

# *Exploring the Reform of Practical Teaching of Business English Course for Cross-border E-commerce Majors in the Era of Digital Economy*

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**Abstract:** In the era of digital economy, cross-border e-commerce has become an important part of the international trade landscape. As an important part of cross-border e-commerce, Business English courses promote the development of cross-border e-commerce by cultivating inter-disciplinary talents with knowledge of international trade and e-commerce, as well as providing professional Business English skills training. However, in the Business English teaching of the current cross-border e-commerce majors, the teaching materials and curriculum cannot meet the actual needs. The practical teaching methods have lagged behind and the teaching faculty is relatively weak. This paper will put forward solutions to those problems in order to provide a reference for the specific teaching practice.

With the development of the digital economy, cross-border e-commerce, as a new trade mode and economic form, is rapidly emerging globally and has become an important force in promoting the development of international trade<sup>[1]</sup>. The cross-border e-commerce industry is a complex global industry that requires human resources with skills in cross-border trade, e-commerce, international logistics, overseas market development, etc. The arrival of this new era has caused the education sector to step up its reforms<sup>[2]</sup>. As the cross-border e-commerce majors have a more urgent need for Business English talents, the traditional Business English courses have many drawbacks, so colleges and universities should push the reform of Business English teaching to cultivate more Business English talents with strong practical ability for the society.

## **1. The Necessity of Improving the Practice Teaching of Business English in Cross-border E-commerce**

### **1.1 Improve the Quality of Business English Practical Teaching**

It is an inevitable trend to improve the quality of Business English practical teaching in higher education institutions. According to the instruction of Document No. 16 issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, it should actively promote the cultivation of students' practical ability by combining work and study, and gradually optimize the talent cultivation system,

emphasizing that teaching activities should be open, practical and career-oriented. In order to improve the practical ability of contemporary college students, it is necessary to rely on the reform of practical teaching in the courses of various disciplines, and the focus is on strengthening the design and innovation of practical courses, which is an effective way to develop their vocational skills and practical ability. Incorporating practical aspects into the teaching process of Business English can not only help students transform theoretical knowledge into practical business skills, but also further enhance their competitiveness and employability in the market, so that institutions of higher education can nurture more professionals to meet the needs of the industry and enterprises.

## **1.2 Promote the Reform of Business English Teaching**

Improving the practical teaching of Business English in the field of cross-border e-commerce has an important practical value for promoting the reform of Business English teaching in colleges and universities. Guiding students to actively participate in practical teaching activities can effectively improve their practical operation ability and professionalism, which not only affects the quality of Business English talents, but also directly relates to the success of college education. Therefore, colleges and universities should continue to optimize the framework and methods of practical teaching of Business English in order to enhance students' innovation, analytical and problem-solving ability, and at the same time to improve their profession and comprehensive quality, and then to promote the overall healthy development of students.

## **1.3 Improve the Practical Teaching System of Business English**

Improving the practical teaching of Business English in cross-border e-commerce is crucial to the establishment of a complete Business English practical teaching system. According to the analysis of the employment situation of the graduates of cross-border e-commerce majors in China in recent years, it is found that one of the main factors restricting the employment of graduates is the lack of English practical ability, which reflects the inadequacy of the current practical teaching of Business English in colleges and universities. For students, mastering theoretical knowledge is important, but vocational skills and practical ability are the key elements to their employment in the future<sup>[3]</sup>. Therefore, when teaching Business English, colleges and universities should focus on the existing problems in practical teaching, learn from successful reform experiences, and continuously promote the innovation and development of Business English practical teaching, which is of great significance for improving students' professional skills and practical operation.

## **2. Problems of Business English Teaching in Cross-border E-commerce Majors**

### **2.1 The Lack of Practical Relevance for Textbooks and Curriculum**

The lack of practical relevance of textbooks and curriculum is reflected in the following aspects: insufficient practicality, neglect of cultural differences, and technology updating is lagging behind. The vocabulary and sentence patterns used in textbooks may be different from the language used in practice. For example, some textbooks may emphasize too much on the teaching of theoretical knowledge and neglect the industry terms and daily communication phrases that need to be frequently used in the actual work. Conversation scenarios may not be realistic enough to reflect common communication scenarios in cross-border e-commerce working environments, such as dealing with customer complaints, conducting product negotiations, etc. The lack of introduction to the cultural backgrounds of different countries in the textbooks makes it difficult for the students to

understand the mindset and behavioral habits of the customers from different cultures in the working circumstances. There are not enough case studies or situational simulations to help students understand how to communicate effectively across cultural barriers. With the rapid development of e-commerce technology, the content of some textbooks may be outdated and not updated to include the latest methods of using e-commerce platforms, digital marketing strategies, payment solutions, etc. There is a lack of teaching about emerging markets and technology trends (e.g. social media marketing, mobile payments, big data analytics, etc.)<sup>[4]</sup>

## 2.2 Practical Teaching Methods Have Lagging Behind

In the current higher education system, English practical teaching activities are still influenced by the traditional teacher-led education model, which makes little difference between practical courses and theoretical lectures. Teachers often tend to use traditional classroom lectures to convey practical knowledge and technical points. This way of Business English teaching restricts students' participation and reduces their opportunities for practical and simulation exercises, thus affecting the improvement of students' English oral expression. Due to the slow updating of English practical teaching methods in colleges and universities, the Business English professionals trained often show strong theoretical foundations, but their practical skills are relatively weak. For example, when purchasing goods around the world and cooperating with payment institutions to provide a variety of payment methods, it requires diverse knowledge backgrounds and strong communication skills. This situation not only makes it difficult to meet the demand of industries and enterprises for talents with practical working ability, but also affects the employment competitiveness of graduates, which is not conducive to the cultivation of high-quality cross-border e-commerce talents.

## 2.3 Weak Teaching Faculty

The rapid development of cross-border e-commerce industry requires English majors to have practical operation and management experience, but the faculty of local higher education institutions consists of teachers with traditional academic backgrounds, who lack practical experience directly related to the cross-border e-commerce industry, and even most of the English majors' research directions are not related to cross-border e-commerce<sup>[5]</sup>. In addition, there is constant changing in the policies and regulations of cross-border e-commerce industry, market trends and technological development, thus teachers need to constantly update their knowledge and skills to keep up with the industry. However, English teachers lack the time and resources to carry out continuous learning and updating. For example, those full-time teachers expand their professional knowledge mainly by participating in academic seminars or trainings. Fewer teachers can improve their practical ability by participating in the cross-border e-commerce projects through the form of social practice. The shortage of practical experience results in that the teachers cannot master the cross-border e-commerce operation, not to say share practical experience with students, which makes it difficult to develop practical skills for students. Generally speaking, at present, there is a significant problem of “four nos” in the Business English teaching team of cross-border e-commerce majors in institutions of higher education, i.e., “no solid cross-border e-commerce basic knowledge + no cross-border industry experience + no participation in cross-border e-commerce practical training operations + no sufficient cross-border e-commerce teaching experience”<sup>[6]</sup>.

### 3. Reform Strategies for Practical Teaching of Business English Course for Cross-border E-commerce Majors

#### 3.1 Creating A New Model of School-Enterprise Cooperation in the Digital Age

Under the context of digitization, the teaching mode of “school-enterprise co-construction” is conducive to the building of Business English teaching team and the digital teaching mode. On the basis of “integration of industry and education, cooperation between schools and enterprises, and combination of work and study”, based on industrial institutions, we will carry out in-depth cooperation between enterprises and schools, promote the research and application of Business English, and provide powerful support for the construction of “One Belt, One Road” and the development of the regional economy of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao Bay Area. When training Business English talents, expertise from local enterprises are introduced, forming a circular model, see Figure 1.

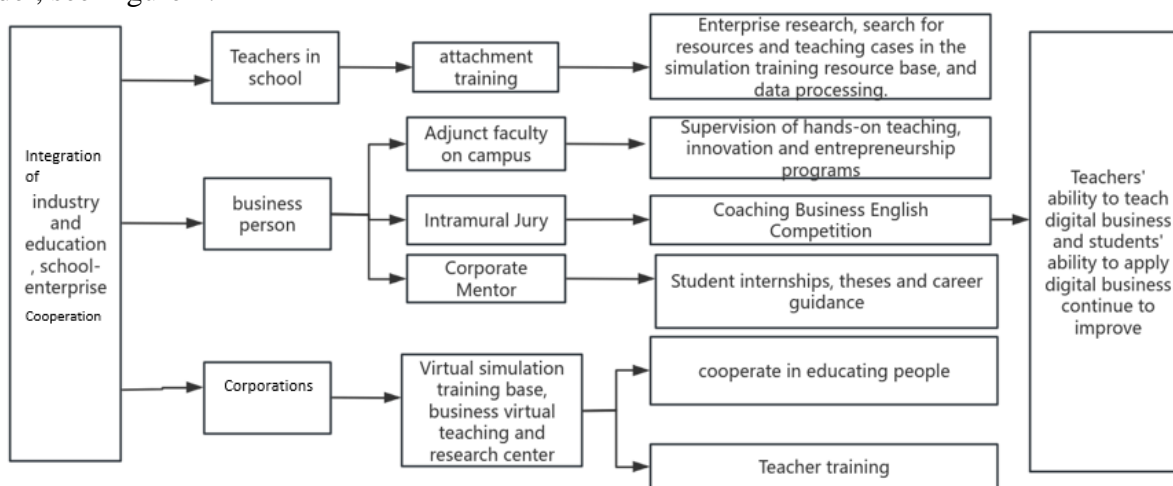


Figure 1: A New Model of School-Enterprise Cooperation

As shown in Figure 1, through the integration of industry and education, school-enterprise cooperation and other means, teachers in schools can serve as interns in enterprises, carry out enterprise research, and build up simulation training resource base as well as teaching examples in enterprises, so that they can improve themselves in digital marketing, cross-border e-commerce platform operation, and cross-border e-commerce live broadcasting, and so on. Employees from enterprises can participate in the construction of virtual training bases by working as part-time teachers outside the university, guiding practical teaching and innovation and entrepreneurship activities through the established virtual simulation resource base, leading the universities to carry out Business English competitions, and acting as judges of the competitions. In addition, they also serve as enterprise instructors on campus, holding positions in the field of cross-border e-commerce, and work with teachers to provide guidance on internships, including internship guidance, thesis guidance, employment guidance, and employment recommendation. The company collaborates with institutions in the form of industrial universities to establish campus virtual simulation training bases, business virtual teaching and research laboratories through virtual reality, augmented reality, mixed reality and other technologies, jointly develop Business English courses and electronic teaching materials, and jointly carry out teaching and research activities in cloud Business English, with an emphasis on training in new media marketing, business data analysis, Live broadcasting skills, short video production, RFQ, Python programming, cross-border e-commerce operation and other specialized knowledge. Through special lectures by enterprise experts, we exchange advanced

education concepts of Business English, improve teachers' comprehensive Business English teaching and research reform, promote teachers' digital business teaching and students' digital business application. If their abilities are not improved, it will go back to the closed-loop feedback cycle, where the school will find out the root cause of the problem and solve it, so as to improve teachers' and students' digital literacy. The system is a continuous improvement system.

### **3.2 Establishing Multidimensional Cultivation Channels for Business English Teachers in the Digital Era**

The digital era has put forward new requirements on the teaching and textbook research ability to Business English teachers. Qualified Business English teachers should have informationized teaching skills and informationized professional knowledge and skills. Schools can build their faculty through multi-dimensional cultivation channels such as introducing new bloods, internal promotion, and school-enterprise collaborative cultivation. When introducing teachers, in addition to focusing on talents with Business English professional background, it is also necessary to pay attention to the interdisciplinary talents, recruiting personnel with enterprise background and practical skills in digitalized business to realize the diversification of the faculty structure, including teachers majoring in Business English, part-time enterprise personnel, digital technicians, industry experts and other personnels. Schools can also introduce various policies to enhance the digitalized teaching ability for full-time Business English teachers, such as through the end-of-year assessment, title evaluation and other systems, for the purpose to motivate teachers to take the initiative to learn digitalized business knowledge in the School of Big Data, School of Finance and Economics and School of Management, to actively participate in the training courses of digitalized business technology, lectures on digitalized business teaching skills, seminars on digital humanities, and Internet+ Business English teaching competitions, and to regularly participate in business virtual teaching and research seminars. In addition, school-enterprise collaborative cultivation is also an effective way to build Business English faculty in the digital era.

### **3.3 Building Digital Business English Textbooks**

Traditional paper textbooks have many shortcomings, such as a serious lag in information, a dull form and little attraction to students. For this reason, different approaches should be used to design digital textbooks for Business English. First of all, digitalization and informatization should be reflected in the form of presentation. Universities can cooperate with enterprises and software companies to develop interactive digital textbooks and design an AR content reference book according to the actual situation of enterprises. The resources and cases provided by enterprises are applied to three-dimensional images, which provide a three-dimensional presentation of characters and objects, a realistic reproduction of business scenarios and live broadcasts of cross-border e-commerce, and an in-depth combination of textbooks and digital teaching resources, which turns paper into holographic figures. At the same time, we can also work with publishers to develop three-dimensional digital resources for Business English, so that we can get the workflow, work content, work cases, course knowledge points, and supporting exercises of business work situations with just one sweep. Secondly, as for teaching materials, it is necessary to reflect the business professional norms and work process in the digital era, so that the work tasks of cross-border e-commerce positions can be decomposed and the cases collected by enterprises can be written in a project-based manner with the textbook, thus realizing the correspondence between the projects and work steps in the textbook. Digital thinking should also be properly integrated into it to cultivate students' digital business quality.

## 4. Conclusion

In the context of the digital economy era, with the deep integration of Internet technology and business models, cross-border e-commerce, a new business operation mode, will usher in a broader development space, and become a crucial link in reshaping the international trade pattern, which will also bring more business opportunities and good development prospects for global enterprises<sup>[7]</sup>. Starting from cross-border e-commerce professional Business English, this paper proposes that the reform of Business English practical teaching can be promoted by creating a new model of school-enterprise cooperation, establishing multidimensional cultivation channels for Business English teachers and building digital Business English textbooks.

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