An Innovative Research on Bachelor’s Degree Cultivating Program of Business English

Chuan-yu ZHANG
Shandong Women's University, No. 2399, Daxue Road, Changqing District, Jinan City, China

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Abstract. The term of “Business English Major” firstly appeared in “List of Undergraduate Majors Set in Higher Education Institutes Approved by the Ministry of Education (2006)”, being juxtaposed to the “English Major”. By the year of 2016, the amount of colleges and universities approved to set “Business English Major” has climbed to 293. Meantime, we should see the shortcomings of this major. For dealing with these problems, some solutions are founded as following: constructing “2/3/3-concept” curriculum system, reforming the traditional teaching modes, forming a team of “dual-qualification” teachers, alternating the theoretical study in the school and practical training at the practice bases, building diversified student evaluation mechanism.

Introduction

In 1960s, a series of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) [1] were produced with the coming of ESP Concept, such as Tourism English, Science English, Medical English, Laws English, Business English, and News English. The term of “Business English Major” firstly appeared in “List of Undergraduate Majors Set in Higher Education Institutes Approved by the Ministry of Education (2006)”; [2] being juxtaposed to the “English Major”. By the year of 2016, the amount of colleges and universities approved to set “Business English Major” has climbed to 293.

Chinese higher institutions actively established the Business English Major after the year of 2010, especially in 2013-2014, nearly 52% of institutions had set the major, which meant the obvious arising trend.[3] In fact, the Business English Major existed lots of unsolved shortcomings, for instance, unreasonable cultivating objects, duplicate curriculum settings, weak teaching staff, low-efficient practicing mode, and out-dated students’ evaluation mechanism. One of the most important reasons is that the Business English Major is exotic product, very few researchers and scholars pay attention to this domain, esp. the theories, not the practice.

Related Concepts

The Business English Major

Business English, belonging to the category of ESP (English for Special Purposes), is one of the functional variants of English.[4] From the prospective of concept, the major of Business English is to realize the fusion of “business knowledge module plus English language skills module”. In 1990s, the Business English Major had been set in lots of higher professional institutes and foreign trade concerned colleges.[5]

Cultivating Program of the Business English Major

Program, the explanation in Chinese Dictionary is “A specific plan for work or project for a problem”. Cultivating program of business English major, in short, is a complicated and comprehensive project in order to cultivate professional talents of Business English undergraduates including the name of title, the students being cultivated, the length of education, the goal of cultivation, the knowledge and capacity structure, relevant qualifications and certificates, curriculum set, practice, the elements of performance evaluation and graduation papers.
Problems Existed in the New-Built Business English Undergraduate

Deviation Between Orientation of Talents Cultivating and Actual Cultivation

Business English Major pops such cultivating goal as: “To cultivate such applied and extrovert-typed talents that can work for business administration, business practices and other foreign trade enterprises.” But the actual graduates can not start working immediately, instead of demanding lots of training and practicing.

Identical Curriculum Settings

In the process of designing a teaching plan, the institutions pay very little attention to dig the characteristics of the talents demand in a certain economic domain, while copy other schools’ teaching plans. E.g., there are philosophy, political economics, logic, situation and policy, Deng Xiaoping's theory, femaleology, PC application, etc., consisting of the basic courses. For about selective course, we get Selected Reading of British & American Literature, the Society and Culture of England and America, macro/micro-economics, international finance, higher mathematics, etc. In fact, every specialty should make its own teaching plan according to the real situation.

Weak Teachers Team with Unreasonable Echelon

First, there is a common and similar problem of shortage of teachers existed in the higher institutions which have set business English undergraduate, the amount of teachers/students can not meet the rate of 1/20 regulated by Ministry of Education. Second, we take a look at the distribution of technical titles, very few professors and associate professors, the majority of staff is lecturers. Third, most of the institutions get a lack of “dual-qualification” teachers which results in the shortage of teach-by-doing instructions. [6]

Single Practice Mode

Relying on single practice in school but not on practice in enterprises should result in the lack of real ability, after graduation, the students should start over. On the contrary, the higher institutions should conduct the alternating mode of learning and training, that will be better to solve the situation and trouble. The enterprises have the obligation to feedback some necessary information about the students’ practice, especially the problems and shortage of what they have learned in school.

Out-Dated Students’ Evaluating Mechanism

In colleges and universities, the most way to test and evaluate students’ knowledge is to use traditional test paper, 100 marks. Generally speaking, theoretical test has several shortcomings, first, it violates the concept of individual education and quality education; second, it ignores the average performance, emphasizes the final grades only, to the opposite, it violates the developing routine of individualization, not good to dig the students’ innovative potentials and practical skills.[7]

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According to the paper The National Standard of Teaching Quality of Business English Undergraduate in Higher Institutions written by Wang Lifei and Ye Xingguo, [8] the cultivating program should be established as following:

233-Concept Curriculum Settings

Business English undergraduate should increase the percentage of selective courses, reduce the percentage of required courses. Meanwhile, the selective courses should absorb those general selective courses including natural science, social science and human science. The students use self-selection and specify-selection that helps them develop overall ability and individual personality.

Three Types refers to public basic courses, specialized courses and practical courses. The unification of three-type courses should reduce the amount of public basic courses; carefully
arrange the professional courses; appropriately increase the courses consisting of the theories and practices. The most important point is, entrepreneurship course should be increased to cultivate the entrepreneurship thinking, designing ability and techniques. Foreign universities attach great importance to shaping the entrepreneurial ability of students, but at home, this field is often ignored. For application-oriented undergraduate personnel, employment and entrepreneurship are closely related. [10]

Three Modules refers to language module plus business knowledge module plus class practice module. The contents of these three modules are indispensable, complement each other. About module of teaching content, Yu Xiangyue (from Huzhou Teachers College) proposed "four course modules: English courses, humanistic courses, business courses and integration of economics plus management plus law. [11]

Reforming the Traditional Teaching Modes

Creating a Situational Teaching Mode in Class

For instance, the course of Applied English, the reading and writing of English recruitment advertisement, the students get a homework of writing a short and brief English recruitment advertisement for Shandong Women University after having studied several examples. It requests the students not only respect to all the elements of recruitment ads but also control the length of writing with clear statement.

Utilizing the Brain-Storming Method

Brain-Storming method, sometimes called the Intellectual Stimulation method, was initially proposed by Adam Osborne from America (the founder of Modern Creation Science) which was an effective method to train the creating ability of a big group, not a single person.

Utilizing Brain-Storming method in teaching usually does like this: the teacher set the problem, the students (in separate groups) solve the problem without any limits, eventually the teacher comments the answers with respect and confirmation, not True or False.

Using Group-Discussion to Form Students’ Team-Word Spirit and Innovation Capacity

Such as business correspondence, business negotiation, business etiquette, business English conversation, the import and export processes and operations, international settlement course, etc., should increase the proportion of classroom discussion in a certain circumstances for collaborative problem solving. To stimulate students' imagination and creativity, so that they can establish their own companies, teams, and simulate the various scenarios of trade processes and business negotiations.

Advocating Some Courses to Move Away from the Classroom

For example, Business English Conversation, Import and Export Process and Operation, Business Negotiation, Escort Interpreting, Business Etiquette, these courses should create actual scenes to practice their skills except for the in-class theories and practices. Further, the teacher might bring students to the enterprises, factories, firms, etc., and organize an imitating on-site class. The co-operating unit also assign some experienced staff to provide assistance in need.

Forming a Team of “Dual-Qualification” Teachers

Sending-out

To develop extramural “dual-qualification” bases which meet the characteristics of the major, and send certain teachers out to the bases to attend real practice.
Inviting Talents
Suggesting the personnel department to issue particular policy, introducing “dual-qualification” talents to come to work in our school. Emphasizing intermediate technical personnel with 3-5 years of working experience.

Changing the Norms
The qualifications relating to business English should be considered, for instance, the certificate of customs declaration, export certificate, certificate of translation (oral & written), IELTS, etc. Adopting reasonable incentive measures to improve the salary of “dual-qualification” teachers.

Alternating the Theories Study and Practice at Extramural Bases
This paper suggests the schools to take “1+0.5+0.5+0.5+0.5+0.5+0.5” practice mode or “2+0.5+0.5+0.5+0.5+0.5” practice mode which means the students may alternately go to the practice base for half a year and come back to school for half a year after having studied basic theories in school intensively, and these modes help them to combine the theories in book with the practical skills. In other words, the schools should set the curriculum provision in accordance with the need of enterprises. In reverse, students are more easily to find out their shortcomings in study.

Attempting to Build a Poly-Nary Students Evaluating System

Using Diversified Evaluating Forms
To evaluate a student’s grade in a certain semester should start with usual in-class performance (e.g., answering, attendance, group discussion, being late or leaving early), after-class homework, social practice report, investigation report, imitating operations, program design, practices, etc.. And of course, the final exam is very necessary.

Evaluating Students at Different Times
For most theoretical courses, we can evaluate students several times in a semester, not by final exam only. According to scores they get at different times, we can give students a comprehensive grade, that would be reasonable and scientific.

Summary
The cultivating program of business English undergraduate talents mainly include: (1) 233-concept curriculum settings, referring to the integrality of two kinds of courses (selective courses plus required courses), three types (public basic courses plus specialized courses plus practical courses) and three modules (language module plus business knowledge module plus class practice module); (2) Reforming the traditional teaching modes by using the method of situational teaching, group discussion, speech, and live teaching in the field; (3) Forming a team of “dual-qualification” teachers, introducing talents who have graduated more than 3-5 years with a good command of business knowledge and the English teaching, gradually sending them to the relevant enterprises for at least 1 years of practice; (4) Alternating the theories study and practice at extramural bases, the students’ outside practice training mode can be transferred from traditional "3+1" mode to "1+1+1+1" or "2+0.5+0.5+0.5+0.5" mode; (5) Attempting to build a poly-nary students evaluating system, using more new ways of testing such as classwork, homework, class attendance, class discussion, social practice report, investigation report, process simulation and operation and the practice at bases.

References


