

College English Syllabus

(For Students of Arts and Sciences)

College English Syllabus Revision Team

Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press



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College English Syllabus

(For Students of Arts and Sciences
in Institutions of Higher Learning)

I. Target Students

This syllabus is designed for students of arts and sciences in institutions of higher learning. It is expected that before the students are enrolled they will have already acquired a minimum competence in pronunciation and grammar as well as a vocabulary of 1,600 words. Of this number, the students are required to know the correct spelling and the basic meaning and usage of about 1,200 words. The students are also assumed to have received elementary training in the skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking.

II. Objectives

College English aims to develop in students a relatively high level of competence in reading, an intermediate level of competence in listening and a basic competence in writing and speaking. After completion of the course, the students should be able to use

the English they have learned as a means to obtain whatever information they need in their fields of specialization and also as a solid foundation for further improvement of their command of the language.

III. Requirements

College English is divided into two stages: the Foundation Stage and the Specialized Reading Stage. The requirements for these two stages are set as follows:

A. Foundation Stage

This stage is subdivided into 6 progressive bands called College English Bands 1—6 (CEBs1—6). As students admitted to this course may well have different levels of competence in English, requirements for the completion of this stage have been set at two levels. Those who have successfully completed the first four bands are considered to have met the basic requirements, whereas those who have passed CEB 6 are regarded as having met the higher requirements.

1. Basic Requirements

1) *Pronunciation*: The students should be able to read aloud with acceptable pronunciation and intonation.

2) *Vocabulary*: The students should be able to recognize 4,000 words and a certain number of the most frequently used phrases. They should also be able to guess the meaning of unknown words with the help of basic rules of word formation. Of the 4,000 words, they are required to know the correct spelling

and the basic meaning and usage of 2,300.

3) *Grammar*: The students should increase their basic knowledge of grammar with the emphasis on developing their ability to use this knowledge for communicative purposes.

4) *Reading*: The students should be able to employ basic reading skills and read with ease texts on general topics at intermediate level. The reading speed should be no less than 50 wpm. For less difficult texts, with new vocabulary not exceeding 2% of the total number of words, the reading speed should be around 90 wpm with at least 70% accuracy in comprehension.

5) *Listening*: The students should be able to follow classroom instruction in English. In addition, they should be able to understand listening materials on familiar topics presented only once at a speed of 120 wpm. These materials should have very few new words and should be relatively simpler than texts for reading. The students should score no less than 70% accuracy in comprehension.

6) *Writing*: Provided with some guidance, the students should be able to complete in 30 minutes a short composition of 100 — 120 words on a given topic. The composition should be written with coherence and without any serious grammatical mistakes.

7) *Speaking*: The students should be able to carry on daily conversations in simple English and to ask and answer questions based on a given text.

2. Higher Requirements

1) *Vocabulary*: The students should be able to recognize 5,300 words and a certain number of frequently used phrases. Of the given number, they are required to know the correct spelling

and the basic meaning and usage of about 2,800 words.

2) *Reading*: The students should be able to employ relatively advanced reading skills and read with ease more advanced texts on general topics. The reading speed should be no less than 70 wpm. For less difficult texts, with new vocabulary not exceeding 3% of the total number of words, the reading speed should be no less than 120 wpm, with a minimum comprehension of 70%.

3) *Listening*: The students should be able to understand listening materials on familiar topics with a minimum comprehension of 70%. These materials should have very few new words and should be presented only once at a speed of 140 wpm.

4) *Writing*: The students should be able to write coherent short compositions (such as abstracts) of 120—150 words within 30 minutes.

5) *Speaking*: With preparation beforehand, the students should be able to talk briefly about the content of a text or a specific question under discussion. They should, by and large, be able to get their ideas across to the listeners.

B. Specialized Reading Stage

By the end of this stage, the students should have met the following requirements:

1) They should be able to read with ease articles and books relevant to their own fields of specialization.

2) They should be able to read the above mentioned materials at a speed of no less than 70 wpm with at least 70% accuracy in comprehension.

3) The total amount of their reading should be no less than 250,000 words.

IV. Course Structure

A. Foundation Stage

The number of class hours in this stage should be no less than 280 distributed over the first four semesters in college. Each band is equivalent to one semester's work, preferably with 4 class hours per week and at least two hours devoted to homework after each hour in class.

A placement test should be given before the start of the course in order to put the students into suitable bands. In most cases students start from CEB 1 and continue until they complete CEB 4. Those who start from CEB 2 or 3 must continue to study through CEB 5 or 6 respectively.

Students will be reassigned according to their performance to a suitable band at the end of each semester or academic year. Any capable student with good marks may take the test for a higher band than his own. If he passes it, he may skip the band.

(Refer to Table I for full specifications of this stage.)

B. Specialized Reading Stage

To ensure continuity in English learning and to help students do specialized reading in English for gathering information in their own fields, a specialized reading course should be offered from the 5th semester on through the 7th by teachers from rele-

vant disciplines. This will be a compulsory course with two class hours per week.

Specialized reading can also be handled in the following two ways:

1) Using a relevant English textbook in teaching a specialized course.

2) Assigning English reference books for outside reading in teaching a specialized course.

C. Optional Courses

If conditions permit, optional courses at a more advanced level may be offered from the 3rd year on. However, optional courses should by no means replace the specialized reading course.

Some suggested optional courses

Courses	Qualifications of the Participants
College English Band 5	Those who have passed CEB 4
College English Band 6	Those who have passed CEB 5
Selected Readings in different types of literature	Those who have at least passed CEB 4
Translation	ditto

Advanced Listening	ditto
Advanced Conversation	ditto
Writing Skills	ditto

D. College English Preparatory Stage

For those students whose level of English is lower than that required for CEB 1, two College English preparatory bands have been set up. They are called College English Sub-Bands 1 and 2 (CESBs 1—2).

For CESB 1, the students are required to have undergone a preliminary training in pronunciation and grammar and to have a vocabulary of 700 words of which they are required to know the correct spelling and the basic meaning and usage of 500. For CESB 2 the students are required to have a vocabulary of 1,100 words besides having had a preliminary training in pronunciation and grammar. Of the 1,100 words, they should know the correct spelling and the basic meaning and usage of 850.

At key universities those who start from CESB 1 or 2 must continue to study from CEB 1 through CEB 4. As for other universities, it is left to them to decide the minimal requirement for graduation.

(Refer to Table II for full specifications.)

V. Some Guidelines for College English Teaching

A. To lay emphasis on a good foundation of the language

Although the English used in different disciplines has some different characteristics, it has after all the same basic vocabulary, basic grammar, basic functions and notions, which are generally known as the common core. At the Foundation Stage emphasis must be laid on the teaching of the common core so as to help students lay a good foundation for competent reading in their specialities, for the development of their ability to use English as a tool to obtain whatever information they need and for further improvement of their communicative competence both in oral and written English.

With the advance of society, the development of frontier disciplines, the mutual infiltration between natural and social sciences, and the diversity in the sources of technical information, students of liberal arts should know more about natural sciences while students of natural sciences ought to know more about liberal arts and the humanities. This has set higher demands for English teaching and for the setting of students' English upon a more solid foundation. Hence the necessity of preparing a unified syllabus and developing teaching materials designed for students of both natural sciences and liberal arts.

To help students lay a good foundation in the language, the

teaching materials should have a diversity in content and form. Besides choosing stories and articles of general interest and in standard English, efforts should also be made to select as teaching materials readings in various subjects, such as popular science, literature, history, philosophy, economics, etc. Whatever the material, it must be conducive to the building of a solid foundation in the language.

B. To attach importance to the development of communicative competence

Language is a tool for communication, and the ultimate aim of language teaching is to foster students' ability to communicate both orally and through written channels. In the process of teaching, therefore, the teacher should not only impart necessary knowledge about the language but also help the students read extensively and engage in other forms of communication using as a tool the language they have learned and the skills they have acquired. Language teaching should not only aim at the development of the students' linguistic competence but also at the development of their communicative competence. Importance should be attached both to language training at sentence level and to the gradual improvement of students' communicative competence at discourse level.

C. To have a proper balance between reading on the one hand and listening, writing and speaking on the other

The increase in international exchange, the steady rise in students' entry level of English and the gradual popularization of audio-visual aids and materials make it necessary as well as pos-

sible to cultivate students' abilities in listening, writing and speaking besides developing in them a relatively high level of reading ability. As has been proved empirically the development of reading ability is interdependent with that of the other three abilities. To have some training in listening, writing and speaking will surely help improve students' ability to read.

D. To help students acquire fluency in the language

In fostering students' abilities to read, listen, write and speak, attention should be paid not only to accuracy, but also to fluency. Accuracy and fluency are closely related. Desirable fluency cannot be acquired without accuracy; whereas without fluency, communication can hardly be efficient. In teaching, therefore, it is necessary to keep the two in balance. But at present, special importance should be attached to the enhancement of fluency so that students will acquire communicative competence as soon as possible and will further improve their accuracy gradually in the process of communication.

E. To adopt a suitable teaching approach on the basis of actual conditions

Any language teaching approach is the product of certain historical and social circumstances. In teaching college English, strong points should be drawn from different approaches. Different approaches should be adopted for different students, different stages and different purposes. But consideration must first be given to the specific conditions of our country. No matter what approach or method is adopted, it is necessary to bring into full play the initiative of the students and to develop their ability to do in-

dependent work.

F. To create a favourable language environment

Practical experience indicates that the creation of a favourable language environment in which students may have the fullest possible exposure to English, both oral and written, will help strengthen their language feeling and develop their abilities to read, listen, write and speak. Teachers, therefore, should conduct classroom teaching as much in English as possible. While making efforts to improve teaching in class, they should help students read extensively after class. Besides, they should also try their best to create conditions favourable for setting up 'second classrooms', and encourage students to participate in all kinds of extracurricular activities in English.

G. To utilize modern teaching aids

Modern teaching aids, such as tape-recordings, videotapes, television, films and computers, will not only help improve the quality of English teaching, but also partly make up for the shortage of teaching staff. Therefore, they should be popularized and utilized fully. Meanwhile, experiments and research work in teaching English with audio-visual aids and computer technology should be carried further and attention should also be directed to the development of software for teaching purposes.



VI. Testing

1. Language testing should focus on students' basic language skills, and it should aim to be scientific, objective, unified and standardized.

2. Tests should be given at the end of each band of the Foundation Stage. For CEB 4 and CEB 6, unified tests will be given on a nationwide basis in accordance with the requirements laid down in this syllabus. In the students' academic records both the band passed and the score achieved should be entered.

3. At the end of the Specialized Reading Stage, the department concerned must arrange for students to take a test in their specialized reading ability. The scores they achieve are also to be registered in their academic records.

4. For optional courses, tests should also be given and scores registered.