
Strategic competence	13%	44%	41%	2%	0
Critical thinking	13%	39%	46%	2%	0
Interpersonal skills	12%	44%	43%	1%	0
Creative thinking	15%	53%	30%	2%	0
Self-monitoring	8%	44%	45%	3%	0
Cooperation	10%	45%	44%	1%	0

Note. Measured on a five-point scale with response categories ranging from (1) completely dissatisfied to (5) completely satisfied. (** p< .01.)

A small portion reported that they are dissatisfied with the result of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities especially the grammatical competence. More than half of the respondents reported that the new teaching design helps enhance their sociolinguistic competence and creative thinking. Around 45% of the respondents reported that the new format of education helps enhance their self-monitoring and cooperation ability.This result is consistent with Orhan Akınoğlu and Ruhan ÖzkardeşTandoğan (2007) who pointed out that by means of PBL (one form of inquiry-based active learning adopted in the new format of education), some attitudes of students in relation to such areas as problem-solving, thinking, group works, communication, information acquisition and information sharing with others are affected positively.

In general, students are satisfied with the Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities in improving their communication competence. For the open question part, students reported that cooperation is the most difficult work to handle well. The possible explanation is that firstly, solo study is the traditional Chinese way of learning since primary school, thus, it takes time for students to adapt to collaborative learning; secondly, students of digital age are generally lack of interpersonal skills, and it really takes efforts to learn to make compromise and cooperate well among group members. Teachers should put more effort into helping and guiding students to build the sense of co-study and master communication strategies. Besides, students also mentioned that the huge information input during the class presentation is hard to digest. To

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facilitate students learning, it is suggested that teachers spend some time in introducing students' learning strategies. Meanwhile, teachers themselves need training in classroom management ability and curriculum design as well.

To gain a better understanding of the effects of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities on students' attitudes towards the four communication competence in daily communication, another questionnaire was carried out among the 118 respondents. The result is shown in table 2:

Table 2: The views of students about their emphasis on the four communication competence

competence / Frequency	Grammatical competence		Sociolinguistic competence		Strategic competence		Discourse competence	
	Respondents	%	Respondents	%	Respondents	%	Respondents	%
Always	6	5	24	20	29	25	18	15
Often	12	10	29	25	36	30	29	25
Sometimes	71	60	47	40	47	40	47	40
Rarely	29	25	18	15	6	5	24	20
Total	118	100	118	100	118	100	118	100

From the results of this table, 25% of respondents agreed that they always emphasize strategic competence in daily communication. In the same way 40% confirmed that strategic competence is sometimes emphasized. 20% said that sociolinguistic competence is often emphasized, 40% confirmed that it is sometimes emphasized. As far as discourse competence is concerned, 25% of respondents agreed that it is often emphasized, 40% said it is often emphasized. On the contrary, 20% responded that discourse competence is rarely emphasized. Concerning grammatical competence, a great percentage of 60% confirmed that it is sometimes emphasized in their daily communication. On the contrary, 25% responded that grammatical competence is rarely emphasized.

From the findings in table 2, it is clear that the most emphasized competences are strategic competence and strategic competence while discourse competence and grammatical competence are often neglected. This implies that students' writing ability cannot be well developed through Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities. To improve the writing ability of students, a modification is made in the teaching design, and reflection is highlighted.

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3.2 The Best Practice of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities

The Best Practice of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities in Improving College Students' Communicative has two dimensions, the horizontal parameters are the four phases of the classroom activity and the vertical parameters are process management. (See table3):

Table 3: The Best Practice of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities in Improving College Students' Communicative Competence

Phases	1. Initiation	2. Planning & Design	3. Sharing	4. Closing
Preparation	1.1 Course Management 1.2 Familiarization 1.3 Physical supports	2.1 Theme Design 2.2 Theme presenting	3.1 Activity Rehearsal	4.1 Grade reports
Cooperation& Communication	1.4 Class building 1.5 Grouping 1.6 Promulgate Ground rules 1.7 Explain assessment	2.3 Information Collecting 2.4 Activity Design	3.2 Presentation 3.3 Comments	4.2 Overall Assessment 4.3 Reflection
Quality Management	1.8 Domain knowledge acquisition 1.9 Students' Profile analysis 1.10 Ground rules statement	2.5 Activity Management Plan 2.6 Working Schedule	3.4 Time Schedule 3.5 Marking Scheme	4.5 Recognition and Reward
Products	1.11 Group lists	2.7 Activity plan	3.6 Video recorded 3.7 Grade reports	4.6 CD, Paper, Report

Source: created by the author

1. Initiation phase:

This is the initiation of the whole practice of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities which is of utmost important.

1.1 Course Management mainly focus on the teaching material, syllabus, teaching plan, teaching objective, teaching evaluation, teaching method. Since Inquiry-based ESP teaching differs from traditional classroom teaching, to improve students' inquiring, communication and practical abilities are the ultimate goals.

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1.2 Familiarization refers to the conceptual adjustment. Before adopting Inquiry-based ESP design, teachers and students should be effectively changed their concepts from the former tests-oriented to the new ESP competence-oriented and to adjust to a new academic environment. Besides, teachers and students should have sufficient knowledge and understanding about the best practice of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities. If not, a training program especially for should be designed which includes the underlying theories of English language teaching, concepts of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities, task grading and sequencing, teaching techniques, teaching materials design, and assessment or evaluation. This is in accordance to Mustadi's (2012) research.

1.3 Physical supports here mean the university officials should give support in visual aids, audio-visual or multimedia, Learning Activity Management System (LAMS) etc. These external factors are crucial for the successful running of the teaching design.

1.4 Class building refers to the cohesive force and collaborative spirit of teams or groups. Since Inquiry-based ESP classroom activity relies much on team/group work, and students' inquiring spirit, self-study ability, actively shouldering responsibility are the key elements in class building.

1.5 Grouping here refers to the composition of groups/teams. Group work is an effective but difficult way of learning especially for Chinese students. To highlight group work in ESP Classroom Activities is not out of no reason. Previous literature suggests that group work could arouse students' learning interests, cultivate their exploring ability and creative thinking (Davidson & Worsham, 1992; Johnston & Miles, 2004) and improve their team spirit and social communication skills (Fearon, McLaughlin, & Eng, 2012). However, through our experiments, it is reported that group work falls into the most difficult part of the classroom activity. Nearly all the participants believed their "insufficient English speaking and listening ability" was a main impediment to their active participations in group work. Language barriers directly resulted in their little speaking or passive participations in activities such as group discussions, presentations, or project writing tasks. Besides, the previous teacher-centered approach in high school provided them with no opportunities for discussion. Thus, when being exposed to group work, they encountered constraints resulting from their previous learning experiences. The reports are in line with those of previous researches which have attributed Asian students' lack of interest in participating in group work to their inadequate language skills, the influence of their prior learning experiences, pedagogical differences, and their underdeveloped interpersonal communication skills (Holmes, 2004).

During grouping, the "heterogeneity" principle should be followed which will help keep students' interest high and maximize learning. That is dividing the whole class into groups using a variety of criteria such as students' English proficiency, gender, interests and other important backgrounds information. It is suggested that less than 4 people /group is the most productive

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number (Lou, et al., 1996). Since leadership functions depend on the circumstances, the needs of the group, and the skills of the members, shared leadership is more effective than a fixed formal leader.

1.6 Promulgate Ground rules refer to some basic rules to be followed during the implication of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities. Teachers should clearly promulgate the ground rules for the successful application of the teaching methodology in the long run:

(1) In inquiry-based classroom activities, every member should contribute to the group finishing its tasks, that is "individual and group accountability", but one student takes the lead, completes the task.

(2) Inquiry-based classroom activities encourage promotive interaction, that is students help each other to learn, applaud success and efforts.

(3) Evaluation criteria for inquiry-based classroom activities should differ according to different types of tasks/activities and be clearly explained in advance to the students.

(4) The deadline for each task should be clear and strictly implemented.

1.7 Explain assessment is vital for the successful evaluation of the new teaching design. Differs from the traditional summative evaluation, the Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities evaluation is more formative. Since this new class design focus on developing students' communicative competence, in this paper, the common evaluation criterion of communicative competence is based on the measurement assumptions of Communicative Language Tests proposed by Kathleen & Kitao (1996). The Communicative Language Tests measure productive skills and receptive skills. As for productive skills, it emphasizes appropriateness rather than on grammatical ability, when measure receptive skills, understanding the communicative intent of the speaker or writer is emphasized.

Subjective element to the evaluation of communicative competence is unavoidable. Since real life situations don't always have objectively right or wrong answers, thus, band scales are more appropriate for evaluation. Each band has a description of the quality (and sometimes quantity) of the productive performance of the presenter.

Besides, since variety of presentation forms are encouraged, the special assessment criteria should be made and explained clearly based on the common measurement assumptions of Communicative Language Tests used in this paper.

1.8 Domain knowledge acquisition is necessary for course management, class building and grouping. Since the students involved in inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities varied in disciplines, teachers should familiarize students' domain knowledge to better realize the course management and grouping.

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1.9 Students' Profile analysis is the universal way for teachers to better understand students' characteristics, English proficiency and interests. This is also the basis of the application of "heterogeneity" principle in grouping. Besides, theme selection should also be based on the analysis results such as the interestingness, difficultness and the practicality of the theme selected.

1.10 Ground rules statement is the key outcome of the initiation phase which should be settled with great cautious and explained clearly to the whole class taking part in the new teaching design. During the practice, many "Don'ts" will occur such as one student takes the lead and completes the task, all the group members got the same marks in the in-group evaluation, the presenters are the same people times again etc. To prevent these "Don'ts", the Ground rules should be repeatedly reminded before and after presentations until taken roots in students' minds.

1.11 Group lists are valuable outcome of this phase which really cost time. Adjustment and regrouping are inevitable for a satisfying group composing. Even when grouping is settled down, recomposing group members should be allowed at the concern of different activities.

2. Planning and Design phase

This is the starting and inquiring phase of the concrete activity, which features in an overall development of students' communication competence.

2.1 Theme Design is the core of the Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activity. The themes selected should unify a time background and students' features including age, major, interests, English proficiency etc. As lead-in, teachers should explain the background information of the theme and raise some questions or make a case study to deepen students' thinking. To develop students' inquiry ability, teachers may list some authoritative websites or academic paper retrieval platform for students' activity planning and design.

2.2 Theme Presenting guarantees a successful starting of the inquiry activity. Teachers give the background information (related website links, articles, books etc.) about a pragmatically selected theme in the ESP class, and facilitate students to raise questions about the theme; then teachers make the question list through adjusting the questions raised or add some specific questions; later, each group selects one question after short discussion.

2.3 Information Collecting is the substantive implementation of Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activity which has high requirements on students' independent research ability. Firstly, students in groups should allocate tasks such as who will be responsible for surfing internet information; who will look for books or journals in the library, and who will filter information collected etc. Secondly, group member signs signature on the task allocation table after class before they start preparing. Thirdly, students execute tasks individually.

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2.4 Activity Design embodies the collaborative group/team work. Student Groups, under the leadership of the group leader, analyzing and filtering the information collected, discuss the best activity design to present the task, and allocate tasks in detail. It is of utmost importance that teachers and group leaders facilitate and smooth the group work during the whole phase.

2.5 Activity Management Plan is the quality control part for this phase. It includes the time, place, style, assessment criteria, and goals of the classroom activities (including the description of the concrete communication competence developed). Besides, roles assignment or work allocation should also include in the plan. Group members are required to sign their names on the work/task table to explicate personal responsibility for future accomplishment evaluation.

2.6 Working Schedule refers to sufficient time allotment for Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activity. The new teaching design requires that sufficient time allotment should be proportionally available. On the one hand, teachers and students need much time to adapt to the new teaching design especially at the beginning try; on the other hand, more often than not, confusions and failures happen during classroom activities. All these should be taken into consideration when making the working schedule.

2.7 Activity plan and the working Schedule are the outcome of this phase which require both students and teachers to have a dedicate consideration and thorough discussion.

3. Sharing phase

This is the presentation phase of the hard work and cooperation efforts between teachers and students. Communication strategies are fully developed in this phase. As Cohen (1998) and Dörnyei (1995) suggested that EFL learners' communicative proficiency can be improved through developing the ability of using communication strategies to compensate for their lack of target language sources. To successfully show their co-works, presenters have to adopt and adjust their communication strategies during the activity. Effective strategies such as body language, eye contacts, paraphrase, guessing etc are all frequently applied.

3.1 Activity Rehearsal refers to students' after-class presentation among groups or within group. This is an important collaborative process where students thoroughly exercise the whole four components of communicative competence in an open, free, natural environment.

3.2 Presentation is the most challenging step in the whole Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activity. It requires not only the class management experience of the teachers, but also the actively involvement and close cooperation among students. This is the real stage show moments of students' exquisite preparation.

3.3 Comments are necessary and important for Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activity. During the implementation, the activity flow can be "presentation + evaluation + presentation".

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That is after each presentation, evaluation should be followed to draw students' attention and cultivate their inquiring ability and critical thinking.

3.4 Time Schedule is the time control of the whole classroom activity. Since the running of the Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activity is not predictable and totally in control, time schedule works as an alarm

3.5 Marking Scheme is the quality control of presentations. As mentioned above, the evaluation criterion used in this paper is based on Communicative Language Tests. Since forms of activities varies, the marking scheme should be consistent with types of activities.

3.6 Video recorded is the product or outcome of the presentation. Teachers can choose to record excellent performances or typical ones for students to learn from good models and get experiences from common mistakes or drawbacks. The recorded video can also be good teaching materials for the incoming students.

3.7 Grade reports are the overall evaluation of students' performances. It can be group performance description or single student which is based on class observation and the Marking sheet. The result of the grade reports should be sent back to students to improve their communicative competence specifically. It is suggested that the reports should be descriptive assessments with future improvement suggestions or instruction.

4. Closing phase

In this final phase, teachers give comprehensive evaluation for all the presentation and organize students to do reflection.

4.1 Grade reports should be handed out for students at the beginning of the class. Teachers can allot some time for students to discuss the grade reports or give further explanation when necessary.

4.2 Overall Assessment is the summery of students' performances in all aspects including presentation skills, activity design, content evaluation, cooperation spirit and the four communication strategies etc.

4.3 Reflection is the process which is highly important but often being omitted. It has the function of deepening students' understanding of the theme and developing their grammatical and course competencies solidly. Reflection summary in groups or individually, group repots or paper writing are most commonly used ways of reflection.

4.4 Reward and Recognition are valued by students. Rewards and recognition must be applied fairly and equitably through a process which is as transparent as possible. The most effective means of acknowledging the work of students letting them know that their contribution

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is valued remains that of informal and immediate recognition.

4.5 CD, Paper, Report are the usual forms of reflection. Teachers decide the most effective way of reflection or mix these ways to keep a fresh feeling among students.

IV. Do's and Don'ts

As supplement to the Best Practice, the following Do's and Don'ts are highlighted.

Do's

1. Set role model: the first behavior pattern that emerges in a group often sets group expectations. If the first group presentation is marked by one-man show, then the other groups will tend to conduct in the same way. However, the effectiveness of group work is measured by the group's collective outcomes and products. There should be much discussion, and everyone is encouraged to participate. Besides, it is important that the climate be comfortable, no obvious tensions or signs of boredom and the communicative competence of the first presentation play a demonstration role.

2. Clear task allocation: the group leader should organize group members' activity designing discussion and supervise the task implementation such as group members signing in the task allocation table. It is suggested that the activities diversified in forms, such as PPT, game, debate, interview, role play or drama.

3. Change presenters: every group members should have equal chance to make presentation in class. Fixed presenters not only hindered the foster of group work spirit, but also deprived other students' growth opportunities, which violates the original intension of helping every student in improving communication competence.

4. Sufficient comments and guidance: teachers play roles as coordinator and evaluator through out the ESP classroom activity. Different assessment criteria should be set and explained before activity planning and design. Students are encouraged to make comments and raise questions after each presentation. Mark sheet can be handed out to group leaders before class, and after each presentation, a certain time (3-5minutes) should be set aside for discussion, making comments and filling the Mark sheet. Besides, it should be pointed out that positive and encouraging comments are important but good suggestions and instructed modifications are even more valuable for students.

5. Regulated reflection: reflection is of great importance not only helps students' to digest what they have learned, analyze the problems or mistakes they have made during the presentation, but also as a way to explicit output of their new understanding to enhance their grammar competence and discourse competence.

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Don'ts

1. Don't change the Ground rules once laid down. Teachers should take serious consideration in making the Ground rules (with the involvement of students), and a try period such as a month for making minor changes is acceptable. However, once the final version of Ground rules is confirmed, it should be followed until the end of the teaching design.

2. Don't give up easily once started. The Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities is brand new try for both students and teachers. It can be imagined that conflicts, nervousness even messes will happen at the starting try period of the teaching design. However, no matter how hard, how depressing it is, once teachers have decided to make a change, all the obstacles will finally overcome. What's important is the considerable decision making whether to carry out the new teaching design or not.

3. Don't involve too much in students planning and designing phase. Once the theme and questions are selected, teachers should let the students decide how to carry out their tasks. Too much suggestions and opinions will hinder students' development of inquiring ability and creative thinking.

4. Don't choose a theme that is hot but students have no interests in it. Theme selection needs considerable consideration. The involvement of students in this phase is utmost important. Students from different majors may have different interests, it is suggested that when making teaching design, teachers can list themes that is hot and practically related to students' discipline, and students in groups discuss and adjust the themes. With the coordination of the two parts, the final list of themes is announced and confirmed.

5. Don't neglect the reflection phase. Our experience tells that reflection is necessary and effective in students' communicative competence development. Students' papers, reports or CD records should be read over carefully and detailed comments or suggestions are valuable for students' improvement. Teachers should take time in this phase and have great patience when students' ask for further explanation.

V. Future LAMS supported Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activities

Learning Activity Management System (LAMS) can be afforded as a tool for creating learning designs in teacher-led conceptions of inquiry-based learning pedagogy in college English teaching to increase students' motivation and infuse activity-centered learning strategies with various educational benefits. LAMS is intended to encourage activity-oriented design thinking and to support such visualization and sharing/reuse. It is an example of an integrated design for learning environment; described by Britain (2004) as 'the most comprehensive implementation of the concept of Learning Design available to date', it remains the leading

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software of its kind and for this reason was selected for the study reported in this paper. Described in more detail by Dalziel (2003, 2007a), it is an open source tool that enables the design, orchestration and sharing/reuse of sequences of learning activity, placing special emphasis on collaborative and group processes. The visual, drag-and-drop LAMS design interface offers a range of activity types combined with the means to arrange these into sequences and embed, or connect to, associated content; in enabling visualization of linked steps, the system offers a similar feature to 'course of action' or author-ware systems as developed from the 1980s on-wards.

By allowing teachers to set-up and implement sequences that consider the alignment between student orientation, task instructions and assessment workflows, there is great potential in streamlining Inquiry-based ESP Classroom Activity through further integration with LAMS in the future.

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