Industry Demand-Driven ESP Layered Teaching Design and Practice Path Exploration

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Abstract: The core mission of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching is to bridge English language proficiency with industry job requirements, cultivating interdisciplinary professionals aligned with industrial development standards. Industry demands, as the central orientation of ESP teaching, directly determine the direction, content, and practical effectiveness of tiered instructional design. This paper, driven by industry needs, explores the core dimensions and implementation pathways of tiered teaching design. It constructs an integrated "goal-content-method-evaluation" tiered teaching system, supported by a comprehensive practical safeguard mechanism. This provides actionable solutions for ESP teachers to optimize instructional design, enhance teaching relevance, and align with industry demands. The study promotes the transformation of ESP teaching from "knowledge-transfer" to "industry-adapted" approaches, thereby improving learners' professional English application skills and job-related competency.

Keywords: Industry demand; ESP teaching; Tiered instructional design; Practical pathways; Job competency alignment

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1. Introduction

The deep integration of industrial transformation and economic globalization has driven industries to demand more specialized and versatile professionals. Foreign enterprises and multinational corporations now require employees to demonstrate not just basic communication skills, but comprehensive competencies encompassing industry expertise, English application, and cross-cultural collaboration. As a crucial bridge between general English education and workplace needs, the quality of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) directly impacts the cultivation of such professionals. ESP instruction fundamentally emphasizes industry relevance and practical applicability, with sector-specific demands serving as the core driver throughout the teaching process. When educators deviate from industry requirements, they risk creating content that fails to align with real-world job expectations, while tiered teaching approaches may become ineffective. This study focuses on designing and implementing tiered ESP instruction models, with industry needs as the central driver.

2. Core Dimensions of ESP Tiered Instructional Design Driven by Industry Needs

As the cornerstone of ESP implementation, tiered instructional design requires teachers to align with industry needs by structuring it around three pillars: learning objectives, content, and methodologies. This ensures

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each dimension accommodates learners' varying proficiency levels while precisely meeting professional requirements, ultimately building a comprehensive tiered teaching framework.

(1) Setting teaching objectives by levels to align with industry requirements

The teaching objectives serve as the core framework for differentiated instruction. Educators should categorize learners into three tiers based on three industry-specific dimensions, establishing tailored learning goals that align with both learners 'competency profiles and industry requirements. Through industry-specific competency assessments and learners' English proficiency tests, the teaching team classifies students into three groups: foundational, intermediate, and advanced, each with corresponding instructional objectives.

The core characteristics of foundational-level learners include weak English proficiency, limited industry-specific English application experience, and career planning focused on entry-level positions. Teachers design basic teaching objectives for this tier, aligning with fundamental industry job requirements. The curriculum emphasizes developing essential industry vocabulary, basic grammar, and communication skills for simple business scenarios. Specific objectives include: mastering 500-800 core industry terms, proficiently applying grammar to construct correct sentences; conducting basic English listening and speaking in professional contexts such as client interactions and routine business consultations; and drafting essential workplace documents like simple emails and forms to meet the English competency standards of entry-level positions.

Intermediate learners possess foundational English proficiency to handle basic communication tasks but lack hands-on experience in complex industry scenarios. Their career paths primarily involve mid-level positions within the industry. Teachers design advanced instructional objectives for this tier, aligning with industry progression requirements, with a focus on developing skills in complex scenario communication, interpretation of professional literature, and standardized business document writing. Key objectives include: expanding industry-specific vocabulary to over 1,500 terms, demonstrating proficiency in applying complex grammatical structures for professional expression; independently conducting English communication in medium-difficulty industry scenarios (e.g., assisting in business negotiations or resolving operational issues); interpreting industry literature and drafting summaries, as well as completing standardized business proposals and contract drafts that meet the competency requirements of mid-level industry roles.

High-level learners possess a solid foundation in English and demonstrate practical industry-specific language skills, with career aspirations targeting senior executive or managerial positions. Educators design advanced instructional objectives for this tier, aligning with industry's high-end competency requirements. The curriculum emphasizes cultivating cross-cultural collaboration, complex business coordination, and interpretation of industry trends. Key objectives include: mastering industry-specific terminology and cross-cultural communication vocabulary to conduct precise professional exchanges; independently handling complex scenarios such as international business negotiations and cross-border project coordination; interpreting industry-leading literature and drafting analytical reports to drive cross-cultural business initiatives, thereby meeting the career development needs of high-level positions. Additionally, educators should establish a dynamic adjustment mechanism to regularly refine instructional objectives based on evolving industry demands and learners' progress, ensuring relevance and timeliness.

(2) Stratified design of teaching content to meet the needs of different levels and industries

Teaching content serves as the core vehicle for achieving educational objectives. Educators should design tiered content based on industry demands and learners 'competency levels, ensuring it combines foundational knowledge, professional expertise, and practical application. This approach not only addresses learners' skill gaps but also aligns with real-world workplace scenarios. The teaching team should collaborate with industry experts to establish a clear "industry needs → competency gaps → teaching content" framework, thereby creating a structured tiered content system.

The foundational curriculum prioritizes developing core industry competencies, closely aligned with essential job requirements while emphasizing practicality. At the vocabulary level, instructors curate essential industry-specific terms, paired with scenario-based examples and simple exercises to help learners quickly master practical applications rather than relying on theoretical memorization. For grammar, the focus is on reinforcing basic structures through real-world examples, ensuring learners can construct accurate business expressions. In scenario-based practice, instructors design exercises like simulated conversations, sentence translations, and document drafting for common tasks such as client interactions, phone communications, and basic paperwork, strengthening foundational application skills. Additionally, teachers integrate industry basics to help learners understand workflow processes, laying the groundwork for advanced skill development.

The advanced-level curriculum centers on cultivating industry-specific professional competencies, aligning with career progression requirements while emphasizing content professionalism and standardization. At the lexical level, instructors expand industry-specific vocabulary and complex fixed expressions, using examples from professional literature and business contracts to explain precise usage scenarios and collocation rules. For grammar, they strengthen the application of complex structures like compound sentences, non-finite verbs, and virtual tone, incorporating case studies from industry documents and negotiation dialogues to enhance learners 'standardized professional expression. In practical application, instructors design scenario-based exercises using moderately challenging industry contexts such as business negotiations, interpreting professional documents, and drafting business proposals. These include document analysis, writing exercises, and simulated scenario drills, integrated with industry standards and operational workflows to improve learners' English proficiency in complex situations. Additionally, instructors should supplement the curriculum with case studies of typical industry scenarios, guiding learners to summarize English application techniques in professional contexts.

The advanced-level curriculum centers on cultivating comprehensive industry competencies, aligning with high-end professional requirements while emphasizing depth and expansion. At the lexical level, it focuses on premium industry terminology and cross-cultural communication vocabulary, explaining their differentiated usage across cultural contexts and business types to enhance precision. For practical application, it designs scenario-based modules including negotiation simulations, project proposal analysis, and academic report writing/demonstration, incorporating complex scenarios like international business negotiations, cross-border project coordination, and academic exchanges. The curriculum also integrates cross-cultural communication knowledge—such as cultural customs, business taboos, and communication etiquette—to develop learners 'intercultural collaboration skills. Instructors should provide industry updates and international academic resources, designing innovative tasks like writing English analysis reports aligned with industry trends or designing cross-cultural business solutions, thereby enhancing learners' innovative application abilities and industry insight.

(3) Selecting teaching methods by levels to improve the effectiveness of teaching implementation

Teaching methodologies directly determine the effectiveness of differentiated instruction. Educators should design tailored approaches by considering learners' competency levels, study habits, and curriculum content. These methods must not only meet instructional objectives but also motivate students and enhance learning outcomes. To achieve this, teachers should leverage blended learning platforms to develop a customized pedagogical framework.

For foundational learners, the "online groundwork + offline targeted coaching" approach is ideal, emphasizing teacher guidance and skill reinforcement. Online, educators utilize ESP teaching platforms to deliver resources like vocabulary and grammar videos, simple conversational examples, and structured exercises such as vocabulary dictation, grammar fill-in-the-blank, and simulated dialogues. The platform automatically tracks learning progress and provides real-time feedback. Offline, teachers address online learning challenges through

group sessions and one-on-one tutoring, using interactive classroom activities, group exercises, and scenario simulations to deepen understanding, resolve difficulties, and build confidence. Additionally, teachers should focus on teaching effective learning strategies and cultivating good study habits to lay the foundation for future skill development.

For advanced learners, the "online self-directed exploration + offline collaborative enhancement" teaching approach is recommended, focusing on developing self-directed learning and collaborative skills. Online, instructors provide complex scenario cases, professional literature, and business document templates, while designing inquiry-based tasks such as literature analysis reports, document revisions, and scenario dialogue scripts to encourage independent exploration. An online collaboration platform is established to support group discussions and task completion through division of labor, fostering teamwork. Offline, teachers organize group presentations, case studies, and scenario simulations. They provide targeted guidance based on task performance and learners' challenges, helping optimize solutions and enhance competencies. Peer reviews and instructor feedback reinforce knowledge mastery and improve professional expression standards.

High-level learners are best suited to an "online expansion and enhancement + offline innovative practice" teaching approach, focusing on cultivating innovation capabilities and cross-cultural collaboration skills. Online, instructors provide cutting-edge industry updates, cross-cultural communication case studies, and international academic resources, while designing exploratory and creative tasks such as developing cross-cultural communication strategies, drafting international business proposals, and translating and revising academic paper abstracts. This encourages learners to independently broaden their perspectives and sharpen innovative thinking. Offline, teachers conduct hands-on activities including simulated international business negotiations, cross-border project coordination drills, and academic presentation workshops, with guidance from corporate experts and foreign instructors who provide feedback and improvement suggestions. Additionally, field-based activities like observing operations at multinational enterprises and assisting in cross-border business projects allow learners to gain practical experience in real-world industry settings, enhancing their comprehensive application skills.

3. Practical Path of ESP Tiered Teaching Driven by Industry Demand

The implementation of tiered instructional design requires a scientifically sound and rational practical approach. Teachers should be guided by industry demands and establish a comprehensive practical pathway through four key stages: needs assessment, tiered implementation, evaluation feedback, and dynamic optimization. This ensures the orderly advancement of tiered teaching and effectively enhances both teaching quality and learners' job competency alignment.

(1) Carry out accurate industry demand research to lay the foundation for practice

Accurate industry demand research is the prerequisite for the effective implementation of ESP tiered teaching. Teachers should collaborate with industry experts and corporate HR departments to establish a multi-dimensional research framework, comprehensively understanding the English proficiency requirements across various industry positions, thereby providing data-driven support for the design and implementation of tiered teaching.

The research team will employ a diversified methodology to conduct their work. First, questionnaires will be designed for practitioners and corporate managers across various industries and positions, covering aspects such as English proficiency requirements for specific roles, English application needs in core business scenarios, and English competency demands at different career stages, to comprehensively gather industry data. Second, in-depth interviews will be conducted with industry leaders, HR managers, and seasoned

professionals to identify pain points in English application, skill gaps, and emerging industry requirements for English proficiency. Third, field research will involve on-site visits to foreign-related enterprises and multinational institutions to observe English application scenarios across different positions and document practical needs for English communication and document writing. Fourth, literature review will be performed by analyzing industry development reports and job competency standards to track evolving industry demands for English proficiency.

Upon completing the research, teachers should systematically organize and analyze the collected data to establish an industry demand database. This involves defining English proficiency requirements for various job roles and career stages, while categorizing industry needs by specific dimensions and tiers. Additionally, by integrating learners' English proficiency assessments and career planning questionnaires, teachers can accurately identify learner levels. This establishes a clear correlation between industry demands, learner tiers, and teaching content, thereby laying a solid foundation for implementing differentiated instruction.

(2) Promote the implementation of tiered teaching and strengthen process control

The implementation of tiered instruction requires teachers to integrate teaching design plans with blended learning platforms, conducting targeted activities while strengthening process oversight to ensure effective execution of objectives, content, and methodologies across all instructional levels.

Teachers must first conduct precise learner stratification and grouping. By integrating industry demand research findings with learner competency assessments, learners are categorized into three tiers: foundational, intermediate, and advanced. Each tier is further divided into multiple study groups, with designated instructors and industry mentors assigned to each. Foundational groups focus on basic skill development, requiring teachers to enhance classroom guidance and tutoring frequency to ensure mastery of core fundamentals. Intermediate groups emphasize professional competency enhancement, where teachers should guide learners in independent exploration and collaborative learning while strengthening application training in complex scenarios. Advanced groups prioritize comprehensive skill cultivation, necessitating industry mentors to participate in instructional guidance and provide authentic business scenarios and practical opportunities.

In instructional delivery, educators utilize online platforms to precisely deliver tailored resources, providing customized learning materials, practice exercises, and case studies based on learners 'proficiency levels. The platform also tracks progress and task completion, enabling real-time monitoring of learning dynamics. For in-person instruction, the focus shifts to scenario-based simulations and practical training, with differentiated classroom activities designed for different tiers: basic-level dialog simulation, intermediate-level business negotiation drills, and advanced-level cross-border project coordination simulations. Educators must establish classroom management mechanisms to monitor individual learners' performance, adjust teaching pace and methods as needed, and ensure all learners participate actively to achieve targeted improvement.

(3) Constructing a hierarchical evaluation and feedback system to optimize the teaching process

The stratified evaluation feedback system is an essential tool for assessing teaching effectiveness and optimizing the teaching process. Teachers should align with industry demands and integrate multi-level teaching objectives to establish a stratified evaluation framework that combines "formative assessment + summative assessment" and "quantitative evaluation + qualitative evaluation," thereby fully leveraging the motivational, feedback, and guiding functions of evaluation.

The foundational assessment framework emphasizes process-oriented evaluation, focusing on the mastery of basic competencies and enhancing motivational functions. Process evaluation accounts for 70% of the total, primarily conducted through online learning metrics, classroom participation, assignment quality, and foundational skill assessments. Online learning data is automatically tracked by the teaching platform, including study duration, resource access frequency, and exercise accuracy rates. Classroom performance evaluation

focuses on learners 'engagement and foundational skill acquisition, such as vocabulary dictation and simple dialogue simulations. Assignment quality assessment centers on accuracy and standardization of basic tasks. The summative evaluation accounts for 30%, implemented through periodic foundational competency tests. These tests cover core vocabulary, grammar, and basic industry scenario applications, featuring question types like multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, simple translation, and basic dialogue simulations. Feedback should emphasize encouragement and guidance, with teachers acknowledging learners' progress while providing targeted improvement suggestions to help build confidence.

The progressive evaluation system integrates formative and summative assessments, focusing on enhancing professional competencies and practical proficiency while strengthening feedback mechanisms. Formative evaluation accounts for 60% of the total, covering dimensions such as online self-directed inquiry outcomes, group collaboration performance, quality of professional documentation, and scenario simulation effectiveness. Online inquiry outcomes emphasize depth and completeness, group collaboration evaluates participation, teamwork skills, and task contribution, while professional documentation and scenario simulations assess standardization and proficiency. Summative evaluation constitutes 40%, combining comprehensive competency tests with practical assessments. Test content includes communication in complex scenarios, analysis of professional literature, and professional documentation writing. Practical assessments evaluate learners' real-world application abilities through simulated professional tasks. The evaluation process incorporates self-assessment and peer review. Self-assessment enables learners to reflect on personal shortcomings, while peer review fosters mutual learning and collective improvement. Teachers provide comprehensive feedback and targeted improvement suggestions based on all evaluation results.

The advanced evaluation system emphasizes summative assessment and practical competency evaluation, focusing on comprehensive abilities and innovative application skills while enhancing the guiding function of evaluations. Process evaluation accounts for 50% of the total, focusing on cross-cultural communication skills, innovative application abilities, and practical performance. Evaluation content includes expanded learning outcomes, quality of innovative task completion, cross-cultural scenario simulation performance, and practical activity performance, with particular emphasis on the innovation, practicality, and depth of achievements. Summative evaluation also accounts for 50%, combining comprehensive practical assessments with outcome presentations. Practical assessments evaluate learners' comprehensive application abilities through complex professional scenarios such as international business negotiations, interpretation and presentation of cross-border project proposals. Outcome presentations require learners to submit innovative achievements like cross-cultural communication plans, industry analysis reports, and academic papers. A panel composed of teachers, industry experts, and foreign instructors evaluates these submissions based on innovation, practicality, and professionalism. Feedback on evaluation results emphasizes relevance and foresight, guiding learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop personalized improvement plans, and align with the requirements of high-end industry positions.

(4) Establish a dynamic optimization mechanism to adapt to demand changes

Industry demands and learners 'abilities are in constant flux. Teachers should establish a dynamic optimization mechanism for differentiated instruction, adjusting stratification criteria, teaching objectives, content, and methods in real time based on industry changes, learners' progress, and teaching feedback. This ensures that differentiated instruction consistently aligns with both industry needs and learners' expectations.

Teachers should conduct regular industry demand tracking surveys and collaborate with enterprises to hold biannual demand follow-ups. This helps identify emerging requirements for English proficiency in evolving industry trends, update the industry demand database, and adjust teaching objectives and content at all levels. Additionally, teachers must perform learner competency assessments each semester. By integrating evaluation

feedback with learners' career planning adjustments, they can dynamically reclassify learners: upgrading those showing significant progress to higher levels while providing targeted support for those with gaps, ensuring the rationality of tiered standards.

Teachers should establish a teaching feedback mechanism to gather learners 'opinions and suggestions on the content, methods, and evaluation system of differentiated instruction through classroom assessments, learner questionnaires, and group interviews. By integrating teachers' teaching reflections and feedback from industry mentors, they can optimize teaching plans. For example, when learners report that the teaching content is disconnected from actual job requirements, teachers should promptly collaborate with industry experts to adjust teaching cases and practice tasks. To address the issue of monotonous teaching methods, innovative blended online-offline teaching formats can be adopted to enhance instructional appeal. Through this dynamic optimization mechanism, differentiated instruction remains relevant and timely, adapting to evolving industry demands and learners' skill development needs.

4. Conclusion

Industry demands serve as the core driving force behind ESP education, while tiered instruction becomes the key approach to enhancing its relevance and effectiveness. ESP teaching tailored to industry needs not only aligns with the essential characteristics of ESP education but also precisely addresses the skill requirements of different job positions and learners' capabilities. This method effectively resolves common issues in traditional ESP teaching, such as the disconnect between theory and practice and the lack of solid foundations for tiered design, thereby providing robust support for cultivating versatile professionals. In future ESP teaching practices, educators should continue to deepen their research on industry demands, integrate industrial trends and technological innovations, and continuously optimize tiered instructional designs and implementation strategies. They should further strengthen school-enterprise collaboration and faculty development, improve resource systems and support mechanisms, and promote the deep integration of big data, artificial intelligence, and other technologies with tiered teaching to enhance precision and intelligence in instruction. Through ongoing reforms and innovations, ESP education can better meet industry needs, cultivate more versatile professionals with strong vocational English application skills across various sectors, and contribute to industrial transformation, upgrading, and economic globalization.

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