

Original Paper

Construction of Practical Teaching System for Business English

Majors

—Take Business English Majors of Guizhou University of

Finance and Economics as an Example

Jing Cai^{1*}

¹ Associate Professor, Guizhou University of Finance and Economics, Guiyang, China

* Jing Cai, Associate Professor, Guizhou University of Finance and Economics, Guiyang, China

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Abstract

With the current economic development in China and abroad, as well as the recent development plans in Guizhou province, the needs for high-quality Business English talents has been increasing. In order to cultivate qualified Business English talents, the practical teaching plays a crucial role. This paper aims to analyze the current problems of the practical teaching system, and with examples from Guizhou University of Finance and Economics, it proposes several effective ways to help the construction of practical teaching system for Business English majors.

Keywords

practical teaching, teaching system construction, Business English

1. Introduction

As China continues to open wider to the outside world, it is particularly important to continue to promote high-quality economic development, build a new development pattern and promote the building of an open world economy. In addition, the Belt and Road Initiative and the proposal of the RCEP cooperation framework further demonstrate the urgent need for business English professionals. As a result, it is of great significance to consider the question that what could be done to perfect the training modes of Business English majors to meet the current development goals of China and the world.

In 2022, with the guiding ideology of supporting Guizhou to break a new path in the western development of the new era, break grounds in the rural revitalization, and seize new opportunities in the implementation of the digital economy strategy, Guizhou Province has been required and supported to create a new inland open economy highland and a digital economy development and innovation zone. Business English professionals play an essential role in achieving the current development goals for Guizhou Province as well as for China. For this thesis, practical teaching system for Business English Majors will be explored, with the aim of constructing a comprehensive and functional system for professional Business English talents training. Examples of what has been done and what has been trying to achieve the above goals in Guizhou University of Finance and Economics will be introduced in the thesis.

2. Literature Review

The research into the topic of Business English talents training has been the concentration for different scholars for many years, and they have dived into different research aspects.

Some scholars concentrated on a broad view on the education and cultivation of Business English majors.

Wang Lifei and Ai Bing (2019) reviewed the four historical stages of Business English education since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and summarized the process of the gradual construction and improvement of the professional system, disciplinary system, theoretical system and academic system of Business English undergraduate major since its birth. At the end of the paper, the authors put forward some thoughts on the orientation of the Business English major, the optimization of the curriculum system, the way of teaching evaluation, the compilation of textbooks and the development of teachers.

Zhang Weilei (2021) analyzed the training strategies for business foreign language talents in the context of new liberal arts, which was explained from seven dimensions: business foreign language subject group, business foreign language major, business foreign language curriculum system, business foreign language talent training model, business foreign language talent ability index system and quality standard, business foreign language education base construction, business foreign language innovation and entrepreneurship practice skills competition.

He Ning and Wang Shouren (2022) explored the topic of talent training of foreign language major in colleges and universities in the new era. They reached the conclusion that under the background of new liberal arts construction, foreign language majors were new foreign languages with innovative curriculum systems and teaching modes. Teachers of foreign language majors needed to grasp the concept of the construction of the new liberal arts accurately and constantly explored new ways to cultivate foreign language professionals in the new era.

Tan Li (2018) explored the innovation in training applied business English talents under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, and she stated in her thesis that improving the curriculum system, reforming the traditional teaching methods and means, cultivating students' self-learning ability, creating "double-qualified" teachers, simulating real scenarios and deepening school-enterprise cooperation are important measures to innovate the mode of training applied Business English professionals.

Kong Bo (2020) focused on the cultivation strategies for applied talents for Business English majors under the Belt and Road Initiative and tea culture. She analyzed the current problems of Business English talents cultivation, and proposed new requirements for applied talents for Business English majors, as well as the specific cultivation strategies to meet these requirements.

There are also many scholars who are interested in diving into the aspects of practical teaching for Business English majors.

Li Gang (2014) summarized the construction of practical teaching system for undergraduate Business English majors based on the experiences of the cultivation of Business English majors in China West Normal University. There were five modules for the practical teaching system: language skills module, business skills module, intercultural communication skills module, humanistic quality training module, and comprehensive capability module.

Pan Zhen, Li Jinsheng, and Wang Liping (2022) dived into the exploration and innovation of liberal arts practice teaching under the new liberal arts concept. Their paper summarized the problems of traditional liberal arts practice teaching, put forward new concepts, new paths and new practices of practical teaching under the background of new liberal arts, explored new paths of integrated construction, integrated development and creative pattern of practical teaching, and provided new ideas for carrying out systematic reform and exploration of new liberal arts practice teaching and improving the efficiency of practical teaching personnel training.

Jianguo Jiang and Xin Guan (2022) explored the construction and practice of practical Business English teaching. They proposed several problems in practice teaching of Business English majors, and in order to solve these problems, they created a practical teaching environment combining virtuality with reality, and innovated the practical teaching mode combining virtuality with reality. Its practical teaching process and results demonstrated that the practical business English teaching environment combining virtuality with reality effectively expanded the teaching time and space and brought a comprehensive experience and multi-dimensionally interactive learning space for teachers and students, significantly improving the quality and effects of practical teaching.

Wang Heng and Zi Zhengquan (2023) concentrated on the practice teaching model of business foreign language in local universities under the background of new liberal arts. This paper made a questionnaire survey of Business English practice teaching in nine local colleges and universities, and found out that local colleges and universities had shortcomings in business talent training, such as

insufficient understanding of business English practice teaching concepts, lack of experience, outdated content, and limited funds. And they reached the conclusion that local colleges and universities should develop a variety of practical courses according to the characteristics of students and business development orientation, promote the information intelligence of practical teaching, gather the joint efforts of enterprises and universities, increase the proportion of “double-qualified” teachers, and promote the operation of practical teaching mode to help the construction of new liberal arts with the help of discipline competitions and innovation and entrepreneurship projects.

3. Current Problems of Practical Teaching for Business English Majors

Business English, as a comparatively young discipline, lacks sophisticated teaching system, especially the one for practical teaching, which is an important element in the cultivation of Business English professionals. Current problems of practical teaching for Business English majors, summarized from the current situations in Guizhou University of Finance and Economics, are listed in the following five aspects.

3.1 Lack of the Mature Understanding of the Student-center Philosophy

In the most old-fashioned way of teaching, teachers are always the center of the classroom, and especially it is the case with the Chinese classroom. In recent years, the teaching philosophy has been revolutionized, and a new philosophy that centers on students has been put forward. The new student-center philosophy has been adopted by many teachers in their classroom, yet the mature understanding of the student-center philosophy is lacked.

The student-center philosophy requires that the students need to be put in the center of the cultivation and education, which means that the whole teaching process, the teaching goals, the teaching methods and means, and the evaluation should always consider the needs of the students. Yet, for example, in the real classroom, the majority of teachers just leave part time of their class to the students to do some presentations, and the teachers are still the center of the classroom. Activities like this cannot be considered as putting the students as the center of the classroom. It is just a way of getting the students to participate in the class. In the initial stage, when the teaching goals are put forward, and different teaching procedures are designed according to the teaching goals, until the last evaluation stage, the goals of the students must always be taken into consideration. For example, what are the cultivation goals for Business English majors? What are the core qualities of qualified Business English majors? In order to achieve the cultivation goals, what are the possible teaching methods and means? In each session of the class, how to achieve the goals mentioned above with efficiency? And after each class, multiple evaluation methods must be guaranteed to ensure the effectiveness of all the previous stages.

3.2 Unclear Goals in the Practical Teaching for Business English Majors

The Business English major is a comprehensive major which requires a sophisticated master of both the language and the business knowledge. And practical teaching is the key to combining “English”

with “business”, so that students can not only master strong English language ability, but also have certain relevant business skills. However, current cultivation and education might neglect the practical teaching or underestimate the significance of the practical teaching. Hence, it might lead to the fact that the goals in the practical teaching for Business English majors are unclear.

Typically, the theoretical teaching and the practical teaching are separated. The teaching for language knowledge and the teaching for business knowledge is also separated. Even if the courses like Integrated Business English and Advanced Business English exist, in most cases, the “business” part only plays a superficial one in the whole course. And deep down, the core of courses mentioned above still focuses on the language skills. The “English” knowledge and the “business” knowledge fail to become an integrated part of the Business English majors. The practical teaching is an efficient way to combine these two essential knowledge.

Then, how to meet the goals of combining “English” with “business” is worthy of consideration in designing the goals in the practical teaching for Business English majors. If the goals in the practical teaching are unclear, the goals to combine the English knowledge with business knowledge cannot be achieved. Furthermore, as a comparatively new major, the course design is largely influenced by the traditional majors concerning English, such as English majors and English education majors. Most courses for Business English majors overlap with the ones for English majors, which leads to a vague understanding of what goals to achieve in practical teaching and what abilities students are supposed to have, which makes it even more impossible to construct a scientific practical teaching system.

3.3 Old-fashioned Methods in the Practical Teaching for Business English Majors

Even if the goals of the practical teaching for Business English majors are sorted out clearly, there is still the risk that they cannot be achieved effectively because the practical teaching methods are old-fashioned.

Traditionally speaking, presentations are the most commonly used methods for teachers to adopt as the way of doing practical teaching. Students are given with a task. After some research and other preparations, students are asked to give a presentation in class. Although such a practical teaching method can improve students’ individual skills, this kind of practical teaching for Business English majors not only is monotonous, but also has great limitations and cannot meet the needs of the real working scenarios, because what enterprises need is high-quality talents with comprehensive skills. In addition, some business content is not updated in the practical teaching. It does not focus on social needs, and it does not fit well with the expectations of employers, because it lacks innovation in practical teaching.

3.4 Lack of the Efficient Evaluation of the Practical Teaching for Business English Majors

Evaluations always play an essential role in the whole teaching process. For the traditional practical teaching, the evaluation mainly relies on the practical report that students hand in after their presentation. The shortcomings of this approach speak clearly. First of all, it neglects the evaluation for

the process, which should occupy a part of huge significance in the evaluation process. Secondly, it fails to measure to what extent the students' multiple abilities are improved. Thirdly, it is an inefficient way to measure the improvement of the students' abilities because it is a subjective impression from the teachers. And lastly, it limits students' innovative thinking and divergent thinking.

To sum up, with the inefficient evaluation methods, teachers are unable to get a clear picture of the effects of the Business English teaching, and students also have no idea about how they should work on their language and business abilities, which cannot fully mobilize the teachers as well as the students.

3.5 Lack of Efficient Practical Base Outside of the Campus

It is of great necessity to provide the Business English majors with lots of practical opportunities to enhance their comprehensive abilities, which will be the core competitiveness in the real working scenarios. And this is also the most expected quality that the enterprises need. However, the courses as well as the practical teaching on campus alone could not achieve that goal. The real effective and efficient way for the Business English majors to learn is in real scenarios, and this is something that can be provided by practical bases outside the campus.

The real situations in most of the universities and colleges in China is that the number of practical teaching bases either inside or outside of the campus is insufficient, the functions of the practical teaching bases are poor, the contents of the practical teaching bases are out of date, and the operation is also lagging behind, all of which leads to the students' weak business practical ability.

4. The Construction of Practical Teaching System for Business English Majors

Based on all the problems in the practical teaching for Business English majors mentioned above, the construction of a comprehensive and functional practical teaching system for Business English majors are put forward with the guidance of the following ideas.

4.1 To Develop Real Practical Courses Based on the Needs of the Business English Majors

To start with, the needs of Business English majors should be thoroughly studied. Before developing functional practical courses, universities and colleges need to have a deep understanding of the needs of Business English majors, including the future career orientation of the graduates, the skills and knowledge they are supposed to possess to handle different situations in working scenarios. This could be done through researches and analysis in collaboration with relevant companies, industry associations, and alumni to ensure that the course contents and the real needs match.

Next, a scientific practical curriculum system should be constructed. With the aim of cultivating students' ability to deal with complex international business problems that they may face in the future, universities and colleges should continuously optimize the talent training programs, and the cultivation of students' practical abilities should always be at the core of the whole training program. Because it is the practical abilities that enables the students to cope with the diverse business situations under the background of economy development.

Finally, the real comprehensive practical courses could be built among different schools in colleges and universities. For example, the real comprehensive talents needed under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative are supposed to have multiple knowledge in diverse fields, which means that the boundaries between different majors should be resolved gradually. And this indicates that real comprehensive practical courses built by multiple schools are the ones that are indeed effective in cultivating the real talents in the future. Certain courses for Business English majors can be combined with courses for majors like Accounting, Finance, Economics, International Relations majors and International Trade. And the practical part of these courses can truly cultivate the real talents in the future.

With these guiding principles, the Business English major of Guizhou University of Finance and Economics has been approved as a first-class undergraduate major in Guizhou Province. In the early stage of the project, the main measures to deepen the comprehensive reform of the major have been sorted out, and the main measures to build the teaching staff, front-line teaching organizations, and strengthen the construction of professional teaching quality assurance system have been listed. According to the specific requirements of talent training goals, during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, Business English major should rely on the superior disciplines such as Economics and Management in Guizhou University of Finance and Economics, actively change the thinking pattern, and be transformed into a composite applied talent form of “English + Business” major to serve the conformal development of the “Four New” and “Four Modernizations” in Guizhou Province. In the construction of curriculum system, all courses increase the proportion of practical teaching, which is used for cross-professional comprehensive practical training and business characteristic practical projects to improve students' practical ability. To be specific, the construction of Cross-border E-commerce practical teaching system has been incorporated into the current curriculum system, which is a very important aspect. With practical courses like this, the cultivation of Cross-border E-commerce talents could be achieved, which helps to activate the entrepreneurial and innovation potential in rural areas, promote the upgrading and integrated development of agricultural industry, drive the development of new industries and new business forms such as “Internet + Agriculture + Characteristic products”, and at the same time, with the boost of the first China-Europe freight train, promote the export of Guizhou goods overseas. The cultivation of qualified applied Business English majors suits the needs for the high-quality development of Guizhou Province during the 14th Five-Year Plan period.

At the same time, the latest resources of simulation experiment teaching and other modern teaching should be introduced into the course construction. Comprehensive professional operation courses should be actively optimized. Basic professional experiments and designs cross-professional courses, such as the courses and practical programs of Cross-border E-commerce, should be integrated. And traditional teaching models and methods to cultivate students' spirit of exploration, practical innovation ability should be reformed. Take the Business English major of Guizhou University of Finance and

Economics as an example, virtual simulation practical projects are adopted in many core courses for Business English majors, such as the course of Intercultural Communication, which aims at cultivating the essential abilities for Business English majors: to broaden their horizon, understand different cultures, be aware of the cultural diversity and differences, and to empathize with other people if confronted with people with different cultural background.

4.2 To Boost Practical Teaching Coordination between Enterprises and Universities

The development of industry-university-research cohesion should be places as a key role to the construction of practical teaching system for Business English majors for the reason that the companies and enterprises are the places where the qualified Business English talents would work in the future, and the places where could provide the Business English majors with real situations that they would learn something practical.

To start with, the model of industry-university-research should be innovated. The disciplinary and professional models of local universities should be strengthened to promote in-depth cooperation between industry, university and research, and promote the sharing of excellent resources between universities and enterprises. It used to be the cases that the colleges and universities and the companies and enterprises are independent, which would result in the situations where graduate students cannot meet the needs of the companies and enterprises because what they have learned in colleges and universities mainly focus on what the textbooks may provide them. They lack effective combination between theory and practice, and this could be effectively and efficiently provided by the industry-university-research cohesion. The textbook compiling can be taken as an example here. The vast majority of the textbook being used for Business English majors are complied by teachers and professors in colleges and universities. The cases and the business skills are normally outdated. If a textbook can be compiled with the help of the companies and enterprises, who would provide certain real cases, students can definitely learn in a context close to reality, so that the language would not be outdated and business skills would not be outdated as well.

What's more, the contents of the cooperation between enterprises and universities can also be extensive. The cultivation of practical abilities for Business English teachers should also be an important aspect in the construction of the practical teaching system for Business English majors. The offline school-enterprise cooperation platforms can be built based on practice and cooperation projects, and the school-enterprise cooperation organizations for Business English teacher training can also be established to coordination and cooperation between the schools and enterprises. Forms such as seminars on Business English, practical training in the enterprises, and working in the enterprises for Business English teachers are the effective way to cultivate the practical abilities for Business English teachers. Take what is being done at the School of Foreign Languages of Guizhou University of Finance and Economics as an example. Different industry-university-research projects are in progress to facilitate the different teaching aims. Diverse seminars and teacher training programs are being

implemented to boost the practical abilities for teachers. Once in a school-enterprise cooperation program for Cross-border E-commerce, not only the students of Business English have participated in the whole process, the teachers for Business English, as supervisors and facilitators, also walked through the whole process, during which the students, as well as the teachers learned so much invaluable practical experience that the textbooks may never provide.

In addition, the industry-university-research cooperation programs may also boost the construction of information intelligence in practical teaching. Take the simulation practical program for Cross-border E-commerce mentioned above as an example again. In the initial stage, professionals from a local Cross-border E-commerce enterprise were invited to give relevant lectures on the background knowledge needed to complete the practical program. Combined what they have learned in class and what they have learned in these lectures, Business English majors were equipped with the knowledge that they needed. Then students were asked to finish the most important part of the whole simulation practical program, in which they were divided into different groups to simulate the whole process of the Cross-border E-commerce. Some parts of the program were finished on campus, and other parts were finished in the enterprise. After all the simulation stages of Cross-border E-commerce were finished, students gave presentations and reports to integrate what they have learned in this simulation practical program. This industry-university-research cooperation program has equipped students with invaluable practical experience.

The School of Foreign Languages of Guizhou University of Finance and Economics has established the practical and internship relations with multiple high-quality enterprises and entities, such as Guiyang Cross-border E-commerce Company, Beijing New Oriental Future Abroad Guizhou Branch, Guiyang Public Environmental Education Center (Guiyang Ecological Science Museum), and China News Press Guizhou Branch. All these high-quality enterprises and entities have provided Business English majors with professional practice, which is an important practical teaching link for Business English majors after learning major main courses. It can help students apply professional knowledge, improve their overall understanding of the major, and enhance their abilities to solve practical problems. It is also an effective means to integrate ideological and political elements and cultivate students' moral sentiment. The professional practices adhere to the concepts of ideological and political education and practical education, effectively combine knowledge imparts, ability cultivation and value guidance, and integrate business English theory with business English practice, with the aim of enabling students to effectively apply the professional theoretical knowledge they have learned to business English practice. Professional practices are as well the last and most important practical teaching link in college education. Through internship, Business English majors can get in touch with the practical work related to their major in social practices, enhance their perceptual understanding, and cultivate and exercise their abilities to independently analyze and solve practical problems by integrating the basic theories, basic skills, and professional knowledge they have learned to combine theory with practice, improve

practical ability, and lay a certain foundation for work after graduation. At the same time, they can test the teaching effects, in order to further improve the quality of education and teaching, train qualified talents, and prepare for smooth integration with the social environment.

4.3 To Make Full Use of the Discipline Competitions and Innovation and Entrepreneurship Projects

Allowing students to personally participate in various business-relevant events will help students get familiar with relevant business knowledge and international business operation modes, broaden their horizon and enhance their practical problem-solving abilities. Business English majors are encouraged to participate in a wide range of domestic and international discipline competitions. By competing with domestic and foreign players, students can improve practical abilities and skills, and truly understand the meaning of combining theory and practice. If students encounter certain problems such as poor communication, inconsistent perspectives, and failure to integrate what they have learned into the actual situations, they can summarize and analyze the causes of the problems after the discipline competitions, so as to cultivate their comprehensive practical abilities, which are to better understand and solve the problems, and take the initiative in future learning, and be good at observing the problems from different perspectives.

In order to meet the requirements of the construction and development of the new liberal arts, education management departments and industry associations hold some discipline competitions, with reference to the basic concepts and technical rules of international competitions, in terms of organizational forms and technical standards. The Chinese Association of Higher Education publishes the list for national college student discipline competitions recognized by the Ministry of Education every year. And these innovation and entrepreneurship competitions are also suited for the cultivation of Business English majors' practical abilities. That is to say, students are supposed to apply professional knowledge, open up the boundaries of participating majors, broaden the scope of practical teaching, strengthen the application of modern technologies such as artificial intelligence, avoid the single knowledge structure of competition students, improve students' participation level and practice autonomy, and enhance the confidence of language students in competing with students of other majors.

The Business English majors in the School of Foreign Languages in Guizhou University of Finance and Economics have been participating different Business-English-related competitions in recent years. In the last two years alone, students have participated in five competitions: the Sixth "Yixue Cup" National Business English Practical Skills Competition, the Sixth "Yixue Cup" National College Students English Vocabulary and Comprehensive Ability Competition (Professional Competition), the 2022 "Shopee Cup" Cross-border E-commerce Innovation and Entrepreneurship Public Welfare Competition, the First "Dianyue Cup" National College Cross-border E-commerce Comprehensive Ability Competition, and the Dianyue "Shopee Cup" Cross-border E-commerce Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition in 2023. Through the whole process of these competitions, the

comprehensive ability as well as the practical abilities of the students are enhanced greatly.

4.4 To Implement Diversified and Dynamic Assessment to Improve the Validity of Practical Teaching

One of the most efficient ways to ensure the implementation of practical teaching for Business English majors is to construct a diversified and dynamic assessment process, which occupies a position of great significance in many other aspects of the teaching process as well.

Normally speaking, the outputs evaluation can be divided into two types: real-time evaluation and delayed evaluation. The real-time evaluation can be achieved immediately after the responses of the students during the practical teaching process. The teacher needs to provide some real-time evaluation to help students better understand if they have understood the key points, and it can also help the teacher to adjust the teaching pace and the teaching process according to the responses of the students. The delayed evaluation refers to the kind of evaluation of the outputs of the students after the class, which can be done both in class and after class. The delayed evaluation can not only enhance the focal points and key points of the practical teaching, it also can help the teacher see if the teaching goals are achieved effectively or not, which in turn helps the teacher perfect the teaching plan gradually. Something worth noticing here is that for either kinds of evaluation, not only teachers can provide some insights, students can also play an important role in the process.

For certain practical sections for different courses in the School of Foreign Languages of Guizhou University of Finance and Economics, the diversified and dynamic assessment process are stressed. Take the course of Business English as an example here. A practical project concentrating on the Cross-border E-commerce process was implemented. In class, after the focal points and difficult points were introduced to the students, students were expected to provide some feedback to check the comprehension of those points. And this is when the teacher would provide some real-time evaluation. After the assignments were delegated to different groups of the students, when they have completed all the tasks, maybe several weeks later, and gave the outputs presentation, both the teacher and the students were supposed to provide some delayed evaluation. And it can be seen from the process that students may sometimes provide insights from different perspectives and make the evaluation from the teacher more comprehensive, which ensures the effective implementation of the goals of the practical teaching.

5. Conclusion

From what has been discussed so far, the significance of the construction of practical teaching system for Business English majors can speak for itself. The practical teaching is an important part of the whole teaching system. Trying to renovate the practical teaching system will boost the discipline development and enhance the practical abilities of the Business English graduates. In addition, considering the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, the proposal of the RCEP cooperation framework, as well as the recent development goals of Guizhou Province, the needs for qualified

Business English talents will be increasing, and a powerful and comprehensive practical teaching system can equipped students with the knowledge as well as the skills needed when they graduate, and help them fit into the position and the society.

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