

---

# A study of the construction of Lexicology Course for Spanish Majors: a case study of SISU

La investigación sobre la construcción de la asignatura de Lexicología en Filología Hispánica: el caso de SISU

西班牙语专业词汇学课程建设研究—以四川外国语大学为例

Исследование построения предмета лексикологии в испаноязычной филологии: пример SISU

---

**Hui Wen**

Sichuan International Studies University  
huiwen@sisu.edu.cn  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1905-6613>

**Qiuyue Xiao**

Sichuan International Studies University  
2084203048@qq.com  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1905-6613>

---

## Dates · Fechas

Received: 2022/04/02  
Accepted: 2022/05/03  
Published: 2022/10/03

---

## How to Cite this Paper · Cómo citar este trabajo

Wen, H., & Xiao, Q. (2022). A study of the construction of Lexicology Course for Spanish Majors: a case study of SISU. *Publicaciones*, 52(1), 149–159. <https://doi.org/10.30827/publicaciones.v52i1.15972>

## Abstract

Under the guidance of the theory of needs analysis, focusing on the necessity of the lexicology courses in Spanish, the allocation of curriculum term, the curriculum content and the teaching resources, etc., this paper has made a net questionnaire survey on the third-year students of Grade 2016 and 2017 in Spanish Department of Sichuan International Studies University (SISU) in order to learn the opinions and suggestions of the students majoring in Spanish on opening the lexicology courses and to provide the ideas for vocabulary teaching and curriculum planning.

---

*Keywords:* Spanish, lexicology, needs analysis, Spanish teaching, course construction.

---

## Resumen

Bajo la guía de la teoría del análisis de necesidades, centrándose en la necesidad de apertura de Lexicología del español, la asignación del curso curricular, el contenido curricular y los recursos didácticos, etc., haremos encuestas en línea a los estudiantes de año 2016 y 2017 del Departamento de Español de la Universidad de Estudios Internacionales de Sichuan (SISU) con el fin de conocer las opiniones y sugerencias de los estudiantes del español sobre la apertura de la asignatura de Lexicología y proporcionar ideas sobre la enseñanza del léxico y la planificación curricular.

---

*Palabras clave:* español, lexicología, análisis de necesidades, enseñanza del español, construcción de cursos.

---

## 摘要

本文以需求分析理论为指导,围绕开设西班牙语词汇学课程的必要性、课程学期分配、课程内容、教学资源等几个方面,对四川外国语大学西班牙语系16、17级大三的学生进行了网络问卷调查,旨在了解西语专业学生对于开设词汇学课程的看法和建议,为词汇教学以及课程规划提供思路。

---

关键词: 西班牙语, 词汇学, 需求分析, 西班牙语教学, 课程建设。

---

## Аннотация

Данная статья написана на основе теории анализа потребностей, после чего был проведен онлайн-опрос среди студентов младших курсов 16 и 17 классов испанского отделения Сычуаньского университета международных исследований, в ходе которого были рассмотрены некоторые аспекты начала курса испанской лексикологии, такие как необходимость курса, распределение семестров, содержание курса и учебные материалы. Цель данной статьи - выяснить взгляды и предложения студентов, изучающих испанский язык, относительно начала курса испанской лексикологии, а также предложить идеи для преподавания и планирования учебной программы.

---

Ключевые слова: испанский язык, лексикология, анализ потребностей, преподавание испанского языка, построение курса.

---

## Introduction

Vocabulary plays an important role in second language acquisition. Most English majors and some other language majors in domestic universities offer courses related to introduction to lexicology at the undergraduate level. However, there are no courses related to lexicology in Spanish undergraduate major of our university. For this reason, we combine the goal of training Spanish professionals in our university and the requirements of "Senior Syllabus for Spanish Majors in Colleges and Universities" (hereinafter referred to as "Senior Syllabus"), mainly from the teaching resources, curriculum content and other aspects of the construction of this course and have made a preliminary exploration.

At present the study of Spanish vocabulary and the construction of Spanish professional lexicology course at home are still in the exploratory stage. They relatively lack systems. Many colleges or universities have not opened the introductory course of lexicology in undergraduate stage while vocabulary teaching is mainly scattered in intensive reading, extensive reading, translation and other courses, and priority is given to the interpretation of single word meaning. Therefore, the course of an introduction to lexicology as an independent course is urgent and important.

When it comes to the establishment of a course, textbook is the basis of the course construction. *An Introduction to Spanish Lexicology*, the first and only textbook published in China that systematically expounds the theories of Spanish lexicology, was published in 2012. Since then, no similar textbook has been published. Many theories and corpus of lexicology in the book need to be further updated and keep pace with the times. Therefore, the construction of the teaching material of Spanish lexicology is the most urgent problem to be solved, but we will not discuss the construction of the teaching material in this paper, but take the study of the construction of the curriculum content as the focus of this paper, the construction of the curriculum content is the core of the course construction. However, when formulating teaching syllabuses, the opinions of experts and teachers are often the main focus, and there is a lack of "bottom-up" empirical analysis of learners' (Chen Shunting & Yao Juanjuan, 2019). In view of this, in the course of this study, considering that students are the main body of teaching, and guided by the theory of needs analysis we take the third-year students of Grade 2016 and 2017 as the research objects to discuss the necessity of opening this course for Spanish majors in Chinese universities.

## Theoretical basis

Needs analysis has attracted increasing attention in the field of foreign language teaching since the 1970s. The theory refers to the techniques and methods of studying needs through introspection, interviews, observations and questionnaires, originally used in English for Special Purposes (ESP), and later it was widely used and expanded to the field of general English teaching. Johns (1991) believes that needs analysis is the first step in curriculum design, because it can provide validity and relevance for all subsequent curriculum design activities. However, it is worth mentioning that the application research of needs analysis theory in Spanish majors offered by Chinese universities is still relatively small. Therefore, this study intends to conduct an anonymous questionnaire survey on the "Questionnaire Star" network to a total of 123 students in two grades. The intention of the course of Introduction to Spanish Lexicology was investigated, aiming to learn the opinions and suggestions of the third-year Spanish

majors on setting up lexicology courses, trying to summarize the commonality and individuality of students' learning needs for lexicology courses, so as to provide ideas for vocabulary teaching and curriculum planning, and better play the role of the course in vocabulary acquisition of students.

## Investigation method

### Survey tools and questionnaire design

In this study, the author uses the anonymous online questionnaire "A Study on Setting Up Spanish Lexicology Courses in Senior Spanish Majors" designed by the author. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions, including multiple choice questions and fill-in-the-blank questions. Both subjective and objective questions were taken into account so that teachers can more intuitively see students' feedback, and students can more fully express their views and opinions. The multiple-choice part consists of two types of questions, single-choice and multiple-choice. Finally, a total of 123 valid questionnaires were recovered.

### Survey Objects

The students who volunteered to participate in this survey are all from the Spanish major of the School of Western Languages and Cultures of Sichuan International Studies University (SISU), including 59 third-year students in Grade 2016 and 64 third-year students in Grade 2017. Almost all the students have studied Spanish for 3 years, the ratio of male to female is 20: 103. There are two main reasons for choosing them as the survey objects: one is that most of the students have some accumulation and knowledge of Spanish vocabulary after passing through the first and second grades of the university. Based on their own study and cognition, they can make better judgments and suggestions on whether the lexical course is opened or not; the second is because in the whole junior year of the students, the author has consciously taught them some basic theoretical knowledge of Spanish linguistics, so we believe that combining these knowledge points, students can give more reasonable and accurate answers to the subsequent lexical courses.

## Results and Discussion

### The necessity of course offering

Although the Spanish major of our university has not yet offered courses related to vocabulary, the students have more or less understanding of Spanish vocabulary after learning other Spanish courses, such as intensive reading, extensive reading and listening, as can be seen from Table 1, all students believe that the subjects currently offered at the undergraduate level are helpful for vocabulary learning, but only 27.12% and 35.94% of students in Grades 2016 and 2017 think that they are very helpful. While more than half of the students think it is helpful to some extent, only 11.86% and 10.94% of the students in Grades 2016 and 2017 think they are helpful. In addition, students were asked some basic theories of vocabulary such as loanwords (présta-

mos lingüísticos), idioms (unidades fraseológicas), polysemy and metaphor (polisemia y metáfora), etc., more than half of the students in Grades 2016 (74.58%) and 2017 (60.98%) are unfamiliar with the above theories (see Table 2 for details). From this, we can know that although the courses currently offered at the undergraduate level are helpful for students to accumulate vocabulary, they do not have a systematic and comprehensive understanding and cognition of vocabulary. This is also why the students want to be able to specialize in lexicology at the undergraduate level.

**Table 1**

*The survey results of students majoring in Spanish in Grades 2016 and 2017 on the degree to which the courses offered at the undergraduate level are helpful for vocabulary learning*

	greatly helpful		helpful		little help		no help	
Grade 2016	16	27.12%	36	61.02%	7	11.86%	0	0%
Grade 2017	23	35.94%	34	53.13%	7	10.94%	0	0%

**Table 2**

*The survey results of the level of understanding of the basic theory of lexicology among students majoring in Spanish in Grades 16 and 17*

	much understanding		some understanding		little understanding		no understanding	
Grade 2016	0	0%	5	8.47%	10	16.90%	44	74.58%
Grade 2017	0	0%	10	15.63%	15	23.44%	39	60.98%

**Table 3**

*Survey results of Spanish majors in Grades 2016 and 2017 on the need for a Spanish lexical course*

	much necessity		some necessity		little necessity		no necessity	
Grade 2016	16	27.12%	33	55.93%	10	16.95%	0	0%
Grade 2017	42	65.63%	15	23.44%	7	10.94%	0	0%

Through the questionnaire survey, we've found that a total of 123 students in Grades 2016 and 2017 who participated in the survey believed that it was necessary to set up the course of vocabulary, and the number of students who thought it was very necessary and relatively necessary was as high as 106, accounting for 86.18% of the total number of students, see Table 3 for details. The above data shows that the senior students have a strong willingness to systematically learn vocabulary after three years of Spanish learning. At the same time, we also expect that the systematic vocabulary

course can improve learners' Spanish vocabulary, their basic theoretical knowledge and comprehensive application ability.

## Allocation of course term

As shown in Table 4, the vast majority of students tend to take lexical courses in their junior year, and more than half of them (Grade 2016, 86.44%; Grade 2017, 67.19%) believe that they should be in the third year of college. Lexical courses are offered in Term 1 and the earlier the better. The author has further sorted out and analyzed the reasons for the students' answers, and has found that the students' answers mainly focus on the following points: 1) They believe that they already have the basic knowledge of Spanish phonetics and grammar and have a certain degree of vocabulary in the last semester of their junior year. At this moment, a systematic study of vocabulary is beneficial to future language learning and use, including translation and interpretation training, Spanish CET-8 test, DELE test and work practice, etc.; 2) Some students learn to explain from their arrangement of study and life time that they think time in the first semester of the junior year and the time is more abundant (for example, the Spanish major has just finished the CET-4 exam, there is no large-scale exam, and there are fewer classes, etc.), while most students think that in the second and fourth semesters of the junior year they may be distracted by things such as graduation thesis, internship, job search, postgraduate entrance examination, and specialization, and cannot fully devote themselves to the study of vocabulary. To sum up, it is not difficult to see that students have an urgent desire to open a lexical course and generally believe that this course has the role of "laying the foundation" and "inheriting the past", and from the perspective of exam preparation and personal future planning, most students more prefer to take lexical courses early in the senior year.

From the perspective of teachers, we also recommend that courses with strong professional orientation, such as *Introduction to Lexical Studies*, can be taught in the senior grades (Grade 3 is preferred), and the total number of hours is set to 36 hours, and it is recommended to open 1-2 semesters (depending on the specific situation of each university), weekly class hours are 2. On the one hand, after the first two years of basic learning, the third grade is a good time for students to improve their language learning skills; Among them, the "Senior Grade Syllabus" suggests that the lexical course should be positioned as an optional course, and it is recommended that 1-2 semesters be opened, and the weekly class hours should be 2; Liu Wei (2011) concluded after analyzing the data of 21 colleges and universities nationwide: English undergraduate majors in 16 colleges offer similar lexical courses in senior grades ( in the third or the fourth year ), while only 5 colleges offer them in the basic stage. This kind of professional knowledge with a strong theoretical nature is already a routine arrangement in the senior grades, and it is generally more reasonable. As for some colleges, they move the lexical course down to the basic stage, the reason may be related to the practical value orientation of the course, that is, they hope to guide and promote students through the learning of lexical theory as early as possible (Liu Wei, 2011). Qiao Xiangru (2011) analyzes many colleges and universities in Hubei Province that offer English lexicology, and concludes that most colleges generally offer lexicology courses in the first semester of the third grade.

**Table 4**

*Survey results of the intention of the Grades 2016 and 2017 Spanish majors on the opening time of the course*

	the first semester of the third grade		the second semester of the third grade		the first semester of the fourth grade	
Grade 2016	51	86.44%	3	5.08%	5	8.47%
Grade 2017	43	67.19%	13	20.31%	8	12.5%

## Course content

In order to better design the content of the course, the questionnaire set up two questions, “what knowledge do you hope to learn in the Spanish vocabulary class” and “what field of vocabulary are you interested in in learning Spanish”, supplemented by multiple-choice questions. Responses are presented in a format that ensures maximum statistics of students’ needs and interests. The author believes that understanding students’ interest in vocabulary is very important for vocabulary teaching. Starting from students’ needs can make students more focused in vocabulary class, absorb knowledge more deeply and effectively, and make the content more attractive and interesting.

First of all, for the students in Grade 2016, 93.22% of them prefer to learn how to use words or phrases correctly in class, which highlights the importance of vocabulary collocation, idioms and other knowledge in the field of second language acquisition and this data dropped to 84.38% among the Grade 2017 students; secondly, 91.53% of the Grade 2016 students think it is very important to acquire methods to expand their vocabulary, which also reflects the importance of word formation and lexical development to lexicology, etc. This item was also ticked by 84.38% of students in Grade 2017. At the same time, we believe that the responses of the students to the above two questions are also more in line with the current situation of Spanish students. “How to memorize words” and “even if you memorize words, you may not match them” are the two major obstacles that have long plagued students’ language learning. At present, the vast majority of students still use rote memorization when reciting words. This method is easy to forget. Although students know this, they cannot find a more efficient way to memorize words; again, among the students of Grade 2016, 74.58% of the students are more interested in etymology, and this figure has risen to 87.5% among the students in Grade 2017. We believe that the acquisition of etymology can not only help students understand the law of vocabulary development but also make them have a better understanding of the history of Spanish development; finally, in our daily teaching, we’ve found that students rely more on the Spanish-Chinese electronic dictionary in smartphones for convenience, so they use less of the Spanish-Spanish dictionary. There are not only various types of dictionaries on the market. Dictionaries and the use of each are also different, so we believe that guiding students to correctly look up a dictionary should also be a part of the curriculum and lexicography. As an important part of lexicology, it should also have a place in the lexicology curriculum. In the survey, more than half of the Grade 2016 students (accounting for 62.71%) think it is very necessary to acquire this content, while for the Grade 2017 students, the proportion dropped to 51.56%. We believe that for these two classes of students, the

reason for the relatively low proportion of this option is that the students' understanding of the field of lexicography is not comprehensive enough and the emphasis is not high enough.

Among others, students express their desire to learn the identification and analysis of synonyms in Spanish, basic Latin lexical knowledge, authentic Spanish expressions, and practical vocabulary related to future work, etc. See Table 5 for details.

**Table 5**

*Survey results on what students would like to learn in Spanish lexical studies*

	How to use words or phrases correctly		Efficient ways to remember words and expand vocabulary		Understand the etymology of words/ phrases and the cultural knowledge behind them		How to use a Spanish dictionary correctly		Others	
Grade 16	55	93.22%	54	91.53%	44	74.58%	37	62.71%	14	23.73%
Grade 17	54	84.38%	54	84.38%	56	87.5%	33	51.56%	7	10.94%

In response to the question of “Which domain vocabulary are you interested in in learning Spanish?”, the questionnaire is also presented in the form of multiple-choice questions and supplements. As shown in Table 6, the overall responses of students in Grades 2016 and 2017 were similar. The students of these two levels are particularly interested in the spoken language and commonly used daily life vocabulary, which the author did not predict accurately; secondly, for the students in Grades 2016 and 2017, the students' needs for economic vocabulary equally exceeds 50%, which reflects to a certain extent that many students may have plans to engage in jobs related to economics or foreign trade in their future work; thirdly, the overall interest in the acquisition of literary vocabulary is not strong. 20.34% of the Grade 2016 students want to learn literary vocabulary. This data has improved a lot among the Grade 2017 Spanish students, and nearly 40% of the students are interested in this. Finally, in the option of “Hope to acquire vocabulary in the field of work in the future”, the students of the two grades unexpectedly gave a lot of intentions, including foreign trade business, law, construction engineering, politics, network hot words, new media, science and technology, the similarities and differences of Latin American and Spanish vocabulary, culture, medicine, sports, tourism and diplomacy and other categories of vocabulary, and from the survey data, the proportion of Grade 2016 students who ticked this item (accounting for 64.41%) greatly. It is higher than that of Grade 2017 students (accounting for 45.31%), which also reflects that Grade 2016 students are slightly higher than Grade 2017 students in terms of the diversity of future employment intentions.

To sum up, we believe that in the process of language acquisition, due to the lack of opportunities for direct communication with native speakers, and the existing textbooks focus on grammar, students in the domestic Spanish major are generally troubled by the lack of daily life vocabulary learning in oral Spanish. Therefore, in the setting of actual teaching content, teachers should pay attention to the selection of corpus, and can choose more corpus from real life to design teaching content, so that teaching and real-life applications are not out of touch. Secondly, more students pay more attention



to the application-oriented vocabulary such as economics and trade, but have little interest in the vocabulary of literature and culture, which also reflects that the career planning of Spanish learners in our university is more inclined to practice-oriented rather than research-oriented. In the vocabulary column related to the field of work they will be engaged in in the future, the answers of the students involve all walks of life, indicating that language learners in the new era are engaged in the trend of diversified occupational development, and are no longer limited to the traditional occupational rules and regulations. However, the teaching hours are limited, and it is impossible for teachers to meet the differentiated requirements of each student within a limited time. Therefore, the author thinks, on the basis of meeting the requirements of the public, we should guide students to search for the vocabulary categories they are interested in after class, "It is better to teach a man to fish than to give him a fish." At the same time, we should also learn a lot from the teaching reform models of other excellent brother colleges and explore the talent training path with the characteristics of SISU, "from the three perspectives of current social needs, academic needs and student needs" (Yu Man, 2019), we should explore the diversified and characteristic development path of the Spanish major.

**Table 6**

*Survey results on what students would like to learn in a Spanish lexicon class*

	More oral, commonly used life vocabulary		Economic vocabulary		Literary vocabulary		Vocabulary related to the future field of work	
Grade 16	57	96.61%	32	54.24%	12	20.34%	38	64.41%
Grade 17	62	96.88%	38	59.38%	24	37.5%	29	45.31%

## Students' Advice

In the 123 questionnaires collected, students put forward various suggestions and expectations for curriculum construction, many of which have commonality and personality. Judging from the feedback results, the students' suggestions are mainly based on two aspects: teaching content and course mode: 1) In terms of teaching content, students hope that the course is more inclined to the practical use of language rather than simply explaining theoretical concepts. Many students expressed their concern that the course might have too much theoretical output and they cannot really learn important knowledge points. This point also echoes what we said above, that is, most students majoring in Spanish prefer to work directly after graduation. Therefore, in terms of curriculum setting, we need to pay attention to the combination of theory and practice, and it needs to be within a reasonable range. 2) In terms of curriculum mode, many students suggested to reduce the proportion of teachers' blindly explaining theory, which can be combined with etymological stories, videos, audio, student group discussions, etc. to avoid boring courses as just teaching knowledge.

## Conclusion

Through the above analysis, we have come to the following conclusions: 1) In terms of course materials, there is currently only one professional textbook on Spanish lexicology, and many theories and corpora in the textbook need to be updated urgently, such as the importance of metaphor theory in vocabulary and semantics teaching. 2) Students generally believe that it is very necessary to set up the course of Spanish vocabulary, and most students hope to open lexicology course in the first semester of the third grade of the undergraduate level. 3) Students tend to learn the following aspects in this course: the use and collocation of acquired vocabulary, the method of efficient memorization of words, etymology, etc.; Vocabulary, DELE, CET-8 for Spanish, and practical vocabulary conducive to future career development are more interesting, but as teachers, we should also recognize the limitations of “needs theory”, and should correctly guide students to avoid blindly using “needs theory”, taking “useful for work” theory as the vane of learning, but to advocate the balanced development of students’ abilities in all aspects of language. 4) In the course mode, the students generally hope that the course will be more interesting, avoid pure theoretical explanation, and pay more attention to the teaching mode that combines theory and practical application. Finally, the shortcomings and limitations of this study mainly exist in the following two aspects: first, the limitations of the sample size and survey objects. Due to the fact that there are very few colleges and universities that offer Spanish lexicology courses in China, this study only refers to the sample data of 123 students of Spanish majors in Grades 2016 and 2017 from Sichuan International Studies University (SISU). The research examines the curriculum construction of Spanish lexicology only from the perspective of students, but does not take into account the needs of teachers and society. From the analysis of the above two aspects, the next research direction should be to collect more and wider data, and incorporate both teachers and social needs into the research, so as to enhance the universality of the research.

## Acknowledgements

This present work has been carried out in the framework of a research project titled “西班牙语词汇学课程建设研究 (La investigación sobre la construcción de la asignatura de Lexicología)”(JY1965102), funded by Sichuan International Studies University.

## References

- Johns, C. (1991). An integrated model for ESP syllabus design. *English for Specific Purposes*, 10, 155-172.
- Liu, W. (2011). 国内高校英语专业词汇学课程发展研究—历史回顾与现状调查[Research on the Development of Lexicology Curriculum for English Majors in Domestic Colleges—Historical Review and Current Situation Investigation]. *高等财经教育研究*[Higher Financial Education Research], 4, 47-52.
- Ma, L. & Zhou, W. (2012). 西班牙语词汇学导论[*An Introduction to Spanish Lexicology*]. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Qiao, X.(2009). 英语词汇学现状调查与研究[Investigation and Research on the Present Situation of English Lexicology]. Central China Normal University.

- Shunting, S., & Juanjuan, Y. (2019). 基于网络问卷的学生需求分析个案研究 [A Case Study of Student Demand Analysis Based on Network Questionnaire]. 外语高教研究[Foreign Language Higher Education Research], 109-114.
- Spanish Professional Syllabus Writing Group. (2000). 高等学校西班牙语专业高年级教学大纲[Senior Syllabus for Spanish Majors in Colleges and Universities]. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.