Study on the Cultivation of International High-level Talents for Ph. D. Students of Non-English Majors in C University Based on the Interdiscursive Competence

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Abstract: Economic globalization imposes substantial demands on China's talents, necessitating the possession of international awareness, communication skills, and competitiveness. Ph. D. students, as highly educated individuals, play a pivotal role in developing cross-cultural communication skills and gaining international awareness. Not only must they grasp basic English vocabulary and grammar, but they must also apply their knowledge in practice to enhance competitiveness in their respective fields. However, the current English courses offered at universities fall short of meeting their needs. To address this issue, this study examines the English for International Academic Communication course for non-English major Ph. D. students at C University. Employing questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and class observations, the research explores the teaching approach aimed at cultivating interdiscursive competence in high-level international talents. Additionally, it analyzes the effectiveness of interdiscursivity in English learning and investigates the enhancement of students' interdiscursive competence. Ultimately, the study provides valuable suggestions for educational activities, better catering to the needs of Ph. D. students and preparing them to thrive in a

globally interconnected world.

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1　Introduction

1. 1　Research background

Since the 21st century, cultural globalization has become an integral part of people's lives with economic integration. And with the overall opening up of China since the 1990s, the flow of talent tends to be multi-directional, and the competition has become increasingly fierce. Simultaneously, the internationalization of higher education has prompted a lot of universities and institutions to cultivate international high-level personnel, which reveals the urgency and necessity of cultivating high-level talents to meet the demands of the rapid growth of the national economy. What's more, talents have always served as the core competitiveness of a country's development. Its importance has already been highlighted in Guan-tzu Quan Xiu (1995: 18), "If you want one year of prosperity, then grow grain; if you want ten years of prosperity, then grow trees; if you want one hundred years of prosperity, then you cultivate people", which reveals the urgency and necessity of cultivating high-level talents to meet the demands of the rapid growth of the national economy.

Undoubtedly, the cultivation of Ph. D. students in China holds significant importance in developing international high-level talents. In line with the National Long-term Reform and Development Program (2010−2020), China must further enhance talent management and continually improve the quality of graduate education, particularly in cultivating Ph. D. students. Ph. D. students are highly educated individuals whose proficiency in the English language and skillsplay a crucial role in facilitating international academic exchanges. Therefore, if a Ph. D. student aspires to become a qualified international high-level talent, the first step is to focus on improving their English language proficiency. Proficiency in English undoubtedly contributes to enhancing the overall quality of Ph. D. students. However, English language learning is a complex process influenced by various factors, including students, teachers, and teaching methods. Therefore, the concept of interdiscursive competence has been introduced to explore commonalities among different subjects and how this competence impacts students' learning outcomes. This concept can be traced back to Fairclough (1992).

Subsequently, numerous scholars have engaged in studies related to interdiscursive competence. However, current studies mostly focused on defining or discussing the detailed content of interdiscursivity, without considering its impact on cultivating international high-level talents. Thus, this thesis highlights the role of interdiscursive competence in English learning and proposes reasonable and feasible reforms to the framework of the Doctor English curriculum.

The English curriculum for Ph. D. students at C University is undergoing reforms to better meet the demands of a multi-disciplinary and compound talent-oriented state and society. The English course for Ph. D. students entails a comprehensive range of English language skills, including learning how to deliver an international conference speech and writing an English abstract. This study is centered around the English curriculum reform at C University, using the English for International Academic Communication course for Ph. D. students as an illustrative example. The curriculum places significant emphasis on fostering all skills relevant to academic and professional development.

1. 2   Definition of interdiscursive competence and international high-level talents

1. 2. 1   Interdiscursive competence

The concept of interdiscursivity was first introduced by Fairclough in 1992. According to him, interdiscursivity encompasses three main elements: genre, discourse, and manner. Interdiscursive competence, on the other hand, pertains to presentation skills related to various genres of written and oral materials. This includes the ability to introduce professional backgrounds verbally or in writing, write experimental reports or a thesis, and translate relevant professional literature, among others. It also involves understanding the culture and jargon of relevant professional fields and using jargon appropriately, including discourse rhetoric.

Hyland (2004) further explains that "interdiscursivity" refers to the use of elements in a text that carries institutional and social meanings from other discourses. It is noted that interdiscursive competence and interdisciplinary knowledge exist in both academic English and occupational English (Bhatia, 2004). Additionally, interdiscursivity is described as the use of elements in one discourse and social practice that carry institutional and social meanings from other discourses and social practices (as cited in Ho, V. 2011). These "elements" can be considered resources from other discourses associated with different social practices (as cited in Ho, V. 2011). These resources act as tools with which we achieve various transactional and interpersonal aims, and they can be seen as the text itself or the "style" or "register" (Fairclough 1992: 124−125).

1. 2. 2   International high-level talents

In the 2003 Asian University Presidents Forum (AUPF), international professional talent is defined as individuals who "are capable of mastering more than one foreign language, utilizing tools or channels for transnational exchanges and services, possessing expertise or abilities, and having knowledge of international trade rules in a particular specialty, level, and field. " On the other hand, high-level compound talents refer to individuals who possess both interdisciplinary knowledge and interdiscursive competence (Bhatia, 2004).

In an article written by Yao Congli & Ren Baoping（2008）, international personnelwere defined as individuals who should possess the following seven qualities:

1）Possessing a broad international vision and a strong sense of innovation.

2）Being familiar with professional international knowledge.

3）Being familiar with international practices.

4）Having strong cross-cultural communication skills.

5）Being able to participate in international activities independently.

6）Being capable of using and processing information.

7）Possessing good ideological political quality and healthy psychological diathesis, being able to withstand the impact of multiculturalism, and adhering tenaciously to one's principles while being international（p. 94）

Among all of these qualities, the most basic one is the accumulation of knowledge, which necessitates exploring the influence of interdiscursive competence on the process of knowledge accumulation. The study results will enable students to become more professional, efficient, and purposeful in their pursuits.

2 Literature Review

It is not surprising that interdiscursive competence and the cultivation of international high-level talents have already been the subject of several studies. Some studies aim to provide an overview of interdiscursive competence, while others seek to explore its impact on specific fields, among other objectives. Some studies have been fundamental and beneficial for my research, and I will briefly highlight them, focusing on their contradictions and progressive elements. Additionally, I will explain the rationales behind interdiscursive competence and international high-level talents, providing a comprehensive theoretical foundation for the current study.

2. 1 *Review of research on interdiscursive competence*

2. 1. 1 *Review of research on interdiscursive competence abroad*

Bhatia is renowned for his work in critical genre analysis of professional discourse. He highlighted a challenge faced by English for Special Purposes, which is how to effectively link relevant studies to class teaching. He also raised a question about detecting the relationship between interdiscursive competence and interdisciplinary knowledge through cultivating the former（Bhatia 2004: 203）. Therefore, addressing the complex relationship between interdiscursive competence and various subjects becomes a central issue that college English needs to resolve. Specifically, the cultivation of interdiscursivity is achieved through understanding and accumulating knowledge concerning interdisciplinary discourses. Furthermore, Bhatia（2008: 161）proposed the

idea that "professional genres have often been analyzed in isolation, leaving the study of professional practice almost completely out, except as providing context for specific analyses, thus undermining the role of interdiscursivity in professional genres and practices." In Bhatia's view, there should be a shift towards integrating discursive and professional practices, thereby emphasizing the function of interdiscursivity in critical genre analysis, and I wholeheartedly agree. This perspective serves as a foundation for my study. Throughout my research, interdiscursive competence cannot be treated in isolation. Regrettably, this study only focuses on the importance of interdiscursive competence in genre analysis without recognizing that the ability to use various genres fundamentally manifests interdiscursive competence.

Based on Bhatia (2004), many other scholars have conducted research on interdiscursive competence. For example, in Duff's study in 2004, the influence of students and the environment was taken into account with the use of interdiscursive competence. Duff discussed the discursive hybridity or intertextuality concerning spontaneous references to pop culture in a teacher-led discussion mode, where students come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In his study, he mentioned that the interdiscursive and intertextual means by which pop culture references are woven into ambient texts are associated with the rationale for and probable results of this discursive hybridity for diverse types of learners. Overall, it highlights the great significance of interdiscursive competence in classroom teaching.

To some extent, it seemed that the students were modeling their nuanced intertextual and interdiscursive news and pop culture despite their different backgrounds. By exploring how pop culture contributes to the co-construction of knowledge, social/cultural identities, and participation patterns, such as social/discursive inclusion and exclusion at school, and "unpacking" hybrid texts so teachers, students, and applied linguists can better understand the (socio)linguistic and semiotic forms and functions of texts, we can gain valuable information that the study on interdiscursive competence is hopeful to be useful for class teaching. However, this study was limited to teacher-led discussions, which failed to demonstrate the wide application of interdiscursive competence in English Teaching. In other words, it needs to explore interdiscursivitymore diversely.

Indeed, in a genre analysis ofsyllabi in higher education, the impact of interdiscursivity is presented in another way. Afros & Schryer (2009) emphasize the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of paper-based and web-mediated syllabi and how they are used to promote links between various discourse communities. Their studies align with Hyland (2004), who posits that "intertextuality and interdiscursivity foster initiation of novices into a new world of cultural and social competence as well as reconfirm the instructors' membership in this world" (Afros & Schryer 2009: 225). Although Afros & Schryer (2009) acknowledge that the syllabus is not solely "a document by which faculty members define learning outcomes for students and the methods by which those outcomes will be realized" (Afros & Schryer 2009: 231), but also a site of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, the research still has limitations. Given the severe shortage of talent, it should provide further explanation regarding the influence of interdiscursive competence on teaching. Moreover, it can also attempt to discuss the feasibility of reforming the English teaching framework to help students study more efficiently and purposefully.

In other words, providing detailed methods is more practical than dwelling solely on theories and influences in English Teaching Studies.

According to Forman, R. (2008), who demonstrates the bilingual teaching of English in Thailand with the notions of scaffolding and intertextuality, an intertextual analysis across two languages/cultures can provide a rich picture of the semiotic restructuring enabled by second language development.

Forman, R. (2008) combines the notion of intertextuality in both manifest and interdiscursive forms with that of scaffolding to illuminate teachers' classroom language under specific conditions: it is spoken rather than written, bilingual rather than monolingual, conducted with students learning English as a foreign rather than a second or native language, and located in an Asian rather than a Western setting. What impressed me most is that it tries to find out how the notions of scaffolding and intertextuality may contribute to a fresh understanding of the nature of bilingual pedagogy in EFL contexts. However, there is still a lack of presentation of the detailed role interdiscursive competence plays in English Teaching, which does not contribute to my study on the relationship between the cultivation of interdiscursivity and international high-level talents.

On the other hand, Bosher, S. & Smalkoski, K. (2002), two scholars who did not directly study interdiscursive competence or the cultivation of high-level personnel, did conduct a study that is practical and useful for my research. They presented a new view of English teaching, namely the needs analysis. In my study, I will alsoconsider the needs of students and try to propose a feasible way for English Teaching by combining interdiscursive competence with students' needs. Several procedures, primarily interviews, observations, and questionnaires, were used to gather information about the objective needs of the students, which contributed significantly to the objectiveness of the study.

2.1.2　Review of research on interdiscursive competence at home

At present, many domestic experts haverealized that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) might be the solution to the current situation where college English teaching in universities fails to meet the needs of China's development. While there have been empirical studies on the application of academic English in basic English courses for postgraduates, very few researchers have explored the integration of interdiscursive competence with the cultivation of high-level international talents and its feasibility. Domestic scholars have conducted some studies on this matter, as outlined below.

Duan Ping & Gu Weiping (2007) discussed the common-core concept of English for Special Purposes (ESP) and its practical significance. The common core of ESP refers to the language conventions and communication skills to be followed by all disciplines and occupations in communicating technical information. Applying it to ESP teaching has a significant effect on improving students' English proficiency and is relevant to the orientation of China's college ESP under the new situation. This study aligns with my research due to its interrelationship with interdiscursive competence. However, a notable flaw is the lack of objective data from their questionnaire; all data cited in the study are borrowed from others.

In their study, Li Fagen & Liu Ming (2008) attempted to discuss the application of critical discourse analysis

models to the educational research field, focusing on the central concepts of "interdiscursivity" and "learning." Interdiscursivity, a key concept in critical discourse analysis, was applied to the research of learning and interpreting the shift of situated identity. They also emphasized the importance of considering social factors like culture, economy, and recognition in educational issues. While their study on interdiscursivity and the learning process is relevant to my research, it lacks sufficient description of its manifestation in practical settings.

Furthermore, in a 2011 study, Ho elaborated on the function of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in request e-mail discourse. The study provided a deeper understanding of professional communication by focusing on the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of request e-mails exchanged among a group of professional English language teachers in Hong Kong. Two salient features of interdiscursive elements in constructing the request e-mail discourse were identified: "(1) the discursive blending of institutional, professional, and personal discourses; (2) the use of personal discourse and the mixing of formal and informal registers (humor in particular), served two other pragmatic functions" (Ho, V. 2011: 2546). The study contributes to a deeper understanding of professional communication but also encourages learners of the English language to develop a higher awareness of intertextual and interdiscursive elements in discourse for efficient and purposeful study.

Additionally, another Chinese scholar, Hu Anqi (2011), made some progress in discussing the common-core concept based on previous scholars' studies, such as Dai Weidong (2007), Cai Jigang (2004), and Duan & Gu (2007). Hu (2011) further discussed corresponding elements of teaching construction, including teaching materials, methods, teacher team construction, evaluation systems, and educational environment. However, the study covers too many aspects, which limits its ability to delve deeper and provide more comprehensive information.

2.2   Review of research concerning the cultivation of international high-level talents

As the global economy becomes more export-oriented, the demand for international professionals from countries around the world is increasing rapidly. Consequently, domestic higher education institutions are actively exploring the reform and practice of international professional training, resulting in extensive research and practical outcomes.

Pei Wenying (2007) focused on the development of international talent through international education and conducted special studies on international education models. Pei's research concluded that the cultivation of international high-level talents can be achieved through various training modes, such as course-based training, dual-degree programs, credit recognition models for exchange students, and innovative talent training modes. Although Pei's (2007) research may seem unrelated to the present study, its insights into the importance of cultivating international high-level talents should not be overlooked.

Lu Jiangbin & Li Xiaoshu (2009) advocated introducing social mechanisms to promote studying abroad for students engaged in international professional training. They also emphasized the need to expand the scale of students studying abroad and strengthen the management of overseas teaching staff. Furthermore, Lu Jiangbin &

Li Xiaoshu (2009) proposed that cultivating international high-level talents could be realized by optimizing the curriculum, internationalizing curriculum contents, and building an international faculty. Therefore, their study partly aligns with the present study, which emphasizes the significance of teaching contents and methods in cultivating high-level international personnel, with interdiscursivity often playing a role in these aspects.

Additionally, there are other studies seemingly unrelated to the present study subject. For instance, some studies have focused on curriculum design for doctoral programs. For example, Qin Dihui (1998) briefly introduced this topic by using the real situation at Xidian University as an example in 1998. However, these early studies failed to delve into the impact of interdiscursive competence on curriculum design.

In summary, there is a growing body of evidence supporting the active role of interdiscursive competence. However, no supporting data on its influence on the cultivation of international high-level talents has been found as yet. In the present study, the effect of interdiscursive competence on English learning and the development of international top-notch personnel was examined.

3　Methodology

3.1　Research method

This study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the role of interdiscursive competence in the development of Ph. D. students and to assess its effectiveness. The aim is to provide practical advice for teaching styles and English education reform at C University, with the goal of better meeting the needs for nurturing international high-level personnel.

In the quantitative research phase, questionnaires are administered to assess the basic discourse competence of students and the changes in their mastery of interdiscursivity before and after the course. The qualitative research involves classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, providing detailed information from both teachers and students. These interviews delve into the respective roles played by teachers and students in fostering interdiscursive competence. Additionally, the interviews allow participants to express their subjective feelings towards the course, expectations of English educational activities, and their experiences with interdiscursive competence in English learning.

Methodological triangulation is employed in this study to ensure the validity of conclusions from each method. This approach establishes consistency in the results obtained and addresses the following research questions: (1) What is the current status of interdiscursive competence among Ph. D. students of non-English majors after completing this English course? (2) In what ways does interdiscursive competence manifest in this English course? (3) What is the impact of interdiscursive competence on the cultivation of international high-level talents?
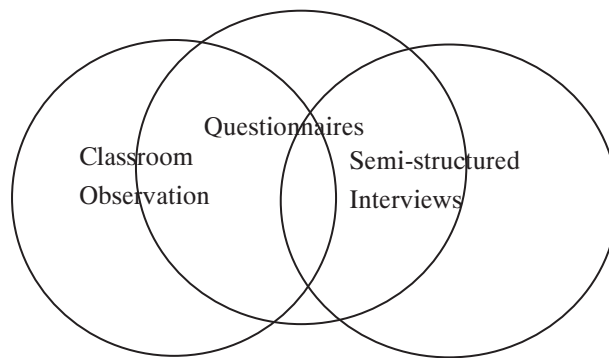
**Figure 3.1   Triangulation of Ph. D. Students' Survey Questionnaires, Semi-structured Interviews,
and Classroom Observations.**

3.2   Participants

In general, the subjects of this study are Ph. D. students in Grade 2013 from various colleges within C University, randomly selected. All of them are currently attending the compulsory basic English course designed specifically for Ph. D. students, which is named "English for International Academic Communication."

3.2.1   Participants of questionnaires

A total of 216 students are involved in this investigation. These students came from 5 different classes, but they all attended the same course, namely "English for International Academic Communication."

3.2.2   Participants of classroom observations

The researcher participated in 1 class to conduct classroom observations. This class consisted of 32 students from 11 different specialties. It is not surprising that students from the same department may have diverse majors and specialties. Many of these students expressed their strong desire to improve their English proficiency. However, it was noticeable that the average age of these Ph. D. students was quite high, ranging between 25 to 40 years old. Presumably, these older students were striving to keep pace with the evolving demands of the job market by enhancing their English skills.

While most of them had a solid grasp of English related to their respective professions, they faced challenges in expressing themselves clearly when explaining complex issues, personal feelings, and opinions, providing detailed event description, or delivering academic presentations. Nevertheless, there were certainly some outstanding students who excelled in acquiring English proficiency.

3.2.3   Participants of semi-structured interviews

As for the semi-structured interviews, six students were interviewed for their different mastery of English knowledge and different performance in class. The six students were also divided into three groups according to their daily classroom performance. In this way, all levels of students' conditions were considered in this study.

3.3   Instruments

Three main instruments were employed in the present study: questionnaires, classroom observation, and

semi-structured interviews. Two questionnaires （Appendix A and B） were given before and after class, respectively.

3.3.1 Questionnaires

As mentioned earlier, two questionnaires were administered in this study. The first questionnaire was distributed before the class, and the second one was given after the class. Some of the question types in these questionnaires were borrowed from the questionnaire designed by the Graduate English Teaching and Research Section of the School of Foreign Languages and Cultures at C University. The response rate was 92.5%, with 200 questionnaires being available for analysis. Both questionnaires aimed to assess the students' basic discourse competence, and their ability to use various genres, and gather preliminary feedback on teachers and curriculum design.

The content of both questionnaires largely overlapped and was combined to determine the changes in students' mastery of interdiscursivity before and after the class. In addition to basic information, the questionnaires included other question types, such as the importance of publishing papers in international journals, the capability of using different genres, and the required discourse competence. Each section contained several detailed items related to the aspects mentioned earlier, and students were asked to rate their acceptability for each item.

In the closing section of the questionnaire, students wereallowed to provide suggestions regarding the course, such as advice on teaching style, methods, and content. The design of these questions and their sequence aimed to ensure that students' opinions were collected objectively, facilitating a general analysis of their improvement in interdiscursive competence.

The main content of the questionnaires was based on the theory of genre competence of interdiscursive competence.

1） A brief introduction to this course, namely *English for International Academic Communication*;

2） How to write an abstract;

3） How to write an introduction;

4） How to write a literature review;

5） How to write the research methods;

6） the skills of describing figures;

7） How to write results and discussion section;

8） How to effectively make presentations;

9） How to write the reference;

10） How to develop the speech text;

11） How to conclude your speech;

12） The skills of asking questions and answers;

13） How to evaluate the effectiveness of a presentation;

14）How to rehearse and perfect the presentation;

15）The skills concerning decision-making;

16）How to begin a speech;

17）Organizing an International Academic Conference;

18）The skills of charing conferences;

3.3.2　*Classroom observation*

Classroom observation is a qualitative method used to measure classroom behaviors through direct observations. This method specifies both the events or behaviors to be observed and how they are to be recorded. For this study, the researcher selected one class for Ph. D. students majoring in non-English disciplines as the target of classroom observation. To obtain reliable primary data, the researcher attended every class to record the operational status of the class and conduct further analysis and study of the collected data. The entire observation process was conducted in the natural state of classroom activities, encouraging the observer to be immersed in the situation.

The observation focused not only on the students' classroom learning process and the effectiveness of interdiscursive competence in English learning but also on the reflection of educational philosophy and teaching behavior. This reflection aimed to identify any deficiencies and contribute to the final results of the study.

The main purposes of this study method are to describe general instructional practices, investigate instructional inequities among different groups of students during the English learning process, and provide feedback to improve teachers' classroom instruction based on individual classroom or school profiles.

3.3.3　*Semi-structured interviews*

The semi-structured interviews were designed for both teachers and students, serving as a subsidiary component of the study. During these interviews, the researcher assigned several topics to explore the participants' intuitive feelings about the class, their expectations of English educational activities, and their performance in interdiscursive competence in English learning. The focus of these interviews was to gather in-depth insights, and the researcher listed related topics in advance while keeping the interview process open-ended. This approach allowed for flexible adjustments to the order of questions based on the participants' responses.

The topics presented in the interviews closely centered on the research questions and were subsequently analyzed through content analysis. Throughout the interviews, the researcher took notes, and special attention was given to developing credibility with the interviewees. However, no guidance or hints were provided to influence their answers.

The interviews were categorized into two types: one for teachers and the other for students, and each interview was limited to 30 minutes. In the initial phase of the interviews, the teacher of the class was asked to discuss the overall teaching objectives, teaching content, and the established teaching method. The teacher also expressed the challenges faced during the teaching process. Based on the interview transcriptions, it was observed

that the main objective of the course was to connect students' English ability with their specialized knowledge, whether in oral or written aspects. The teacher emphasized that effective class teaching should be responsive to students' developmental and learning needs.

Regarding the student interviews, participants were divided into three groups based on their class performance. Students in Group A lacked basic English knowledge, students in Group B could use English in academic and professional situations, but not very fluently, and students in Group C demonstrated advanced English proficiency. The topics covered their understanding of international high-level talents and interdiscursive competence, their expectations of teaching methods to foster English comprehensive abilities, and their attitudes towards the relationship between English learning and future career development. Additionally, students were asked to conduct self-evaluations, identifying areas of improvement and directions for further English learning.

4   Results and Discussion

After providing an overall view of the detailed contents of the methodology in the present study, the results and discussion, which are pivotal to the entire study, will be presented. This section aims to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaires, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews and to discuss the findings. By doing so, it will lay the foundation for the final findings of the study and explore its implications.

4. 1   Results description

4. 1. 1   The results of the questionnaires

Altogether, a total of 216 questionnaires were distributed. The response rate was 92. 5%, and 200 questionnaires were returned and available for analysis. The results from the two questionnaires provide an overall view of the students' genre competence and discourse competence. From a macroscopic perspective, in the basic information section, we can observe that 97% of Ph. D. students were requested by their supervisors to publish their theses in international journals, while only 26% have achieved this goal. The reasons for publications vary. Figure 4. 2 provides a detailed presentation of the motives for the 26% of students who published their theses in international journals under the supervision of their advisors.

As mentioned before, the second questionnaire was designed with almost the same question types as the first one for Ph. D. students, aiming to discover the changes that occurred in the discourse competence and genre competence of students after one term of study. The only difference between the two questionnaires was the timing of their distribution. Students were asked to select the item corresponding to their practical learning conditions, indicating whether they had observed any improvement in their English skills. The scoring scale ranged from 1 to 5, with 5 representing the highest score and 1 the lowest, in descending order of acceptability. The detailed data processed from the two questionnaires can be seen in Table 4. 1 and Table 4. 2, presented below. An analysis of variance was successfully conducted using data from the first and second questionnaires,
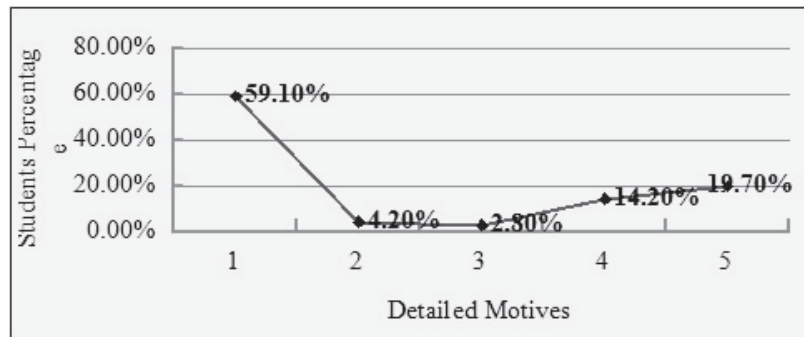
Notes:

1———Graduation Requirements;

2———Supervisor's Requirements;

3———Project Task;

4———Higher Profession Approbation Degree;

5———Self-improvement and Optimization.

Figure 4.2　Ph. D. Students' Motives for Publishing A Thesis in International Journals

and the degree of each item was used to interpret the effects.

Table 4.1　The Genre Competence Ph. D. Students Possessed Before and After

the *English for International Academic Communication* Course

Items of genre competence	Average Score		Students' percentage of more than 3 scores	
	Before class	After class	Before class	After class
The ability to writean abstract and introduction for your thesis in English	3. 52	4. 08	49%	82. 5%
The ability to read foreign journals related to your research and give a literature review at home and abroad	3. 61	4. 09	56. 5%	84. 5%
The ability to write research methods and data analyses in English	3. 27	3. 89	41%	72. 5%
The ability to conduct results analysis	3. 28	3. 68	41%	60%
The ability to discuss research findings and write the research conclusion	3. 11	3. 56	39. 5%	63%
The ability to write the references in English	3. 78	4. 15	65%	82%
The ability to email foreign journal editors in English	3. 15	3. 64	38%	57%

Table 4.1 presents a comparison between the first questionnaire, delivered at the beginning of the class, and the second questionnaire, delivered at the end of the class, regarding the basic genre competence of students. The genre competence part in Table 4.1 consists of 7 conditions for each questionnaire. All items listed are positively correlated, suggesting that the performance of genre competence was not due to a trade-off but rather an interaction. The researcher calculated the average score based on the acceptability of the item, with 5 being the

highest score and 1 the lowest. The data presented in the right column of Table 4. 1 refer to the percentage of students who selected 4 and 5 in the questionnaire, indicating the proportion of Ph. D. students who have a better mastery of basic English knowledge. Generally, a higher percentage indicates better performance of students during English learning. The analytical procedures used for genre competence are also applicable to the analysis of discourse competence presented below.

Table 4. 2   The Discourse Competence Ph. D. Students Possessed Before and After
the *English for International Academic Communication* Course

Items of Discourse Competence	Average Score		Students' percentage of more than 3 scores	
	Before class	After class	Before class	After class
The ability to communicate with colleagues in English	2. 66	3. 35	22%	46%
The ability to conduct English telephone communication	2. 60	3. 40	16%	20. 5%
The ability to make English introductions	3. 23	3. 69	22%	64. 5%
The ability to give an oral report	2. 8	3. 51	27%	54%
The ability to master various skills of participating in international conferences	2. 73	3. 50	26. 3%	53. 7%

Similarly, Table 4. 2shows the contrast between the first questionnaire and the second questionnaire concerning the basic discourse competence students possessed. The discourse competence part presented in Table 4. 2 contains 5 conditions for each questionnaire. Meanwhile, all items listed are positively correlated. Table 4. 2 directly shows that Ph. D. students were relatively not so capable of mastering of discourse competence. The proportion of Ph. D. students who have a better mastering of these basic English knowledge is still low after class. Therefore, the cultivation of students' discourse competence deserves greater focus.

4. 1. 2   The results of classroom observation

Generally, data collected from observational research methods focus on the frequency and duration of specific behaviors or types of behavior that occur in the classroom. The preliminary results of this study show the positive role of interdiscursive competence in cultivating the comprehensive quality of students, especially in terms of their English skills, while also revealing some inadequacies. As Tom Good (2000: 337) states in his work "Looking in Classrooms," observational research aims to describe what occurs in classrooms to understand the complex practical issues that educators face. The classroom observation successfully provides the researcher with a general overview of the mastering of interdiscursive competence and its influence on the overall improvement of students. As shown below, there is a brief introduction to the major distribution of the current observed object, a class for Ph. D. students of non-English majors. By combining the information presented in Table 4. 3 with the practical teaching content of this course, it becomes evident that although students in this class come from different majors, there is an existence of interdiscursivity and interdisciplinary knowledge. This phenomenon will be analyzed in detail in the discussion part.

Table 4. 3   The Distribution of Majors in the ClassBeing Observed

Major	Statistics	Instrument Science and Technology	Condensed Matter Physics	Biomedical Electronics and Information Technology	Mathematics	Operational Research and Cybernetics
Number	2	1	2	1	5	1
Major	Biology	Physics	Chemical Engineering and Technology	Software Engineering	Pharmaceutical Chemistry	Mineral Engineering
Number	2	6	5	2	3	2

Overall, in line with the results obtained from the classroom observation, the English for International Academic Communication course attached great importance to building discourse competence and genre competence. Its main objective was to enhance students' comprehensive English skills, including the ability to introduce professional background in verbal or written form, write experimental reports or papers in English, and translate relevant professional literature, among others. Importantly, the course emphasized the practical application of this knowledge to students' future occupations.

The results collected from the classroom observation can be categorized into three aspects: teaching content, teaching methods, and teaching effects. Firstly, teaching content was found to be rich and diverse, in contrast to traditional English Language Foundation Courses that often exhibit monotony and inflexibility. Unlike the traditional approach, which emphasizes basic knowledge and training in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating, the English for International Academic Communication course is designed based on the specific needs of students in their future workplaces.

As for teaching methods, the teacher who plays a leading role, typically centers the instruction around the assignment or task, responds to students' signals, communicates the task's procedures, and checks students' work to identify areas for improvement. The teacher is also discerning in applying rewards and punishments to guide students effectively. An analysis of attention allocation during English teaching was conducted using time sampling, observing the teacher's attention allocation every 5 seconds in a 45-minute class. The total frequency of the teacher's attention allocation was recorded as 540.

Table 4. 4   Teachers' Attention Allocation in English Teaching

The Location of Teaches' Attention in English Teaching	Frequency	Percentage
All students in the class	135	25%
Students in the front row of the class	108	20%
Students in the middle row of the class	94	17. 4%
Students in the back row of the class	66	12. 2%
Students who are answering questions	79	14. 7%
Students who are making a presentation	36	6. 7%
Students who are absent-minded	22	4%

Table 4. 4 directly illustrates the teacher's interaction with students during class teaching. All the teaching contents were primarily presented in the form of PowerPoint (PPT) slides. Additionally, the teacher would provide a sample essay for the corresponding content and allocate a certain amount of time for students to practice writing and speaking in class, which partially actualizes the combination of student-centered and teacher-led teaching methods.

In terms of teaching effects, although students were typically engaged in class activities, they often demonstrated a lack of active interaction with both their teacher and other students. Most students were generally passive in the classroom, often just listening to or watching the teacher, and there were some students who appeared absent-minded during class.

4. 1. 3 The results of semi-structured interviews

As mentioned before, interviews with students were an additional aspect of the whole study, and the conversations were recorded in note form by the researcher. The interviews were conducted with students from three different groups based on their class performance:

Group A: Students No. 1 and No. 2, who lack basic English knowledge.

Group B: Students No. 3 and No. 4, who could use English in academic and professional situations but not very fluently.

Group C: Students No. 5 and No. 6, who coulduse English skillfully.

In Table 4. 5, the researcher presents the interview contents based on the notes recorded during the interviews with the six students.

Table 4. 5　Contents of the Interview with the Participants

Interview Themes	Contents of the Interviewwith the six students
Considerations of the meaning of this course	Touching on your reflections on the role of this course in the improvement of your English skills, and listing the corresponding English skills you possessed which have got improvement.
	Talking about the practicability of this course concerning its relevance to your future career development.
Suggestions for this course	Talking about your ideas on the teacher of this course.
	Talking about your acceptability to the teaching methods of this course and your expectations on it.

Among thesix students being interviewed, five students have but a hazy understanding of the qualified international top-notch personnel. Fortunately, all of them recognize the significance of learning English well and know that a good command of various English skills will make them more competitive than others.

As for the 2nd and 3rd interview themes, according to the notes, generally, this course is widely accepted by students, although there are still deficiencies. This can be verified by the examples shown below.

I have learned a lot of useful things about the workplace through this course. For example, I find iteasier

to write an English thesis concerning my major under the guidance of my teacher, although sometimes I still run into a stone wall. The research method and figures description are not so complicated for me. There is no doubt that my attending the English for International Academic Communication course will contribute to my comprehensive development. And any improvement I got through learning various English skills may be crucial to the competition, whether in the workplace or in academic development. I learned from this course that we must hang in whenever we come across difficulties. And only by hard work can one succeed. (Personal communication, Student No. 1, May 7, 2014)

Student No. 2 expressed the same idea as shown below.

"I have enhanced my ability to write abstracts. The course content is very practical and abundant, such as the introduction to International Conference, which has been trained in the simulation scenario. " (Personal communication, Student No. 2, May 7, 2014)

Student No. 3 (personal communication, May 7, 2014) expressed that she could handle English presentations more fluently and freely, which greatly benefited her during her internship experience. Both Students No. 5 and No. 6 (personal communication, May 7, 2014), who have excellent English skills, strongly agreed about the active role of this course in their career development. In contrast to high school, Student No. 1 (personal communication, May 7, 2014) found the mode of class attendance to be novel and unique. Several students expressed particular satisfaction with the writing style of abstracts and the simulation of an international academic conference process. Student No. 3 (personal communication, May 7, 2014) considered the course to be rich in content, providing them with more opportunities to learn various applied English skills. However, there are still some deficiencies in the course. Although English learning requires students to speak actively, not all students participate as expected during class interactive sessions. Moreover, there are differences among students, similar to the experiences of the six students being interviewed. Therefore, the teaching content should be more inclusive and cater to a broader range of students. Students believed that a layered teaching approach would be more effective and efficient.

For the interviews with teachers, they mainly discussed their reflections on teaching attitudes, opinions on the English Curriculum Reform, academic awareness, and reflective teaching. These insights provided the study with additional supporting evidence.

4.2   Discussion

4.2.1   The status quo of interdiscursive competence Ph.D. students of non-English majors possessed after class

Generally, there is a compelling necessity and utmost importance for Ph.D. students to acquire proficient English skills. The data gathered from the first questionnaire demonstrates that studying English is indispensable

for Ph. D. students of non-English majors. Considering the practical context of non-English major Ph. D. students, most of them are required to read and write an English thesis. The results of the second questionnaire reinforce and complement the findings of the first questionnaire, revealing students' inadequacy in various English skills, including genre competence and interdiscursive competence.

Notably, there is a distinct advantage in mastering English skills for Ph. D. students, particularly for those who need to publish academic theses in International Journals. According to the data processed from questionnaires, 97% of students were urged by their supervisors to publish their theses in such journals. Figure 4. 2 provides evidence that 59. 1% of students consider publishing a thesis in International Journals as a graduation requirement, and 14. 2% believe that it would enhance their professional recognition. Only 19. 7% of students indicated that publishing in such journals is for self-improvement and optimization. From this perspective, regardless of the specific objective of publishing in International Journals, English learning holds significant value for Ph. D. students.

Additionally, most non-English major Ph. D. students lack systematic English knowledge and are substantially influenced by traditional English teaching methods. Their general listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating skills require enhancement (Liang, Qu, & He, 2008). Therefore, specialized training in English skills relevant to their academic fields is imperative for their overall academic progress.

Moreover, the average scores in Tables 4. 1 and 4. 2 also indicate that students' interdiscursive competencies need further improvement, which can be achieved through systematic English learning. Notably, all items of discourse competence after the class still receive average scores below 4, with the average score before class even lower. In the genre competence part after the class, students who can write abstracts and introductions in English, read foreign journals related to research, give literature reviews at home and abroad, and write English references, receive high scores above 4, and no less than 80% of students consider these aspects deserving of patience and attention, emphasizing their importance in further learning. In contrast, in the discourse competence part after the class, the highest average score is 3. 69, which pertains to the ability to make English introductions. Other items, such as the ability to conduct English telephone communication, communicate with colleagues in English, master various skills of participating in international conferences, and give an oral report, receive relatively low scores, highlighting the urgency for Ph. D. students to enhance their English skills.

The differences between the data from the first questionnaire and the data from the second questionnaire further confirm the importance of learning English well, despite the small-scale improvement in students' genre competence and discourse competence. English learning not only offers advantages for Ph. D. students but also addresses their study needs. Genre competence and discourse competence show high expectations and significant improvement after the class, suggesting that the role of English learning is generally positive, with no added disadvantage in learning various English skills.

In conclusion, it is crucial to focus on further enhancing interdiscursivity in the long run. WhileTables 4. 1 and 4. 2 indicate some improvement in genre competence and discourse competence, the percentage of students

who have a good command of various English skills remains relatively low. According to the questionnaire data, by the end of this class, only 71. 6% of students have generally mastered all items of genre competence, and only 47. 7% of students have generally mastered all items of discourse competence. Therefore, improving students' English skills is essential for qualifying them as international high-level talents and making valuable contributions to the development of the national economy.

4. 2. 2   Ways of the interdiscursive competence Ph. D. students obtained

Undoubtedly, after a semester of study, Ph. D. students who attended the English for International Academic Communication course have acquired various English skills that are not only useful for their academic development but also beneficial for their professional growth. These diverse English abilities reflect their interdiscursive competence, which, as defined by Fairclough (1992), comprises genre, discourse, and manner, but can be further generalized into three aspects: genre competence, text competence, and social competence (Bhatia, 2004). Genre competence refers to students' ability to master all parts of an academic thesis, such as the introduction and conclusion. Text competence involves understanding discourse from the text itself, context, and pragmatic characteristics. Social competence, on the other hand, entails the ability to effectively communicate with others, such as during participation in international conferences. In the observed English for International Academic Communication class, the main focus of interdiscursive competence is on genre competence and social competence.

Regarding genre competence, the observed class is a typical example of how genre competence is nurtured during the English learning process. The course is designed to align with the needs of the state and society, combiningsituations, content, and projects. Despite their diverse English proficiency and professional knowledge, the 32 students in the class share the common goal of linking English skills learned in class with practical career development. The teaching content, rich in variety, centers on academic writing. While students come from different majors, they are required to follow the same rules regarding the details of academic writing. Although there are differences in the content of academic theses across different majors, the general structure for writing each part remains consistent. For instance, the students are guided on how to write an abstract, with a maximum number of words depending on the target journal for publication. They are also provided with information elements that constitute a complete abstract. The results of Table 4. 1 indicate that students' performance in genre competence has generally improved, with 84. 5% of Ph. D. students demonstrating better abilities in reading foreign journals related to research and giving literature reviews at home and abroad. Moreover, 33. 5% of Ph. D. students have significantly enhanced their ability to write abstracts and introductions for their theses in English.

Regarding social competence, classroom observation provides evidence of interdiscursive competence. As Bhatia (2004) suggested, interdiscursive competence and interdisciplinary knowledge are present in both academic and occupational English. During the class, students are required to give presentations on topics of their choice, coinciding with their professional knowledge. Other students engage in questioning and interaction during these presentations. This teaching method not only stimulates students' enthusiasm in class and broadens their

knowledge through interaction but also improves their presentation and communication skills. Consequently, after completing the course, most students can easily communicate with each other despite their different majors. The data in Table 4.2 also shows a significant increase, from 26.3% to 53.7%, in the proportion of Ph. D. students' ability to master various skills required for participating in international conferences. These facts demonstrate the tangible presence of interdiscursivity in English learning.

4.2.3   The effect of interdiscursive competence on the cultivation of international talents

Firstly, the data processed from the two questionnaires indicate a significant improvement in students' genre competence and discourse competence, demonstrating that their English skills in these two categories have been well practiced and honed during the process of English learning. As a result, this progress lays the foundation for Ph. D. students to become qualified international high-level talents. According to Xu (2001), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization emphasizes the importance of higher education's alignment with social issues and the labor community, aiming to meet the long-term goals and needs of the community. This involves providing a wide range of education with common characteristics and implementing vocational education to cultivate people's adaptability under various reform conditions. Consequently, Ph. D. students' improvement in English ability, i.e., interdiscursive competence, contributes to their future development.

Evidence can be further worked out through the specific statistics from questionnaires. As shown in Table 4. 1 and Table 4. 2, there is also feedback from Ph. D. students after this *English for International Academic Communication* course. In Table 4. 1, where items concerning genre competence after class are listed, each item gets an average score of more than 3. 5, which is 0. 48 higher than the corresponding genre competence before class in mean value. And in Table 4. 2, where items regarding discourse competence after class are listed, each item gets an average score of more than 3. 4, also 0. 69 higher than the corresponding data before class in mean value. The contrast between the results of the first questionnaire and the second one shows that Ph. D. students generally got improved through the learning of this class. More specifically, in the discourse competence part, the ability to communicate with colleagues in English only gets an improvement of 0. 8 after this class in average scores, and only 4. 5% more students think that they have bettered a lot in this item. It shows that this course is not omnipotent for the improvement of students' English knowledge. While prominently, the ability to make English introductions gets an improvement of 0. 46 after this class in average scores, and 42. 5% more students think that they have enhanced a lot in this item. The teaching effects reflected here are the general goals of this course, which are to enhance the comprehensive quality of students and link their English abilities with professional development. In the discourse competence section, the ability of Ph. D. students to make oral English introductions is only 0. 46 higher than the average score got from the first questionnaire, while the ability to master various skills by participating in international conferences is 0. 77 higher than the primary average score. The items listed in this part are all beneficial to the cultivation of interdiscursive competence for Ph. D. students. And the general results show that the course lays more emphasis on the practicability in cultivating international high-level personnel, especially the cultivation of knowledge concerning professional development. The data for

doctors' ability to master various skills by taking part in international conferences just illustrates this point. In sum, from the two questionnaires, the researcher found that students' genre competence and discourse competence generally improved a lot, but the overall level of students' discourse competence should be further elevated to improve their comprehensive qualities.

Additionally, the classroom observation enabled the researcher to discover that the cultivation of students' interdiscursive competence in this class provides a range of opportunities for them to improve their integrated abilities, making them more competent and qualified for international top-notch talents. The English for International Occupational Purposes course's content includes the knowledge and skills needed by Ph. D. students after graduation (See Table 4. 1 and 4. 2). Huang Ying, Lv Hongfen & Fu Changluan (2012) emphasized the importance of training international high-level students, stating that "in the report 'Coping with the shortage of China's looming talent,' the world-famous management consultancy McKinsey said that, over the next decade, China will need 75, 000 professional managers with international experience." This English class focuses on students as the main participants in instructional activities, allowing them to learn and improve through practice. Differing from traditional basic English, which not only fails to meet the strategic planning of national economic development but also cannot fulfill the demand for high-level talents in society, this course greatly contributes to students' career development. By actively engaging in using and practicing the English abilities learned from the course, students can familiarize themselves with relevant language skills, jargon, and socio-cultural qualities.

Furthermore, based on semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, the researcher found that the English for International Academic Communication course focuses on cultivating students' interdiscursive competence by bridging their academic English abilities with knowledge relevant to their future occupations. The teacher's interview revealed that the overall objective of this course is to cultivate students' text competence, genre competence, and discourse competence, which are essential in the workplace and the general socio-cultural context. In this learning environment, students can apply what they have learned in classto practice, providing a strong foundation for future development. The interviews with six students also highlighted the active role of interdiscursivity in making students more competent. For instance, Student No. 2 praised the practical and abundant course content, including training in the simulation scenario of International Conferences. Student No. 3 expressed that the skills learned in the course were valuable for her internship experience. Additionally, students No. 5 and No. 6 already possess good English skills and acknowledged the course's significant impact on their career development. It's evident that through English learning, students improve their genre competence and discourse competence, making them gradually qualified for international high-level roles, fulfilling the growing demands of the nation and society.

5   Conclusion

Based on the English curriculum reform in C University and aligned with the demand for international high-

level talents in the national economic development, this study investigates the overall performance of interdiscursive competence in students' practical English study and analyzes its effectiveness in enhancing the comprehensive quality of Ph. D. students. In conclusion, the English for International Academic Communication course is deemed successful in cultivating interdiscursive competence, as it encompasses valuable English abilities relevant to professional development and employs innovative teaching content and methods that cater to students' practical needs.

5.1　Main findings

After completing the course, the first research question addresses the overall state of interdiscursive competence among non-English major Ph. D. students. Interdiscursivity is examined through the evaluation of genre competence and discourse competence. On average, 71.6% of students reported that they had acquired proficiency in all the items listed in the genre competence section, while only 47.7% of students felt the same regarding the discourse competence section. Notably, 84.5% of students displayed a higher command of reading foreign journals and providing literature reviews compared to other abilities. The statistics indicate that most students have improved their English abilities during the course, but there is still room for further development in discourse competence.

The second research question delved into the performance of interdiscursive competence in the English course. Classroom observation revealed that despite the diverse academic backgrounds and English proficiency levels of the 32 students, they worked together with a common goal of linking English skills to practical career development and adhered to the same rules in thesis writing. Although students' academic theses differed in content based on their majors, the overall structure for writing each part remained consistent. This English for International Academic Communication course prioritizes student-centered teaching and effectively promotes interdiscursive competence through various approaches.

The third research question examined the impact of interdiscursive competence on cultivating international high-level talents. A comparison between the statistics from the first and second questionnaires revealed that Ph. D. students have generally improved their genre competence and discourse competence. However, there is still a need to enhance general English proficiency and overall quality to make students more qualified as international top-notch professionals. More than 54.64% of students reported significant improvements in genre competence, particularly in literature review skills, and over 25% noted enhancements in discourse competence, especially in making oral English introductions. The cultivation of high-level international talents is crucial for the macroeconomic development of the nation, as emphasized by Xu (2001), who views higher education and personnel training, particularly the training of high-quality personnel, as strategic resources for a country. The questionnaire data highlights the course's focus on cultivating practical abilities for international high-level personnel, particularly in the context of professional development. The classroom observation further supports the notion that cultivating interdiscursive competence in this class provides students with ample opportunities to

enhance their integrated abilities, making them more competent and qualified for international high-level roles. Studentscan apply what they have learned in practice, laying the groundwork for their future development.

5.2 Implications

The present study investigates the effectiveness of interdiscursive competence in cultivating international high-level talents. The main findings indicate that the enhancement of interdiscursive competence positively impacts the development of both Ph. D. students' English abilities and professional skills, underscoring the importance of promoting interdiscursive competence in English teaching and across various subjects. However, the limitations of nurturing interdiscursive competence should not be ignored. On the whole, there are some suggestions for classroom teaching and teaching content, especially the former one.

Concerning classroom teaching, firstly, while acknowledging the necessity of a certain degree of control over classroom activities, teachers should allocate more class time for Ph. D. students to practice the English skills learned in class and enhance the learner-centered model. Guiding students to apply what they have learned into practice within a limited time is essential in cultivating international high-level talents. Students were typically involved in whole-class instruction and showed limited interaction with either their teacher or peers. They displayed passivity in the classroom, primarily observing or listening to the teacher, despite being on task approximately 94 percent of the time. Therefore, Ph. D. students require additional time to practice the various skills learned in class. In this study, the primary pattern of interaction in this course is teacher-student(s), with less emphasis on student(s)-student(s) interaction. However, according to Piaget (1959), disagreements in student(s)-student(s) interaction tend to promote progress to higher stages of cognitive development. This kind of student(s)-student(s) interaction mode should be advocated to allow Ph. D. students actively to construct what they have known.

Secondly, teachers should optimize the tasks or activities designed in the class. Tasks should align with Ph. D. students' fundamental learning needs and future development, rather than being centered around specific academic disciplines and repetitive drill practice. Specifically, teachers should design purposeful and meaningful class activities within familiar and clear contexts. Additionally, the teacher should consider the grade, time arrangement, sequence, and resource limitations when designing tasks. Therefore, teachers shouldoffer topics that build on students' knowledge.

Thirdly, the teacher should provide Ph. D. students with more opportunities to express various English skills and avoid asking closed questions that lead to repeating sentence patterns or words individually.

Lastly, the teaching content of this English course, which significantly contributes to developing students' interdiscursive competence, should be arranged systematically and scientifically to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of students from diverse academic backgrounds with varying English proficiency levels.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions

What is clear, however, is that the study still has some limitations. The present study aims to provide

insights into the role of interdiscursive competence in cultivating international high-level students. Nonetheless, the reported cases here may not fully represent the typical English courses for Ph. D. students at C University due to the small-scale coverage of sample statistics. To enhance the credibility of the study, future researchers investigating the same topic can expand the scope of samples to ensure a broader representation of the student population.

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