

Exploration of Business English Practice Teaching in a Cross-cultural Context

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Abstract

With the increasing globalization of the economy, frequent international trade has become a key objective for countries' development. In this context, the development of cultural trade is vital for communication between countries. Especially in the current international situation, China's enterprises and cultural institutions urgently need a large number of high-end business English talents. These talents are not only the main force in business negotiations but also crucial for promoting cultural exchange and transactions between countries. The demand for business English proficiency has now extended beyond purely linguistic abilities. It requires higher levels of cross-cultural communication awareness and understanding of culture differences. Therefore, it has become particularly important in daily teaching to cultivate the cross-cultural communication skills of students. Based on the above perspective, this paper analyzes the current status of business English teaching and proposes effective strategies. These strategies mainly include creating translation scenarios in business English, utilizing AI teaching assistance tools, deepening the integration of industry and education, and establishing a diversified evaluation system. By adopting these effective strategies, business English teaching can better cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills and make them important contributors to the development of cultural exchange between China and the world.

Keywords

Cross-cultural, Cultural differences, Business English, Teaching.

1. The Influence of Cultural Differences on Business Communication

1.1. Cultural Differences leading to Communication Barriers

Cultural differences between countries can result in communication barriers. Without a deep understanding of these differences, direct translation can often lead to embarrassment and misunderstandings. Neglecting the cultural and linguistic environment in teaching makes it difficult to ensure students' accurate cultural and language expressions, leading to deviations or even errors in translation. Moreover, deep-seated cultural differences result in variations in idiomatic expressions, and ignoring this aspect in teaching can cause significant obstacles in business negotiations and communication when students are not understood by their counterparts.

In business communication, accurate conveyance of information is crucial. However, industry-specific languages in different regions have unique characteristics that can lead to misunderstandings and make it difficult for both parties to grasp each other's true intentions. For example, in Chinese culture, direct statements are often avoided, and doubts or refusals are typically expressed in an indirect and tactful manner. This can easily be translated into

expressions of agreement or partial agreement, leading to potential misinterpretations. Conversely, Western culture values logic over intuition and tends to be more straightforward in language expression. Translating directly into Chinese may also create tensions in business relationships. As international trade often involves cross-border negotiations, differences in etiquette and customs can create communication barriers. This includes dining cultures and gift-giving customs. In Chinese culture, seating arrangements in dining occasions hold significant meaning[1]. However, in different cultural contexts, these deep meanings can easily lead to misunderstandings and confusion. Inappropriate behavior may unintentionally offend the other party. Furthermore, different cultures have contrasting views on gift-giving, with significant differences in assessing the value and significance of gifts. In some countries, accepting gifts in a business context can be seen as burdensome. Failure to understand these cultural differences in communication can lead to offenses and burdens.

1.2. Cultural Differences leading to Inefficient Cooperation Efficiency

Establishing trust between cooperating parties is crucial for smooth collaboration. However, trust alone is not enough. It is equally important to understand the differences in norms and values between each other. Insufficient understanding can result in low efficiency or even a halt in project progress. Avoiding such situations is an important goal in business English education. Different cultures have significant differences in their perception of time. Different value orientations regarding time and speed can lead to conflicts between cultures. For example, China has a multi-tasking system, which is characterized by flexible time arrangements and simultaneous scheduling of multiple tasks. This flexible time processing model can cause conflicts with single-tasking system that tend to follow strict time deadlines for certain tasks. In China, the belief is that discussing work at any time reflects a strong work ethic, whereas in European cultures, it may be perceived as a lack of respect for legally designated rest time.

2. Strategies for Dealing with Cross-cultural Communication in Practice Teaching

2.1. Creating Translation Scenarios in Business English

Practical teaching in business English often utilizes case scenario simulations as the main approach, supplemented by short-term internships in cooperation with external companies. For example, in the field of international trade-oriented business English, trade training software is commonly used, and teachers guide students to simulate practical cases as both buyers and sellers. However, due to the limitations and delays of simulated scenarios, the skills acquired by students may not meet the demands of actual work after graduation. Therefore, in addition to traditional practical teaching methods, it is important to modify teaching methods based on current talent needs. Firstly, the use of internet resources to promptly update scenario content is necessary. Teachers should select news cases relevant to the course content from international business news and encourage students to use social media platforms to track and share business English-related current events. By fostering interaction between teachers and students inside and outside the classroom, students can feel engaged. After selecting the cases, teachers can establish specific themed tags for student participation in the first-round discussion, facilitating real-time information sharing. Subsequently, students can simulate business meetings based on the latest business events. Role-playing different characters, students can participate in the second-round discussion and demonstrate their business English abilities. Emphasizing the teaching of cultural differences between China and the West is crucial in the teaching process to enhance students' cultural knowledge. Teachers can compare and contrast Chinese and Western cultures and employ various forms of media, such as films and videos, to help students strengthen their cultural literacy.

The purpose of scenario setting is to provide students of Business English with experience, enabling them to address two teaching challenges through practice. The first challenge is how to deal with cultural differences in cross-cultural communication. The second challenge is how to ensure that the teaching of Business English meets the evolving demands of talent.

2.2. Utilizing AI Teaching Assistance Tools

The use of AI teaching assistance tools aids in optimizing educational scenarios. Strengthening the ability to create business English teaching scenarios is a critical aspect of business English teaching[2]. AI speech recognition technology can convert students' spoken English into text or provide real-time feedback, helping students improve pronunciation and intonation. Natural Language Processing (NLP) technology can be used for text analysis, automatic translation, and grammar correction. For example, students can use NLP tools to check grammar errors and inappropriate word usage in business documents, emails, or speeches. With the effective integration of intelligent tools, teachers can assign more written exercises, allowing students to self-correct with the assistance of tools, thus addressing the issue of limited teacher time to review a large number of assignments. AI-driven virtual assistants and chatbots can simulate business communication scenarios and provide supplementary learning materials and answers to students' questions during conversations and interactions. Virtual voice assistants such as Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and Apple Siri can be employed. Teachers can use AI tools to analyze each student's exercise and test scores, enabling AI to identify weak areas and provide targeted exercises and teaching suggestions.

Online communication tools and translation tools can help students translate English texts and facilitate oral practice and remote communication. In the era of comprehensive development of artificial intelligence, teachers have a responsibility to guide students on how to effectively use AI to complete learning and work tasks. By interpreting educational issues in business English from the perspective of students, teachers can focus on improving students' translation skills in business English and continuously enhance the integration of AI-based educational content. This way, students can strengthen their accumulation of translation knowledge in business English, thereby improving their translation abilities and learning outcomes in the context of artificial intelligence[3].

2.3. Applying Project-based Teaching to Inspire Learning Enthusiasm

Project-based teaching, initially proposed by the German Federal Vocational Education Institute, emphasizes learning driven by project tasks through group discussions and collaborative learning. Students acquire new knowledge and develop problem-solving skills by completing projects. In project teaching, the focus is not solely on the results but primarily on the process of project completion. Students need to apply planning and coordination skills, understand the knowledge and skills required by the curriculum, experience the challenges and joys of creativity, and demonstrate their subjective initiative in problem identification and resolution. Teachers play the roles of guides and referees in project teaching, helping and guiding students to successfully complete project challenges and ultimately conduct fair evaluations. It can be observed in the teaching process that students show more enthusiasm for exploration and learning when given more autonomy. Learning and application occur almost simultaneously during project completion, greatly improving students' efficiency in mastering knowledge.

As a discipline related to international trade and economics, business English training is of paramount importance in cultivating students' business English and international trade competencies. Students' practical skills directly affect their ability to adapt to social needs. Therefore, the application of project-based teaching in business English has advantages and strong applicability.

The practice of project-based teaching requires students to apply Business English in practical tasks, such as writing business reports, composing emails, or creating presentations. Such tasks enable students to better adapt to and cope with the current business environment. Taking the "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Planning Project" practice as an example, students apply theoretical knowledge related to business concepts, organizational forms, financing, and the 4P marketing elements during the process of completing the entrepreneurial planning project. With guidance from teachers and the opportunity to showcase their personalized ideas, students' enthusiasm for learning is significantly enhanced. As a result, teaching effectiveness improves, and students' professional skills and comprehensive qualities are enhanced.

The practice of project-based teaching also requires deep integration between industry and education. Whether through on-campus training platforms or off-campus training bases, the combination of on-campus training and project-based practices, with the guidance of both on-campus teachers and industry mentors, is necessary[4]. Project-based teaching can also leverage competitions such as innovation and entrepreneurship contests to train students' business creativity, business planning, and business negotiation skills.

2.4. Diversified Evaluation System

The scoring system for business English contains two parts: hard knowledge, manifested in speech pronunciation, vocabulary, and writing grammar. This part can be quantitatively assessed. However, for practical teaching, simply relying on quantitative assessments may be too limited and may not reflect students' comprehensive abilities. Cultural and professional literacy are difficult to quantify. With the development of international trade, the speed and degree of international cultural trade have gradually become important indicators of competitiveness among countries. The essence of business English training is to develop specialized talents for international business and trade. Improving students' cultural literacy will enhance their professional competencies. Cultural literacy encompasses comprehensive cognitive abilities in culture, trade, current affairs, politics, history, and more. These aspects should be subtly integrated into daily teaching cases and projects in business English. Therefore, teachers' evaluation system for students should achieve an organic combination of qualitative and quantitative elements[5]. Only in this way can students' business English abilities be objectively reflected and their motivation enhanced.

The assessment of the effectiveness of business English practice can be achieved through various methods. Firstly, students can present their project experiences and give PowerPoint presentations in the classroom. Secondly, students can be encouraged to demonstrate their comprehensive abilities and innovative thinking, such as by producing short videos. Thirdly, for projects involving collaboration with companies, performance reports can be used as a basis for evaluation.

The evaluation scenarios and evaluators should be expanded within a diversified evaluation system. Firstly, it should go beyond the limitations of the classroom and extend to post-class life scenarios. Students can be comprehensively evaluated through dimensions such as participating in innovation and entrepreneurship competitions and industry-academia integration projects. Diversified evaluators refer to a collaborative evaluation mechanism involving teachers, students, and industry mentors. Teachers establish evaluation criteria and weights, while students engage in self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teaching evaluation. Industry mentors evaluate students' project outcomes and professional qualities, among other aspects.

3. Conclusion

From a cross-cultural perspective, addressing specific problems and limitations in current business English teaching requires teachers to intensify efforts in cultivating students' cross-cultural competence. Using more advanced and progressive teaching methods, teachers can strengthen teaching guidance and accumulate students' practical experience through practical courses. This will help students better grasp the language and cultural environment in business English, align with the talent needs of enterprises, and ensure the achievement of teaching objectives.

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