

Review Paper

A Research on the Improvement of Business English Teachers' Competence in an Internet Plus Era

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Abstract

In an Internet Plus era, the internet technology has brought an unprecedented change to people's ways and habits of learning, so the traditional BE instructional design cannot meet the talent needs of international business practice. BE teachers' lack of business knowledge and practical experience forms an obstacle to BE teaching. BE teachers in transition should make more efforts to improve their competence and teaching quality, so as to cultivate comprehensive and practical talents of high quality. This paper aims at discussing how to improve BE teachers' competence in an Internet Plus era.

Keywords

Internet Plus, business English, teachers' competence, comprehensive and practical talents

1. Introduction

Business English, as an ESP used in business environment, requires teachers not only to have a high level of English language, but also to have rich international business knowledge and practical ability. With the rapid development of foreign trade, the demand for compound and applied foreign language talents is increasing day by day. The ability of teachers affects the training quality of business English talents. "The quality of business English teachers has a direct impact on the teaching quality of business English" (Weng, J. L. & Weng, F. X., 2012). However, most business English teachers in China lack basic knowledge and practical experience of international business. The rapid development

of Internet technology has unprecedentedly changed people's learning styles and habits, the traditional teaching mode of business English class have been unable to meet the demand of students' learning, is bound to trigger a new teaching model reform—the advanced Internet technology will be applied to traditional teaching process, in order to adapt to the development needs of the era of large data. Classroom teaching is still the main way for students to acquire knowledge, while teachers are the main body of classroom teaching, and the growth and achievement of students is the goal of teaching. In the era of Internet plus education, how to improve the quality of teaching through the development of their own ability, and cultivate comprehensive and practical talents of high quality is a problem that every business English teacher should think about.

2. Method

The author adopts qualitative method to make an analysis on business English teachers' competence in an Internet+ era. In the study, the author chooses the course design, business English teachers' education background, classroom teaching methods etc. as the object of the research. Questionnaires with twenty questions for each are designed to collect the data for research, and samples are selected randomly from the students and teachers in our school.

3. Result

Prime minister Li Keqiang, in his government work report put forward the concept of “Internet +”, points out that the “Internet +” is the innovation of the Internet and economic society in various fields depth fusion, to promote technological progress, improve efficiency and organizational change, promote the real economy, innovation and productivity to form more widely on the Internet for infrastructure and innovation elements in new form of social and economic development. It can be seen that “Internet + Education” is not simply adding network technology to the field of education, but applying advanced Internet technology to all aspects of education, including classroom teaching, textbook compilation, and students' comprehensive evaluation system, to deeply integrate the innovative achievements of the Internet with teaching. In order to promote the overall development of Internet technology and education industry, promote the reform and innovation of teaching and improve teaching results. The Guiding Opinions on Actively Promoting the “Internet Plus” Action issued by The State Council clearly proposed exploring new ways of providing education services, including encouraging schools to make use of digital education resources and education service platforms, gradually exploring a new model of networked education, expanding the coverage of high-quality education resources, and promoting education equity. Universities are encouraged to connect online and offline education resources through cooperation with Internet companies, promote online learning models such as massive open online courses, and accelerate the reform of higher

education service models. This also indicates the advent of the “Internet + education” era. In this era, business English teachers are faced with a problem: how to develop themselves, achieve a successful transformation from language and literature to business English teaching, and adapt to the transformation from traditional teaching mode to new classroom teaching mode.

3.1 Problems Faced by Business English Teachers

Experts from Ministry of Education in *National Standard for Undergraduate Teaching Quality of Business English Major in Colleges and Universities* clearly pointed out that the training target is to cultivate comprehensive and practical talents of international vision and high quality, to cultivate their English basic skills with international vision and the humanities accomplishment, and to master international business knowledge and related rules of practice, With English application ability, business practice ability, cross-cultural communication ability, thinking and innovation ability, independent learning ability, can engage in international business work compound, application-oriented talents. The cultivation of talents is inseparable from the teacher’s teaching work, and the teacher’s ability and quality also determine the teaching quality. Therefore, “Business English Standard” also puts forward requirements on the quality of business English teachers. Business English teachers should have noble ethics, qualified basic English skills, professional knowledge, teaching ability, scientific research ability, practical ability, and the ability of applying modern educational information technology to carry out classroom teaching and teaching reform. However, the ability of business English teachers and the level of scientific research are not satisfactory.

Using ESP demand theory, Guo Guihang and Li Dan (2015) found that the defects of business English teachers in terms of ability and quality were mainly reflected in the following aspects: First, the proportion of composite teachers who had both English language and business background education experience was low; Teachers’ knowledge reserve is insufficient, English language, culture and business knowledge need to be improved; Lack of business practice experience and weak business practice ability, most teachers are unable to keep pace with The Times, unable to apply social hot issues as practical cases in classroom teaching; Business practice teaching ability is limited, information teaching ability needs to be improved. Since most business English teachers have changed from single language teaching to teaching business knowledge in English language, there are widespread problems of lack of business knowledge and insufficient business practice ability. To some extent, this restricts teachers’ inspirational and creative teaching ability, is not conducive to arousing students’ interest and enthusiasm in learning, and seriously hinders the teaching effect of business English classroom teaching.

3.2 Suggestions on the Development of Business English Teachers

Teacher ability refers to the personality and psychological characteristics that teachers show in educational and teaching activities and directly or indirectly affect the quality and completion of

educational and teaching activities. “The key factor affecting students’ ability development lies in teachers’ ability, and there is a high correlation between the components of teachers’ ability and teaching effect” (Lu & Hong, 2007). Zhang Bo (2007) believes that teachers’ ability consists of four elements: teaching ability, scientific research ability, management ability and creative ability. Students majoring in business English in colleges and universities are a group with mature mental development and self-behavior management ability. However, the particularity of business English requires teachers to constantly improve their business knowledge level and practical ability. Therefore, how to improve the ability of business English teachers is mainly elaborated from the following three aspects: innovative teaching ability, business practice ability and scientific research ability.

3.2.1 Innovative Teaching Ability of Business English Teachers

Teaching ability is “the individual psychological characteristics required by teachers to successfully complete teaching activities, and a professional quality formed by transforming individual intelligence and knowledge and skills required for teaching through practice” (Yang, 1996). Business English teachers should not only have solid English language and business knowledge at the same time, but also have creative teaching methods in order to successfully complete the set teaching tasks and achieve the teaching objectives. Teachers’ creative ability refers to “teachers’ ability to synthesize existing knowledge, information and experience to produce unique and novel teaching, educational design, educational skills and new results that are different from others” (Wang, 1991). The 21st century needs compound talents with innovative ability most, only teachers with creative ability can cultivate creative students. Business English teachers create unique and novel teaching designs based on existing professional knowledge and teaching skills according to the particularity of their major, rather than “a simple tool for mechanically transferring knowledge” (Zhang, 2007).

With the rapid development of mobile Internet technology, students have diversified channels and ways to acquire knowledge, and teachers are no longer the only representatives of preaching and clarifying doubts. Under the traditional closed business English teaching mode, the teaching content is outdated, the teaching method is backward and the teaching efficiency is low. The current business English teaching design based on classroom teaching has been unable to meet the needs of the increasingly expanding practice of business English knowledge operation (Wang, 2009), let alone meet the needs of the rapidly developing international business activities. “Internet + Education” has broken the monopoly of authority on knowledge and turned education from closed to open. Students can access knowledge no longer only in class, but can enjoy the learning resources they want anytime and anywhere. The teacher is no longer the representative of authoritative knowledge, but the creator and consumer of knowledge as well as the student. At this point, business English teachers must change their role from the classroom controller to the guide of students’ learning, to stimulate students’ enthusiasm and initiative in learning.

Classroom teaching is an interactive process between students and teachers, and teachers should give full play to students' subjective initiative. The teaching process is crucial to the training quality of students, and teachers' teaching methods and methods directly affect students' experience of the teaching process (Guo & Li, 2015). That is to say, teachers' teaching methods and methods directly affect students' learning results, high-quality teaching should be creative and inspiring teaching, stimulate students' learning enthusiasm. Therefore, business English teachers should strengthen the application of modern information technology in the teaching process, use multimedia and network resources to design creative activities in and out of class, and strengthen the vividness and extensibility of classroom teaching, so that students can not only stay in class, but also continue to supplement their learning and thinking after class. For example, when it comes to price terms, letters of credit and other knowledge, teachers can not only tell the relevant basic theoretical knowledge in class, but also organize students to conduct group case analysis, and provide students with after-class learning resources through social platforms to further consolidate the basic knowledge learned in class. Teachers can find the latest case analysis materials and learning resources for students to expand their learning after class through the Internet.

In the Internet + era, flipped classroom, MOOC, micro-class and other new teaching models can mobilize students' enthusiasm and enthusiasm for learning to a certain extent, but teachers are always the leader in the teaching process. Therefore, business English teachers insist on student-centered teaching and meet the learning needs of students through their own continuous development. The full use of the Internet information platform, not only can timely update the content of the teaching material, but also can extend the teaching content to the learning process outside the classroom. Using Internet technology, adding simulated business practice activities in the teaching process can not only improve students' ability to analyze and solve problems, but also improve their learning initiative.

3.2.2 The Business Knowledge and Practical Experience of Business English Teachers

"Teachers' abilities should include teaching ability, subject professional knowledge and ability" (Song, 1999), while "business English teachers should not only have high English knowledge and skills, but also business professional knowledge and cross-cultural communication ability" (Wang & Zhang, 2006). Therefore, business English teachers should not only have a high level of English language and culture, but also constantly strengthen the "input" of international business knowledge, so as to accurately "output" to students in class teaching and cultivate interdisciplinary talents with strong business practice ability.

In the Internet + era, international business knowledge is changing with each passing day. Business English knowledge in practice is a constantly changing and developing "knowledge network", covering knowledge in many fields, which is "rooted in all levels" and constantly updated and developed (Mao, 2003). In other words, the knowledge of business English in practice keeps pace with The Times,

responds promptly and applies to the development of international business. However, the content of most business English textbooks is outdated after several years. Students cannot acquire such dynamic business English knowledge from textbooks and coursebook-based classes, so they cannot adapt to the rapid development of international business. Therefore, business English teachers should constantly update their professional knowledge and improve their professional skills, such as going abroad for further study, attending vocational training and various academic conferences, and strengthening communication and cooperation with teachers of related majors, to make up for the deficiency of teaching material knowledge.

Teachers' classroom teaching should keep pace with The Times. When teaching business knowledge, they should not copy the contents of textbooks, but carry out discussions based on current economic and social hot topics. Combining business knowledge with hot topics that students are interested in can not only activate the classroom atmosphere, mobilize the enthusiasm of students to participate in the class, but also strengthen their business practice ability and critical thinking ability. The development of network technology increases the breadth of knowledge acquired by students, but most of them are superficial and fragmented, which leads to students' passive acceptance and lazy thinking and systematization of knowledge. Therefore, professional teachers should provide students with knowledge sources of depth and breadth by screening these easily available fragmented knowledge, encourage students to be good at thinking, and reconstruct the fragmented knowledge. Let the Internet be a resource for students to read and think and debate.

The business English major aims to cultivate high quality compound and applied talents who can do practical work in the process of international business communication and cooperation. The business practice ability of business English teachers plays an important role in cultivating such talents. Advanced teaching equipment, novel teaching methods and modern teaching means can improve the teaching effect to a certain extent, but teachers are the fundamental guarantee of teaching quality. Therefore, teachers should use their spare time to strengthen the improvement of business practice ability, so that classroom teaching is no longer empty theoretical teaching, but a business practice experience sharing. Teachers should take their own business practice experience as the teaching content in class, encourage students to actively participate in classroom activities, make classroom teaching more creative and attractive, and help improve students' enthusiasm and initiative in classroom participation.

3.2.3 Scientific Research Ability of Business English Teachers

The scientific research ability of teachers is "the ability of teachers to creatively solve problems by taking educational phenomena as objects, using scientific methods and exploring the rules of educational activities" (Zhang, 2007). It can be seen that teachers' scientific research activities are teachers' creative means to study and try to solve the new problems found in the teaching process, for

the purpose of promoting teaching. Shu Dingfang (2004) said that; “Whether a teacher is engaged in scientific research or not, is also the standard that distinguishes a teacher from a mere ‘teacher’ or an ‘expert’ in foreign language education”. As a business English teacher, we should not only ensure high-quality teaching work, but also actively improve our scientific research ability.

In the usual teaching process, we should be good at finding new problems and looking for breakthroughs in scientific research. How to effectively teach language knowledge and silently impart business knowledge and skills in classroom teaching is a test of teachers’ teaching efficiency and teaching methods, and also points out the direction for teachers’ scientific research, that is, how to improve the efficiency and effect of business English teaching. Teaching work provides teachers with scientific research materials, and in turn scientific research can promote the improvement of teaching quality and comprehensive quality of teachers. The composite characteristics of business English teachers determine that their research direction is mainly in the business field, including the research on various business activities, policies, talents and the development trend and laws of international business and other related affairs. The study of business theory and practice can effectively enrich teachers’ business knowledge and improve the specialization of classroom teaching.

Of course, teachers’ personal development is inseparable from the support of the school. Hang in China (2008) said: “the good scientific research environment is the soil for young teachers’ scientific research ability raise, effective incentive mechanism is the innovative ability of young teachers fertilizer”, therefore, should schools for teachers’ scientific research work and more investment funds and equipment, efforts to create a strong academic atmosphere, establish excellent research team and effective incentive mechanism. Encourage teachers to actively participate in scientific research to steadily improve their innovation ability and teaching level. Under the leadership of the scientific research team organized by the school, business English teachers participate in systematic and standardized scientific research training to improve their scientific research ability; Attend international academic conferences and cooperative research projects in the field of language and business, and pay close attention to the leading figures in the field, their research achievements and research topics they are engaged in, so as to understand the most cutting-edge professional knowledge and research trends; Cooperate with local enterprises to do some horizontal research projects to help enterprises improve economic benefits and promote the development of local economy.

Teaching and scientific research are the two most important factors to measure the ability of university teachers. Teaching is the foundation, and scientific research is the theoretical summary of teaching practice, which acts on teaching. If a teacher is all teaching and no research, teaching will stagnate. Therefore, business English teachers must strengthen the awareness of scientific research; make full use of the scientific research environment and conditions provided by the school, and work hard to improve the teaching level and scientific research ability.

4. Discussion

In the era of Internet + education, education can be realized without the restriction of time and place. Teachers and textbooks are no longer the only channels for students to acquire knowledge. Internet + education is a new ecological industry of Internet in the field of education, which brings convenience as well as some challenges to business English teaching. To realize the strategy of Chinese enterprises going global, it is particularly important to cultivate comprehensive and practical talents of high quality. The ability and quality of teachers directly affect the quality of teaching and teaching effect, and then affect the training quality of business English talents. However, at present, most business English teachers in China are deficient in business knowledge, business practice ability, business teaching and scientific research ability, which seriously hinders the overall development of business English discipline and the cultivation of business English talents. The competitiveness of business English teachers can be improved by promoting their competitiveness of business practices, creativity, and scientific research level. Only the continuous improvement of teachers' ability can promote the continuous growth of students and thus improve the overall development level of business English subject.

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