A Study on the Correlation Between Grades of TEM-4 and Scores of College Entrance Examination of English
---- A Case Study of the Latest-three-year graduates, the School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University

Yang Boxiu

The School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University, Jingzhou, Hubei, China, 434020

67744349@qq.com

Abstract

In order to explore the impact of English scores of College Entrance Examination on the TEM-4 grades of English undergraduates, the author takes the latest-three-year 783 graduates (from the year 2017 to 2019) of the School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University as the research objects. The correlation between their English scores of College Entrance Examination and TEM-4 scores was analyzed in this paper. The results show that their academic achievements of undergraduate English learning are not positively related to their scores of College Entrance Examination, but mainly depend on their undergraduate studies. The results will provide a valuable reference for the formulation of English teaching syllabus and teaching reform in the School of Foreign Studies, Yangtze University.

Key Words: Test for English Majors-Band 4 (TEM-4); Scores of College Entrance Examination of English; Correlation analysis; Teaching reform

1. Introduction

TEM-4 is the abbreviation of "Test for English Majors-Band 4". The test covers four aspects of English: listening, speaking, reading and writing. As a national authoritative language test, TEM-4 plays a significant role, serving as one of the means to evaluate the basic educational level of English majors in colleges and universities and one of the important assessment indexes for society and enterprise units to recruit English graduates. As a matter of fact, it has become the most authoritative examination for English Majors in colleges and universities in China. Many schools regard it as an important yardstick to evaluate the teaching qualification and school running level (Sun Youzhong, 1994). In recent years, many schools and employers have attached great importance to the TEM-4 results, and some colleges and universities use those test results as one of the important indicators for bestowing the degree to graduates.

The college entrance examination is a unified national college entrance examination for senior high school students after completing the basic stage of study. It is a selection examination for qualified senior high school graduates or candidates with the same educational background in mainland China. It is one of the most authoritative examinations in China with high reliability and validity. National Matriculation English Test (NMET), as one of the subjects in the college entrance examination, has undoubted reliability and validity, which can accurately reflect the examinees' comprehensive English ability. Therefore, many colleges and

universities in China regard the college entrance examination results as an important indicator for selecting English major students.

To sum up, TEM-4 and NMET have become two proficiency tests with high recognition in China, which have strong reliability and validity in the field of English learning. There is no doubt that there is continuity in students' English learning in middle schools and universities. Some people think that NMET result is the decisive factor of English majors' learning achievement, while others think that the later undergraduate stage is the decisive factor of English learning achievement. So how much relevance is there between senior high school English learning and undergraduate English major learning? Does the result of college entrance examination have any guiding significance to the formulation of the syllabus for English Majors in universities? The answers to these questions have a great influence on the reform and adjustment of English major teaching in colleges and universities, and they are also one of the important reference indexes for formulating the syllabus and teaching plan of English major in our school. Therefore, this study will make a comparative analysis and research on TEM-4 scores and NMET scores of the students in the past three years (Class of 2017-2019), and use the research conclusions to provide valuable reference for the formulation of teaching plans and the direction of teaching reform of English Majors in our university.

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Questions

In order to better understand the impact of NMET scores on English major teaching, and to provide direction for the reforming of English teaching, this study intends to explore the following two questions through data statistics: (1) Is there any correlation between NMET scores and TEM-4 scores? How much relevance is there?（2）What do the NMET scores and TEM-4 scores have on the customization of teaching plan and the direction of teaching reform?

2.2 Research Objects

The objects of this study are 783 English majors from the School of Foreign Languages, Changjiang University, a comprehensive university in China. Among them, there are 296 students from class of 2017, 292 students from class of 2018, and 202 students from class of 2019.

2.3 Research Process

First of all, this study makes a comparative analysis on the pass rate, excellent rate, good rate and fail rate of the two TEM-4 exams taken by 783 students (sophomore and senior) from class of 2017, 2018 and 2019. At the same time, the English performance files of these 783 students are pulled out through the school's admissions office to compare and analyze the excellent, good, pass, and fail rates of English for these three classes of students. The correlation analysis is also conducted on these two sets of data.

3. Research Results

3.1 TEM-4 Scores

According to the data analysis of TEM-4 results in the last three years, the first-time TEM-4 pass rate of each class during their sophomore year are 83.51%, 80.27% and 80.80% respectively; and the total TEM-4 pass rate of each class before graduation is 91.22%, 90.07% and 88.61% respectively. The details are shown in Tables 1 and Table 2. It should be added that: in Table 1 and Table 2, the number of the examinees from the same class who took part in TEM-4 is not the same, because there were a few students in all three classes who did not apply for or take part in the exam due to personal reasons. From Tables 1 and 2, it can be seen that there

were 5 students in class of 2017, 2 students in class of 2018 and 4 students in class of 2019, who did not take part in TEM-4.

Table 1: Comparison between the TEM-4 Pass Rate of Our School and the National English Majors Pass Rate in the Last Free Year

Class / Year	Number of the examinees	Number of the students who passed TEM-4 at the first time	Pass rate of first-time TEM-4	National average pass rate
Class 2017 / Year 2015	291	243	83.51%	51.79%
Class 2018 / Year 2016	294	236	80.27%	49.92%
Class 2019 / Year 2017	198	160	80.80%	48.54%

Table 2: Pass Rate of TEM-4 before Graduation in Our University in the Last Three Years

Class	Number of the examinees	Number of the students who passed TEM-4	TEM-4 pass rate
Class of 2017	296	270	91.22%
Class of 2018	292	263	90.07%
Class of 2019	202	179	88.61%

From the Table 1 above, we can see that the first-time pass rate of our school in the past three year is over 80%, far exceeding the national average pass rate in the same year. However, the first-time pass rate of Class of 2018 and 2019 decreased by about 3% compared with the pass rate of Class of 2017. From the Table 2, the statistical analysis of the two TEM-4 exams data of the English majors in our university in their sophomore and senior years shows that the students of the class of 2017 still have the highest pass rate of Professional English 4, compared with a decrease of 1.15% in the class of 2018 and 2.61% in the class of 2019. What is the reason for the decrease of these percentage points of TEM-4 in 2018 and 2019? Was it due to the teaching of English Majors in the college? Or was it caused by the difference of students' English foundation (NMET score)? In the past three years, there has been a steady growth in the number of English teachers in our school, and there has been no significant change in the syllabus and curriculum design of English major. Moreover, the faculty strength of School of Foreign Languages is in a state of continuous enhancement, and the number of doctoral degree teachers is also increasing year by year. The academic atmosphere in this university has always been good. Therefore, I assume that the previous speculation is unlikely to cause a decline in the pass rate, which may have something to do with the English foundation of the students in the last three year. Based on this, the author will make a comparative analysis of the distribution of TEM-4 scores of the three classes of students and their NMET scores, and explore the relationship between the pass rate of TEM-4 and English foundation through NMET.

3.2 A Comparative Analysis of NMET Scores and TEM-4 Scores

Based on the consideration of the above questions, the author has made a detailed statistical analysis of the students' NMET scores (150 points in total) according to four grades: excellent (above 120 points), good (105-119 points), pass (90-104 points), and fail (below 90 points). Accordingly, this study carries out a detailed statistical analysis on the TEM-4 scores of the English Majors in our university from the last three years according to four grades: excellent (above 80), good (70-79), pass (60-69) and fail (below 60), as shown in Table 3 and Table 4 below. It should be added that the total number of students of the same class in Table 3 and table 4 is not exactly the same as that in Table 2 mentioned above, because a small number of students in all

three class repeat their grades due to suspension of school or failure to graduate, so the total number is inconsistent.

Table 3 An Analysis of the NMET Scores of English Majors in Our University in Last Three Years

Class	Number of examinees	Number of excellent results	Excellent rate	Number of excellent results	Good rate	Number of pass results	Pass rate	Number of fail results	fail rate
2017	291	162	55.67%	111	38.14%	13	4.47%	5	1.71%
2018	292	121	41.44%	153	52.40%	18	6.16%	0	0%
2019	197	146	74.11%	45	22.84%	5	2.54%	1	0.51%

Table 4 An Analysis of TEM-4 Scores of English Majors in Our University before Graduation

Class	Number of examinees	Number of excellent results	Excellent rate	Number of good results	Good rate	Number of pass results	Pass rate	Number of fail results	Fail rate
Class of 2017	291	1	0.34%	84	28.87%	182	62.54%	24	8.25%
Class of 2018	292	10	3.42%	72	24.66%	181	61.99%	29	9.93%
Class of 2019	197	5	2.54%	64	32.49%	105	53.30%	23	11.68%

According to the statistics in Table 3, the excellent rate of the students of the three classes in NMET is very high, especially the excellent rate of the students of Class of 2019, which has reached 74.11%. However, it can be seen from Table 4 that the excellent rate of TEM-4 of these three classes is not high, the excellent rate of Class of 2018 is relatively high, but it only reaches 3.42%. Among the students of the Class of 2019, 74.11% have excellent NMET results, but only 2.54% have got excellent TEM-4 results.

In terms of the NMET good rate and TEM-4 good rate of English Majors in the last three year, Class of 2017 and Class of 2019 are basically the same, both reaching about 30%. However, there is a big different between these two test results in Class of 2018. But relatively speaking, the good rates of the two tests are not inconsistent as the excellent rates of these two. From the table, the rate of students with NMET pass results is only less than 10%, but the rate of students with TEM-4 pass results is more than 50%. In terms of the fail rate, the number of the students who failed in NMET is very low, 0 in 2018, and less than 2% in the other two classes. However, seen from the TEM-4 results, the fail rates of 2017 and 2018 are close to 10%, and the fail rate of 2019 is over 10%.

4. The Conclusion of the Study and Suggestions on the Syllabus and Teaching Reform for English Majors

Based on the statistical analysis of the NMET scores and TEM-4 scores of 783 students in the past three years (2017-2019), the following conclusions have been drawn from this study:

1. The NMET excellent rate of the three classes in our university is very high, but the TEM-4 excellent rate is not high. The excellent rate of NMET is not positively correlated with the TEM-4 excellent rate.

2. Class of 2017 has the highest fail rate in NMET, but the lowest fail rate in TEM-4. It shows that students' learning initiative and motivation are the key factors to learn English well. In the same learning environment, if the students with excellent English foundation displayed in NMET lack learning motivation and initiative to improve themselves, they may only pass or even fail in the exam. English foundation in senior high schools is the basis of English major learning in undergraduate stage, which has certain continuity, but it is not the decisive factor to decide whether students can pass TEM-4 or not.

3. In terms of fail rate of these three classes of students before graduation, it is 8.25% for Class of 2017, 9.93% for Class of 2018 and 11.68% for Class of 2019, showing an increasing trend year by year. There is no decline in students' English foundation shown in the NMET scores (the NMET fail rate is 1.71% for Class of 2017, 0 for Class of 2018, and 0. 51% for Class of 2019). However, the TEM-4 pass rate of the students has a slight downward trend. This data should arouse the reflection and vigilance of our school, university leaders and teachers.

5.The Enlightenment of the Results of the Contrastive Analysis of NMET and TEM-4 on the Direction of English Major Teaching Reform

In view of the above research conclusions, the English teachers in our university should focus on the five basic language area: listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, and be responsible for students' study work. The counselors and teachers should further pay close attention to the construction of study style, urge the students to form good study habits and academic atmosphere, find out the subjective and objective reasons for the slight decline of TEM-4 pass rate year by year, take over the following teaching and management work, help the students learn better and pass the TEM-4. At the same time, the school and university leaders should improve the situation in the following aspects:

(1) The curriculum of English major should be reformed to be more scientific and reasonable and meet the basic requirements of humanistic education.

Reflection on the current "language skills training oriented" concept of foreign language education is needed. For a long time, the concept of "language skills oriented" of foreign language education is the cornerstone of the concept of English major education in colleges and universities in China, and it is also the basis of the concept of English major curriculum. In order to improve the English language skills of English majors, colleges and universities have set up courses such as pronunciation, grammar, listening, oral English, reading, basic English, advanced English and writing. The teaching of language skills runs through four academic years. Although this is conducive to the teaching of language skills, it also exposes more and more problems. For example, English majors have narrow range of knowledge, weak critical thinking ability and low comprehensive quality. Students have little interest in learning, which makes it difficult to motivate students, improve their cognitive level, and help them build a complete knowledge structure. In view of this shortcoming, Professor Chang Junyue of Dalian Foreign Studies University, under the guidance of "CBI content-based" English teaching method, reformed the curriculum system for English majors and achieved good teaching

results (Chang Junyue, 2013). Under the Enlightenment of Professor Chang's teaching reform and curriculum, our school can gradually reform the curriculum of English major, fundamentally change the unscientific parts of English major curriculum, stimulate the students' interest in learning and improve their comprehensive quality.

(2) In line with the needs of the national strategy, we should develop liberal arts and build a talent training system for foreign language majors with contemporary characteristics.

In 2020, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China issued *A Guide to the Teaching of Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Colleges and Universities*, which provides systematic and scientific practical guidance for the construction of foreign language majors and personnel training in colleges and universities from the perspectives of concept, goal, practice and quality. The new *Guide* highlights the fundamental task of "building morality and cultivating talents", adheres to the road of connotative development, takes the overall improvement of personnel training ability as the core, and takes the cultivation of high-quality foreign language professionals and compound foreign language talents with international vision, Chinese characteristics and innovative spirit as the starting point and foothold of the construction of foreign language majors in colleges and universities (English Major Teaching Guide Committee, 2020). The School of Foreign Languages of our university should take the new *Guide* as a compass to accelerate the construction of a foreign language undergraduate talent training system with contemporary characteristics, mold new liberal arts with comprehensive, interdisciplinary and integrative features, construct a world-class foreign language undergraduate talent training system with Chinese characteristics, promote the quality of foreign language education and teaching in universities nationwide in the new era, effectively meet the goal of talent training and the needs of society, and make new contributions to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the construction of the human community.

(3) Schools should attach importance to the development of liberal arts teachers and the teaching of basic subjects.

Our university is a comprehensive university. For a long time, it has focused on the four major disciplines: petroleum, agronomy, medicine and Jingchu culture. It has invested a lot of hardware and software resources in these four disciplines. However, foreign languages, education, Chinese, sports and other disciplines have been in a weak position for a long time. The investment for them in the university is very small, and the teachers and students of foreign languages school have not received enough attention. For example, the construction of students' autonomous learning platform, which has been called out for many years, has not been realized, and the translation training simulation classroom has not been established. As a matter of fact, there are about 300 or 400 freshmen enrolled in Business English, English education, Japanese and other majors in our school. In the past three years, there are more than 370 foreign language graduates in each class, providing a large number of foreign language talents for the society. On the contrary, the current oil industry in China is in doldrums, the output of crude oil is small, and the social demand for petroleum professionals has become saturated. From this point of view, our school leaders should attach importance to foreign languages and other basic disciplines, and strengthen our school's basic disciplines to serve the needs of society.

Bibliography

[1] Sun Youzhong. (1994). Oral Test Shall Be Included in TEM-4 and TEM-8 Soon. *Foreign Languages Community,* (3), 21-23.

[2] Chang Junyue. (2013). An Analysis of the Teaching Effect of the Integrated Curriculum Reform of "Content Language" Teaching for English Majors. *English Knowledge,* (1), 13-18.

[3] English Major Teaching Guide Committee. (2020). *A Guide to the Teaching of Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Colleges and Universities*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

[4] Song Juanli. (2009). A Study on the Correlation between the Scores of NMET and TEM-4. *Journal of Taiyuan City Vocational and Technical College,* (4), 90-92.

Biography

Yang Boxiu, Master of Arts from University of Wisconsin-Platteville, USA, Lecturer of School of Foreign Studies of Yangtze University, Research interests: College English Teaching Method, Second Language Acquisition.