



A Study on the Cultivation Mode of Business English Talents in Maritime Universities in the Context of the "Maritime Silk Road" -- Taking Zhejiang Ocean University as an Example

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Abstract: *'the Belt and Road Initiative' brings opportunities and challenges to nurturing and developing Business English talents in universities of Zhoushan. Taking Zhejiang Ocean University as an example, this thesis talks about problems during the establishment of Business English courses and the cultivation of professional talents, then explore the training mode of compound Business English talents. It will contribute to prepare qualified talents for development of Zhoushan free trade zone, and accelerate the implementation of Maritime Silk Road.*

Keywords: *Maritime Silk Road, Zhoushan free trade zone, compound Business English talents*

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In March 2015, the national development and reform commission, the ministry of foreign affairs, the ministry of commerce authorized by the state council issued the "push to build the silk road economic belt and the vision and action of the Marine silk road in 21st century", which stated "We need to promote the development of construction of Zhejiang marine economy demonstration area, Fujian strait blue economic experimental zone and Zhoushan archipelago new district and strengthen the construction of the coastal cities including Ningbo -Zhoushan Port, making it the main force for the construction of 'the Belt and Road Initiative', especially for the construction of 21st Century Maritime Silk Road." The pilot free trade zone will focus on the liberalization of commodity trade, the investment facilitation of Marine industry and the expansion of the openness of ocean service industry. These show the development of Zhoushan new area has entered into an international stage. Thus the Business English talents who have proficiency both in business knowledge and in English language are extremely important for the future development of Zhoushan. This has brought new opportunities and challenges to the Business English talents of universities in Zhoushan featuring in marine science. Universities in Zhoushan should proactively seize the opportunity for construction and development of Zhoushan free trade zone with the background of 'the Belt and Road Initiative' in order to cultivate Business English talents with strong applicability and high quality for Zhoushan's marine characteristic industry.

It's of great importance for Zhejiang Ocean University to nurture compound Business English talents with high quality and practicality for the development of Zhoushan free trade zone. With the background of the 'the Belt and Road Initiative', the establishment and development of Zhoushan free trade zone will definitely promote the development of commodity trading. Traditional Business English talents are far from satisfying the need of rapid development of Zhoushan on account of its unique geographical location and marine industry. Therefore, the author takes Zhejiang Ocean University as an example, taking the demand of Zhoushan Marine characteristic enterprises into consideration and analyzing the present teaching situation and problems of Business English major in Zhejiang Ocean University. Then some advice and suggestions will be put forward to optimize the curriculum of Business English major. It will not only promote teaching reform, but also beneficial to the Business English talents training strategy. Zhoushan marine characteristic companies will gain a barrage of excellent Business English talents. And the implementation and development of the 'the Belt and Road Initiative' will be facilitated.

2. THE DEMAND OF THE MARINE CHARACTERISTIC ENTERPRISES OF ZHOUSHAN FOR THE COMPOUND BUSINESS ENGLISH TALENTS.

Through research and interview with relevant principals of the companies in Zhoushan, most of which are small and medium enterprises, the project team learned that the requirements of the marine characteristic enterprises in Zhoushan are mainly showed by the following features (relevant figures can be seen in Bar Chart 1):

2.1. Have Excellent Professional English Skills

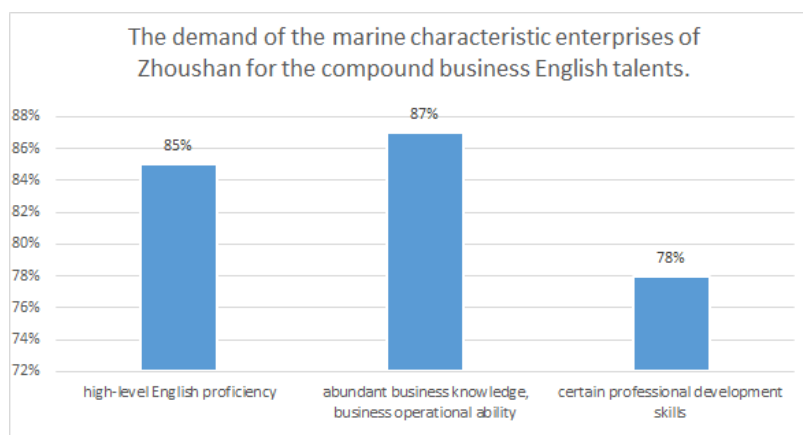
According to the interview, eighty five percent companies require excellent professional English skills. However, many Chinese students learn English from young age, but their English is still very poor because of disadvantages of exam-oriented education in China. They pay more attention to writing and reading instead of spoken English, so it leads to quite negative effects on them as they can't express their ideas in English fluently and correctly. For example, a lot of graduates in English major fail to pass the interview of the companies because of poor oral English. They just can't smoothly answer the question of interviewers so they lose many good jobs. Learning English well not only requires a solid foundation of English language, including basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, but also some translation skills. For example, some employees at work are asked to be able to reply the email accurately in English. Most importantly, they need to communicate with overseas customers fluently in English. They need not only to understand English materials and documents, but also translate them for their boss timely and accurately. It's a demanding task. Therefore, the ability with English proficiency is absolutely important for both enterprises and individuals. Employees must improve their proficiency in English language.

2.2. Master Abundant Business Knowledge, Business Operation Ability, and Some Basic Knowledge about Marine Characteristic Industry

With the rapid development of China's commodity trading and foreign trade, rich business knowledge is of primary importance for development of enterprises. For the marine characteristic enterprises in Zhoushan, learning some knowledge about business trade in certain marine characteristic companies is the icing on the cake. In addition, some tasks of Business English talents, such as the handling of foreign trade documents and letters, call for excellent practical ability of workers. Therefore, in daily work, they also need to master and use basic office software skillfully. Business English talents must equip with all of these business skills due to such requirement of eighty seven percent enterprises.

2.3. Equip with Certain Professional Development Skills at Work

Excellent English language ability, rich business knowledge and business operation skills are basis and must be mastered for graduates majoring in Business English. What's more, according to the interview, seventy eight percent enterprises call for some professional development skills at work. Therefore, certain professional development qualities are also indispensable, such as strong independent learning abilities, interpersonal skills, good psychological quality and sense of responsibility, proper business etiquette, problem - solving skills, team-working and innovative abilities and so on.



Bar Chart 1

3. CURRENT SITUATION AND EXISTING PROBLEMS OF BUSINESS ENGLISH TALENT CULTIVATION IN ZHEJIANG OCEAN UNIVERSITY

3.1. Unreasonable Curriculum Setting

In teaching schedule, the Business English professional courses for Business English students of 2015 in our school are divided into six categories. Those are public basic courses (30 credits), discipline basic courses (40 credits), professional core courses (28 credits), professional direction courses (10 credits), professional optional courses (14 credits), and practice teaching courses (31 credits). However, professional core courses only account for about 18.3% of these total credits, and only about 6.5% of professional courses. Besides, business spoken English 1 and 2 are on the list of discipline basic courses, but this course is not taught by foreign teachers or Business English teachers. Most importantly, the content is not related to business knowledge but common English. It's not helpful for development of Business English talents. And professional direction course is divided into port logistics-related courses and international trade-related courses. But the important course 'business negotiation' is set only in port logistics-related courses. In addition, the courses that develop essential qualities and skills for students such as international business etiquette and international business culture are only arranged in professional optional courses. The lack of core courses related to Business English major and unreasonable setting of some important and practical courses will hinder the cultivation and development of Business English talents.

3.2. Incomplete Curriculum Setting

The target in Business English professional talent training scheme of our school is to develop international, compound and practical Business English professional talents. But the current

Business English professional courses are still mainly in theory, paying attention to the English language itself. For example, there are only two short terms within one week to do the Business English professional practice. What's more, the necessary multimedia facilities and other equipment used for practice are not available in the school. Therefore, both simulation rehearsal in business environment and the business activities in practice base can't be carried out. It means students have no adequate practice opportunities to conduct the real business operation, business conversation and business negotiation. Therefore, it is difficult to excavate students' potential and to develop practical and compound Business English talents. They will fail to meet the need of the market and enterprises. In addition, our school is with maritime features, but there are no related courses to marine culture and science.

3.3. Shortage and Weakness of Professional Teachers in Business English Major

Most English teachers in our school are masters or PhDs, majoring in English Education, English Language and Literature, as well as Translation. But there are few English teachers majoring in Business English, which leads to inadequate business knowledge of teachers. They don't have rich practical experience in business work, because there are no training programs and opportunities for them to work at enterprises and most teachers are busy with their own teaching and research. There is no doubt that they don't have enough experience, abilities and skills in business operation. However, the compound Business English teachers both with solid English language and rich business knowledge are indispensable for development of professional, practical and compound Business English talents.

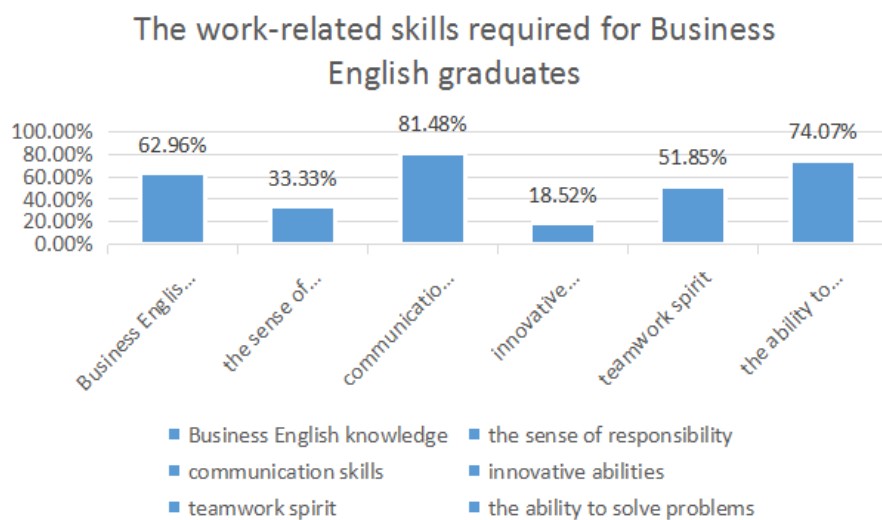
3.4. Few Exchange Programs for Business English Majors

At present, there are many exchange programs for English majors in other universities. It aims to improve the spoken English, interpersonal communication and other comprehensive abilities of English majors. They can also learn from other schools' teaching methods, foreign cultures to broaden their horizons and enrich their knowledge. In the Foreign Exchange Program of the Department of Foreign Languages of our school, the Academic Affairs Office is mainly responsible for exchange programs with domestic universities such as Shanghai Foreign Languages University and Zhejiang Normal University. However, only normal English majors in our school are allowed to study as exchange students in Zhejiang Normal University. And many exchange programs in our school mainly focus on English majors not Business English students. Besides, Foreign Affairs Department in our

school is accountable for exchange programs with universities in foreign countries, such as Russia, South Korea and so on, which students in any majors of the school are allowed and encouraged to apply for. Admittedly, these exchange programs are beneficial for them to practice their spoken English. However, Business English is mainly used for business communication and business activities. What they acquired is still English language. Without exchange programs mainly for business English students in our school, it results in lack of opportunities and experience for Business English students. They can't take excellent business-related lessons in foreign prestigious universities majoring in Business English. And it's not beneficial to nurture high-quality Business English students for our school.

3.5. Lack of Relevant Skills at Work

For a long time, colleges and universities pay more attention to develop the skills of English language and business knowledge for Business English students. To a certain extent, they ignore the cultivation of students' other comprehensive abilities, such as innovative abilities, communication skills, teamwork spirit, the ability to solve problems and so on. In the questionnaire for graduates majoring in Business English who graduated from Zhejiang Ocean University (relevant figures can be seen in Bar Chart 2), 81.48% of the graduates think that the communication skills are necessary at work. 74.07% of them show the ability to solve problems are quite important at work. Besides, 51.85% of the graduates hold that the teamwork spirit is also required to master at work. However, there are not corresponding schemes and programs in our school to develop these skills and abilities for Business English students. It will damage the future development of students after graduation.

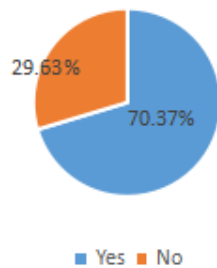


Bar Chart 2

4. THE STRATEGY FOR CULTIVATING COMPOUND BUSINESS ENGLISH TALENTS IN ZHEJIANG OCEAN UNIVERSITY

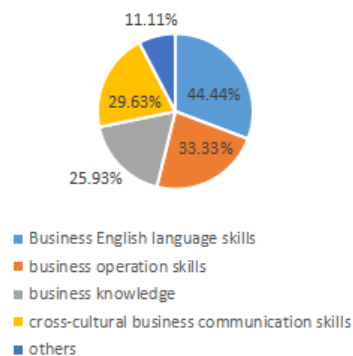
The purpose of Business English learning is to understand and master the rules and operations of business activities. Then they can easily handle business communication in different situation, such as business meeting, business reception, business etiquette, telephone, fax, e-mail and business negotiation. There is no doubt that language is the basis to make it. In the questionnaire for graduates majoring in Business English in our school (relevant figures can be seen in Pie Chart 1 and Pie Chart 2), 70.37% of the graduates believed that they encountered a lot of problems in the work due to lack of professional knowledge. There are 44.44% graduates said they didn't grasp enough Business English language skills (such as listening, translation, reading, speaking, writing, etc.). Besides, 25.93% of them put forward that they did not know much about business knowledge (such as international trade terms, export documents, and international cargo transportation) at work. What's more, 33.33% of the students thought that they had poor business operation skills (such as the application of international trading terms, completion of export documents, offer, counter-offer and so on). Therefore, Business English learning can mainly fall into three parts: the study of English language, the mastery of business knowledge, and the improvement of business practical skills.

Problem at work due to insufficient Business English knowledge



Pie Chart 1

lack of skills for Business English graduates



Pie Chart 2

4.1. Optimize Course Settings

To begin with, in English language learning, we should focus on developing English listening, speaking, reading, and writing and translation skills by setting relevant courses. And 62.96% of graduates from our university show that the company values these English language skills of the graduates. Particularly, most graduates have suggested that Business English majors should seize the opportunities to improve their ability of spoken English. They are required to answer questions in English when they attend the job interview. Therefore, the spoken English courses deserve high concern by the school.

In addition, with the increasing of trade between China and foreign countries and fierce competition in employment, the core courses like international Business English, workplace English and foreign trade English should be set for the students. Especially, the course of business negotiation should be set as a required course. Herb Cohen, a negotiation expert once said, "Life is a big negotiating table. Whether you like it or not, you are already involved in it". And there is also an old saying in China, "Wealth accumulation depend on negotiation". They all show the primary importance of negotiation in our life. So we can conclude that business negotiation is quite important in modern business activities. And it's necessary to set up the course of business negotiation in our school. It's not only instrumental to the logical thinking ability of students, but also beneficial to the spoken English skills.

Besides, optional courses in Business English major concerning financial knowledge like economy and trade, economic laws and regulations as well as international trade rules should also be set up. It's necessary for Business English talents to understand and be familiar with some financial knowledge, foreign trade knowledge and business rules. They will be more clear about current economic climate and deeply master business knowledge with English language ability improved.

Last but not least, the Business English course is not just for simple improvement of the English language skills. It is more than teaching the students western business management philosophy. What's more, the students should also be taught how to trade and work with foreigners, their work ways and their lifestyle. To a certain extent, all of these are involved in the concept of culture. And different people from different countries have different cultures, so intercultural communication is quite important in business. Accordingly, business etiquette and business reception is considerably indispensable. Courses including intercultural communication or overview of Britain and America, British and American literature and so on should be set.

The setting of these courses will be helpful for students to learn more about history, values and culture of other countries. It will definitely raise the intercultural awareness of students and they will behave quite well in intercultural communication, business etiquette and business reception.

Actually, in nurture of English language and ability in cross-cultural communication, our school can learn from the Business English courses offered by Georgia Institute of Technology for ESL students referred in a paper written by Song Nana from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. It's the main objective that is to have better understanding about business and improve innovative thinking skills with improving students' verbal and written skills in a business environment. "In the course, students can talk about some cases concerning companies, customers and products to enhance their communication

skills. Besides, their abilities and skills like decision-making, negotiation and presentation will be dramatically improved. In the meantime, their business written skills and ability to analyze and process problems can be enhanced by different types of writing training about business report and memorandum” (Song, 2012: 49). All of these will help students to be competent for the future job.

Furthermore, Business English students had better acquire some knowledge concerning maritime trade in term of requirements by Zhoushan Marine characteristic enterprises. Considering the maritime characteristic of our school, special Business English courses like shipping English, freight forwarder English should be set up as optional courses. The students can learn more about maritime English to be more excellent and qualified .

4.2. Enhance Practical Operation Ability

Business English talents training program in our school aims to nurture practical talents who are required to have strong operational abilities. In the questionnaire for Business English graduates in our school, 66.67% of students hold that enterprises emphasize more on students’ business operational abilities. Besides, 62.96% of graduates suggest that more courses should be set up to help students improve practical abilities. It’s no doubt that complete multimedia equipment is the premise. For example, the school can introduce the foreign advanced multimedia devices, the hardware and software facilities to establish training base. It will be instrument to conduct business activities in business environment by role simulation, just like Business English courses in Stanford University. In this way, the interests for students to learn Business English courses will be spurred in a relaxing atmosphere. And the business knowledge can be acquired more deeply as the students apply learned English language, business knowledge and skills flexibly to real business communication activities. What’s more, the students’ business operational abilities will definitely be enhanced more quickly in the whole process. Besides, the school can regularly arrange students to visit the companies. Short-term internships will be more helpful for students to understand the employment requirements of the enterprises, familiar with trade business, and improve practical operation abilities. What’s more, the relevant business leaders or excellent staff of the company can be invited to teach students in some target courses. They can give some details about relevant positions in job so that students will specifically understand the current market demand and more clearly realize their own shortcomings. In this way, they will have clear direction and specific goals to improve themselves for meeting job requirements in the future.

4.3. Improve the Qualities and Abilities of Business English Teachers

There are many English teachers in our school teaching Business English students, but the professional teachers majoring in Business English are insufficient. However, the development of professional, knowledgeable and practical Business English talents is inseparable from high-quality and professional Business English teachers. Therefore, it is necessary for the school to provide more training for Business English teachers. For example, some teachers can be sent to take training in some domestic first-class universities to study some core courses concerning Business English. Besides, English teachers should be offered more opportunities to study in foreign trade companies. They will be more familiar with the working process, business scope and business operation. And their business knowledge structure will be more complete and comprehensive. What’s more, some financial experts and masters in business field can be regularly invited to give some relevant lectures to enrich the business knowledge of teachers. However, only training from school is not enough. The teachers themselves need to get more professional knowledge reserves and improve their quality by self-studying and self-development. For example, Business English teachers are expected to the pursuit of business knowledge and take some exams like BEC and obtain related certificates.

4.4. Strengthen the Training of Extended Skills at Work

With the increasingly severe employment situation, excellent English professional abilities and rich foreign trade knowledge are far from meeting the needs of modern enterprises. Extended skills such as business communication abilities, problem-solving and innovation abilities at work are increasingly important. In the questionnaire for previous Business English graduates in our school, 81.48% of respondents express that the most needed relevant skills at work for Business English graduates are the ability to communicate, 74.07% of them consider that they need the ability to solve problems.

Besides, 51.85% of people show the ability of cooperation in team is also indispensable. According to the questionnaire, we can conclude the importance of extended skills at work for development of high-quality and compound Business English talents. Therefore, on the one hand, the school should pay more attention to the development of students in quality education while facilitating the Business English talents' professional abilities. For example, students' serious and responsible attitude, teamwork ability and self-learning ability should be trained and improved in the daily education. On the other hand, students can also comprehensively improve their overall quality by participating in various social practice activities, innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, and various club activities to develop their own interpersonal skills, problem-solving and organizing abilities.

4.5. Increase Exchange Programs with Domestic and Foreign Universities

The purpose of Business English major is to nurture students with a solid theoretical foundation in English language and more systematic knowledge of international business management theory to conduct various business communication and business activities. So the English language and business knowledge must be mastered by Business English talents. The exchange programs with domestic and foreign universities specializing in Business English will definitely help a lot for Business English talents. They can learn rich business knowledge and management philosophy from advanced and complete Business English courses in other countries. In the meantime, their spoken English will also improve greatly and rapidly. In addition, it will conduce to cultivate and improve students' awareness of cross-cultural communication.

5. CONCLUSION

With the development of "One Belt and One Road" and economic globalization, the number of Sino-foreign joint ventures and multinational companies in different cultures has arisen. However, cultural differences and ethnic psychology often conduct a negative effect on business management and business negotiations. Therefore, the awareness and ability of cross-cultural communication is essential for the development of integrated Business English talents. Our school should base itself on the market, keep pace with the times, constantly explore problems in the construction and development of Business English major, continuously reform and improve Business English talents training program, and strive to cultivate professional, knowledgeable, practical and integrated Business English talents. Definitely, they will make great contribution to the development of Zhoushan Free Trade Zone and promote the implementation and development of "One Belt and One Road".

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