The Cultivation of Ecological Literacy in Business English Teaching

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\textbf{Keywords:} Business English Teaching, Ecological Literacy, Teaching Methods.

\textbf{Abstract.} This article aims to probe how to nurture ecological literacy in the process of business English teaching. Since proper teaching concept and teaching method is the core of cultivating ecological literacy, the authors choose one of popular business English textbooks to study its eco-literacy education ideology. Moreover, in order to foster business talents with humanistic quality and awareness of environment protection, business English teaching should receive proper teaching concepts, and apply appropriate teaching methods to instill the ecological literacy which will be discussed in this study.

\textbf{Introduction}

As China entered WTO, the increase of connections with the world and the international trade makes the business English more important. The purpose of Business English course is not exclusively language training, it more involves corporate management, intercultural communication, and working psychology, which require learners to view the change of modern life to deepen the understanding of current life in historical and dynamic perspective. Thus, Business English is constantly promoted as ESP in universities. Currently, more than 400 universities of different levels provide this course or related courses.

Since 1960s, it is more acknowledged that economic development and environment protection are positively related, the ecological literacy shared by all citizens is the core to tackle the environment crisis. Ecological literacy is not born ideology which needs nurturing by constant learning and accumulating related knowledge to form concept of ecological knowledge, ecological awareness, and ecological behaviors.

However, the obsolete concepts are still dominating in Business English teaching, that is, by focusing teaching vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. It is neither suitable to fulfill the teaching expectation nor cultivate ecological literacy. Therefore this article intends to probe and apply desired concepts and methods to seek possible innovation in business English.

\textbf{Literature Review}

The terminology of ecological literacy originally from the book \textit{Ecological Literacy: the Transition of Education To the Post Modern Society} written by American ecologist David W. Orr in 1992. He believed that people’s shortage of natural science knowledge and humanities knowledge resulted in the ever worsening ecological crisis. He advocated that a man with ecological literary must have necessary knowledge and right attitude to understand the interrelation and capability to practice simultaneously. Another reputable scholar Capra emphasized the significance of ecological literacy on reconnecting to the Life Web, ensuring the sustainability of survival for all human beings if the concept could be acquired by every social member.

As for the education of ecological literacy, scholars at home and abroad have made constructive research. Rick Hall and Cherry Bauer-Armstrong used EPS (Earth Partnership for Schools) program to attract local students to improve the environment of local community, and to increase awareness of ecological behavior. [1] Wallace J. Sherlock intended to enhance the ecological knowledge and
ecological aesthetics literature seminar. [2] Brett Bruyere pointed out the ecological literary had a profound and far reaching influence on student’s value and behavior. [3] Debra B. Mitchell promoted the idea of moral education and ecological fairness from the perspective of ecological crisis. His article pinpointed the core of ecological crisis was the crisis of youth education. This education should focus more on ecological literary targeting the young students. [4] Mike Mueller proposed the concept of Education for All, and differentiating the factors that strangle its development.[5] Xue Jinxian pointed out that business English teaching should be in conformity with the principle of Sustainable Development, the course should also cultivate the ecological literary of learners.[6] Zhao Xuemin said it was the implementation of Principle of Sustainable Development to nurture teenager’s ecological literary and it was the urgent demands of establishing harmonious society.[7] Fengyanhua and Guan Wenxin aimed to build eco-culture class.[8] Wang Qiang analyzed the management pattern and operation mechanism.[9]

Scholars at home did lots of research on Business English teaching. On teaching concept, Ding Liying focused on metacognitive strategy, Zhang Lanling focused on constructivism, Xiao Liangming discussed it from Content Base concept,[10] Wang Fupeng proposed Learner-based concept[11], Yu Yan pointed out the competence Based concept, Zhou Jiemin created the PBL concept. On teaching patterns and teaching methods[12], Gao Yingjuan and Chen Yisong proposed some ideas about Double-Qualified Teacher structure,[13] Zhang Yazhi advocated case study,[14] Feng Min discussed the advantages of cooperative learning,[15] Zhang Lianjiao focused on the effect of setting up business situations.[16] Li ling transformed the traditional method into Interactive Teaching method.[17] Cao Biao promoted Program Teaching with participation of learners and educators.[18] On teaching tactics, Yang Xin raised Multimodal English teaching mode, meaning using multi-channels, multi-models to help learners better participate language learning.[19] Ruanjizhi put forward the importance of Internet in Business English teaching. In general, CBI[20] (content-based instruction). PBL (problem-based learning) CBE (competence-based education), student-centered teaching are prevailing teaching concepts in Business English teaching practice. However, they focus on different aspects. CBI requires practicality, which means practical commercial knowledge should be the basic content instead of broad English knowledge like vocabulary and grammar. PBL attaches much importance on problem discovery-problem analysis-problem solve process, which should be the first step of conveying knowledge. To comprehend by analogy is the purpose of this method. CBE aims at improving the competence of learners by making proper learning content and teaching method according to their desired competence. Student-centered teaching starts from needs analysis, which includes learning needs, learning content and learner.

To sum up, although the researches about eco-literacy nurturing and Business English teaching methods have been conducted deeply and thoroughly, rare scholar steps into how to improve eco-literacy in Business English teaching process. That is why the authors attempt to discuss this topic in different perspective.

Definition and Classification of Ecological Literacy in Business English Textbooks

The growing prosperity of global communication gives new connotation to Business English, which not only means English used in international trade, but also English used in intercultural communication. It involves business knowledge, business communication skills and language in business context. What’s more, currently, awareness of environment protection is a popular topic during the external contact and it’s a duty to every business person as well. Therefore, introducing eco-literacy into business English teaching is able to enrich the course, make it more compliant with the demands of modern society, facilitating to raise modern business talents with eco-literacy and protean skills. Therefore, it speeds up the development of the Business English itself as well.

In order to better accomplish the teaching task, and to fully use the Business English textbooks, we
picked *Success With BEC student’s Book* (the third edition) as research target, which is the latest edition revised by Cambridge ESOL, published by Cengage Learning company and recommended by National educational department examination center. The series of textbooks consist of three books of different levels, *BEC preliminary*, *BEC vantage*, and *BEC higher*. The series are applied by many universities due to its richness and wide coverage of knowledge. Thus, the study of it has certain representativeness.

She Zhenrong pointed out that eco-literacy should be indispensible to all social members, which includes eco-knowledge literacy, eco-ethics literacy, eco-aesthetics literacy and eco-behavior literacy, which need cultivating through education and favorable teaching situation. Eco-knowledge literary means forming eco-friendly life style by acquiring basic eco-knowledge; eco-ethics literacy means understanding the values of all life, forming an ethics that human and nature can co-exist harmoniously; eco-aesthetics literacy means building up a awareness of appreciating and protecting eco-beauty; eco-behavior literacy is about how to treat eco-environment properly in work and life.[21]

We apply the classification to analyze the content of the Business English textbooks in the perspective of ecological literacy. (See Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eco-literacy Literacy</th>
<th>P: JIT production to minimize costs (P.79). The prospects of hydrogen (P.86), optimize management to protect environment (P.115)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V: the strength of solar energy (P.111), introduce a solar energy company (P.113)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H: analyze of energy consumption in US (P.48), Use market quota system to reduce carbon dioxide emissions (P.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-ethics literacy</td>
<td>P: Maintain community ecological environment (P.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V: Analysis of the vehicle per capita and its impact (P.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H: Analysis of how to reduce the environmental impact of oil leak (P.12). One of the CSRs is to protect the environment (P.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-aesthetics literacy</td>
<td>P: Away from city, enjoy the countryside (P.46), New application to deal with graffiti (P.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H: Introduce good ecological environment in Nicaragua has attracted investment (P.110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-behavior literacy</td>
<td>P: keep balance of work and life (P.9), A healthy lifestyle is one of the employee selection criteria (P.13) To introduce intelligent household (P.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V: Select new direction of investment in new energy (P.110), The company launched a movement of protecting the environment, reduce the use of plastic bags (P.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H: energy saving tactics in life (P.85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Eco-literacy in Business English textbook.

*Note: P, V, H refer to the textbook of BEC preliminary, vantage, and higher*

Ecotype of Business English Teaching Mode

Researches on Business English, especially on teaching methods have made significant progress.
Based on their experience or learning from abroad or innovate through theories, many experts contributed lots of ideas, like case study method, situation teaching, cooperative learning, communicative teaching, program-driven teaching, interactive teaching and double qualified teachers, etc. On teaching theory and teaching concepts, Meta-cognitive strategy theory, constructivism, CBI, learner-based, CBE, PBL are prevailing.

Eco-knowledge literacy, eco-ethics literacy, eco-aesthetic and eco-behaviors are four components of ecological literacy, among which, the eco-knowledge literacy functions as a base. Acquisition of knowledge helps establish eco-morality and eco-aesthetics and further influence eco-behavior in a positive way.

If the benchmark is to improve learner’s ecological literacy, the concepts mentioned above have different focuses. To ecological-knowledge, CBI concept can contribute more, since it focuses on practical, specific knowledge, which can play a constructive role in eco-knowledge education. The features of PBL determine it is applicable to nurture ecological ethics, because the best entry point is an ecological crisis case, instill the eco-ethics by analyzing and solving the problem is more acceptable. To nurture eco-behavior, since CBE concept focuses on improving competence, it is recommended to cultivate Eco-behaviors.

To view holistically, the methods below are more applicable in cultivating ecological literacy in Business English.

**Case Study Method**

Case study is widely used and proved to be effective in Business English teaching, which is able to embody the abstract concepts by learning from real case. It would be an option to instill eco-literacy in Business English teaching.

As the demand of compound talents increases rapidly, teaching language exclusively is no longer adequate. Case study should be introduced into the course, especially the cases that are worth heated discussion and argument. By analyzing them with facts and scientific methods, the analytic ability and problem-solving ability of learners is expected to improve.

According to the actual situation of ecological literacy and business English teaching, it is worth considering using cases in the textbooks to achieve the teaching goals. Unit one in BEC Higher provides a case, the oil spill case. This case can be used to arouse awareness of environment protection of learners and improve their eco-knowledge literacy and eco-ethics literacy.

**Situational Teaching Method**

This method is popular for its flexible design, simple operation, vivid simulation and high participation. Setting up business situations and teaching in it enables learners to sense the problems occurring in business contacts, which can greatly energize the learners. Therefore, it is acceptable to set up business situations, such as training seminar with topic of how to practice eco-behaviors in business activities under the guide of eco-ethics.

In the activity of Decisions and Dilemmas, the teacher can apply the Writing to Learn Activities to Increase ecological literacy, the writer used writing to improve the eco-literacy of learners, which needs the understanding of the concept and examples related to the learners. It acquires all learners to be authentic learners, who will learn eco-knowledge on their own. Business situations can be created by taking advantage of business English textbooks, for instance, in Unit Five in BEC vantage. It requires simulating a meeting discussing about the positive effects of environment protection. The learners can acquire knowledge about environment, enhance the awareness of eco-ethics and cultivate eco-behaviors in business situation.
Cooperative Learning

This method is also called Collaborative learning method. The method needs teamwork, and interaction of all dynamic factors to achieve teaching tasks. The marks will be given through group appraisal. The cooperative learning method consists of five elements, (1) positive interdependence (each member only limited resource and information. The task will be complete only by joint efforts of all members) (2) Cooperation intention and interpersonal skills (encourage support and aids from within, intention of cooperation and right attitude to competition) (3) individual performance duty (every member must take up a certain responsibility of the final result) (4) face-to-face interaction (encourage each other to achieve collective goal) (5) group self-appraisal (appraise activity regularly to maintain effectiveness).

The core of eco-knowledge is the holistic philosophy, indicating that all forms of life are parts of a giant life web of earth. While the eco-ethics advocate the respect to non-human life. In cooperative learning, every member is the essential part of team, which requires equal and cooperative attitude to everyone. This attitude can sublimate into eco-ethics literacy.

Communicative Teaching Method

This method is also called Functional and Notional Approach, with communication as its core, development of interpersonal skills as its aim, proposed that language should be regarded as a tool. The teaching content is based on language function that learners master the communicative function and features of social culture through corpus and simulative situation provided by educators.

Compared with cooperative learning, the term "communicative" means communicative function of language instead of communication between people. From a holistic point of view, communicative teaching method aims to direct learners to experience the charm of language and use it flexibly. For example, in unit one of BEC preliminary, learners are required to discuss how to keep balance between work and life. Unit eleven of BEC higher requires learners to decide investment direction of a new energy and explain reasons, through which, learners can combine eco-literacy with Business English learning to improve their knowledge about the relationship between human and nature.

Interactive Teaching Method

Interactive teaching is a kind of reform and innovation of traditional teaching, which can improve language skills effectively. The application of this method needs learners to understand the eco-literacy and master the skills to hold a training seminar. this method combining the thought of teaching with studying practice, aim at boosting learners’ initiative and increasing learners’ autonomy.

Program Driven Teaching

The method allows learners to utilize knowledge they learnt by participating a course-related program. It can effectively improve the comprehensive ability of learners.

Programs can be design as a supplement to Business English teaching, for example, learners visit a company, figure out the status quo of ecological literacy in commercial practice and complete a proposal based on their findings.

It is expected that learners would obtain better understanding of eco-literacy and its application through information gathering, corporate visiting, group discussion and communication with advisor. Besides, the business communication ability of learners will get progress.

Double Qualified Teachers Structure

Business English teaching should keep balance between theory and practice. However, one teacher
is obviously insufficient to do that. This method is designed to tackle the problem by organizing teachers with different expertise to achieve synergistic effect, which is expected to improve quality of education and facilitate protean talents with qualification and practice experience.

The most direct and dynamic way of instill eco-literacy is two-teacher structure. It tackles the problem that specialized theoretical teachers have limited practice experience by inviting entrepreneurs from environmental company or company with great eco-atmosphere. What’s more, the experience of the extracurricular tutors enables learners to study eco-literacy in a direct way.

Develop School-Based Teaching Textbook

It’s a good option to cultivate eco-literacy in Business English by selecting content both related to eco-literacy and Business English to school based teaching textbook, seeking a balance point between the two, so that the learners can obtain eco-literacy creatively and constructively.

Summary

Eco-literacy is an organic composition of eco-knowledge, eco-ethics, eco-aesthetic and eco-behavior, whose focus is the overall picture. Case study, situational teaching, program driven, double-qualified structure provide simulative situation, where learners can learn from practice, combine the theory with practice, and ultimately improve ability in terms of knowledge, concepts and inner cultivation. Besides, Business English teaching and eco-literacy education will also benefit from it.

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