

From Simulation to Practice: Exploring the Practical Teaching Pathway of Business English for Commerce Students in Applied Universities

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2025 Special Research Project on Teaching Reform for the "Three-Pronged Integration" (Incorporating the Text into Curricula, Classrooms, and Minds) of Multilingual Editions of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*: Research and Practical Exploration of Multimodal Foreign Language Teaching Models Oriented Toward Cultivating Internationalized Talent.

Abstract

The business English major in applied universities has the important mission of cultivating the highly skilled, multi-talented talents urgently needed in the field of foreign trade. However, in the current practical teaching, there is a phenomenon of "more simulation than actual practice", which leads to a mismatch between the talent cultivation and the market demand in terms of structure. This study starts by sorting out the practical problems in the foreign trade practice teaching of the business English major, and offers insights on moving from "simulation exercises" to "actual operation" in response to this situation. It covers four parts: shaping the curriculum system, reforming teaching methods, enhancing the quality of teachers, and deepening the connection between the school and enterprises. The author believes that the solution to the difficulties in practical teaching is to form a "practice teaching system that integrates scenarios, progresses abilities, and has diverse evaluations", so that the real needs of enterprises can become the content of education, and enable students to convert their knowledge into skills when solving related problems.

Key words: Applied universities; Business English; Foreign trade practice teaching; Industry-education integration; Real project-driven

I. Introduction

The development of cross-border e-commerce [1]-[5] is booming, and with the acceleration of digital transformation in foreign trade, the demand for business English talents has changed. The previous emphasis on document processing and correspondence writing in foreign trade positions has gradually been replaced by

comprehensive skills such as platform operation, cross-cultural live streaming, and data analysis. This has directly altered the training model of business English majors in universities. The market now requires "being able to speak English", but even more importantly, "understanding business", "being able to handle things", and "being good at communication".

However, the foreign trade practical teaching in applied universities has not changed accordingly. From the research, we found that the practical training in most schools is still limited to using simulation software for operations, and the business processes that students have gone through in the simulated environment are quite different from the actual foreign trade work. "Simulation" and "real practice" are far apart, resulting in graduates having to spend a long time adapting to the enterprise and incurring a large amount of on-the-job training costs.

Facing such a contradiction, how should the foreign trade practical teaching system under the applied positioning be reconstructed to make students truly become practical operators who meet industry requirements? This is an urgent problem to be solved. This article will start from diagnosing the problem, combine the current reform attempts in universities, and comprehensively explore the transformation path of business English practical teaching in foreign trade.

II. The Realistic Challenges in Foreign Trade Practical Teaching

2.1 Structural Mismatch between Course Design and Market Demand

The foreign trade practical courses for the Business English major [6]-[9] are "overly focused on language and underemphasize business; overly reliant on theory and lack of practical application". Traditional language courses account for a large proportion, while courses such as international trade practice and cross-border e-commerce operation, which are more application-oriented, have insufficient class hours, resulting in students having language advantages but lacking business knowledge and operational skills.

Some scholars have pointed out that in some schools, the elective courses in the business direction only have 4 - 5 courses, and most of them are theoretical teaching courses, making it difficult for students to come into contact with real foreign trade business processes.

On the one hand, although there are practical training sessions, the content of these training sessions is all centered around the operation of simulation platforms, which is somewhat different from the actual needs of the industry. The tasks provided by the simulation platforms are far less complex, dynamic, and risky than real business, so students cannot learn what the actual work is like from the training sessions. Some graduates have mentioned that the simulated training they did in school was "completely different" from the training they did on the platform at the company. Enterprises value more about how to judge risks, how to communicate with customers, and how to arrange logistics, etc. In the simulated environment, it is impossible to do such practical work.

2.2 The "Distorted" Situation of Practical Teaching Scenarios

The effectiveness of practical teaching largely depends on whether the learning context is realistic. Currently, many schools' practical teaching is mainly conducted in on-campus training rooms. Although there are foreign trade simulation software or cross-border e-commerce teaching platforms, it is still a "risk-free" learning environment. Students will not lose clients by sending a wrong email, nor will they be afraid of being inspected by customs for filling in a wrong form.

This "risk-free" simulation environment is conducive to the transmission of knowledge, but it is not conducive to cultivating students' coping abilities and professional qualities. Some scholars believe that there is a problem of "overly focusing on theory and underemphasizing practice" in the teaching of the foreign trade coordination course. Even though students have completed the simulated operations, they still have a fragmented understanding of the foreign trade coordination work and do not have a complete concept of the entire business process of foreign trade coordination.

More seriously, the simulation teaching is disconnected from the real commercial rhythm. The foreign trade industry is a highly dynamic industry. Platform rules, logistics policies, tariff adjustments, etc. will all change, but if the update and iteration speed of the textbooks or simulation software cannot keep up with the pace of industry development, the knowledge students have learned will have a huge gap with the actual situation of the industry. And this gap will become more prominent over time.

2.3 Structural Shortcomings in Teacher Capacity

The requirements for teachers' capabilities in foreign trade practical teaching are two aspects. The first is to have systematic theoretical knowledge; the second is to have real industry experience. However, most Business English teachers have a background in linguistics or literature and do not have actual experience in foreign trade. Some scholars believe that most university Business English teachers are teachers from one school who teach at another school. "School - School", they only have a superficial understanding of contracts, letters of credit,

bills of lading, etc., let alone new things like cross-border e-commerce platforms.

This shortcoming directly affects the quality of practical teaching. When teachers guide students to do simulated operations, they mostly rely on textbook knowledge rather than practical experience, making it difficult to provide in-depth industry guidance to students. Some schools have attempted to use enterprise mentors or part-time teachers, but they encounter problems such as inconsistent teaching abilities and insufficient cooperation, making it impossible to ensure the formation of stable and long-term teaching support.

2.4 Shallow and Unstable School-Enterprise Cooperation

School-enterprise cooperation is an important path to solve the problems of practical teaching, but it often encounters the embarrassing situation of "having the name but no substance". Common problems include enterprises' reluctance to entrust their actual business to students due to fear of taking on business risks, limited number of off-campus internship bases that cannot accommodate a large number of students for internships, and the fact that most school-enterprise cooperation projects are temporary and short-term, lacking long-term stability and institutionalized guarantees.

The deeper issue lies in the mismatch of goals and demands between the school and the enterprise. Schools hope to collaborate with enterprises to enhance their own quality of talent cultivation, but enterprises may more often pursue short-term economic benefits or the convenience of talent recruitment from their own perspective. Once the interests of both parties cannot be

well aligned, the cooperative relationship will be difficult to sustain for a long time. Some scholars have pointed out that "many school-enterprise collaborations are based on the premise of 'mutual benefit and win-win for both parties'", but in reality, they often fail to last due to "problems of timeliness and implementation" and other factors.

III. Transition Pathway from Simulation to Practicality: The Transformation of Foreign Trade Practical Teaching

The basic approach to resolving the aforementioned predicaments is to transform the practical teaching from "simulation exercises" to "real battle scenarios", allowing students to construct knowledge and develop abilities in the process of problem-solving. This requires concerted efforts in four aspects: curriculum, teaching, faculty, and school-enterprise cooperation.

3.1 Curriculum System Reconstruction: Oriented towards job capabilities

Dynamic adaptation of courses to positions is the principle of curriculum system reform. The setting of courses should not be confined to the existing disciplinary logic but should be constantly adjusted according to the job capability standards of the foreign trade industry. What Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Foreign Trade University has to offer as a model is that they conduct graduate position surveys and jointly develop courses with enterprises based on requirements such as knowledge, skills, qualities, methods, tools, and processes, establishing a modularized curriculum system with "dual core and three expansions". "Dual core" refers to

professional core capabilities and core skills, while "three expansions" follow the trends of new foreign trade developments and changes, achieving "position changes with production changes - ability changes based on positions - operation changes in response to needs".

The systematic arrangement of practical sections cannot be ignored either. Jishou University's Foreign Language College discovered that when transforming practical teaching from "sporadic embellishment" to "systematic modules", it was a crucial matter. They adjusted the talent cultivation plan and added specific practical training courses such as international trade practice, foreign trade document practice, and cross-border e-commerce operation, along with 18 other distinctive concentrated practical teaching sections, forming a structure of "basic-level practice - technical operation - comprehensive application level operation" that gradually progresses. Thus, students can obtain corresponding operational opportunities at different learning stages and will no longer encounter the situation of "starting to cram at the last semester".

3.2 Teaching Mode Innovation: Real Project-driven

The in-depth development of "industry-education integration courses" is a significant step from simulation to practicality. The reform of the Business English major at Jiangxi Fashion University can serve as an example. The core "Fashion Enterprise and Cultural Export Language Service" course is divided into two modules: one is language service for overseas enterprises' outbound expansion, brand localization, international trade, and cross-border e-commerce; the other is the school's fashion museum, with

multi-modal translation, cultural tourism guide explanation capabilities. "School resources + industrial scenarios" reduces the cooperation costs of enterprises and ensures that the learning content is real and challenging.

The "school-in-plant" model attempts to provide a more stable carrier for the implementation of actual projects. The Business English Department of Hunan Information University and a cross-border e-commerce company jointly established an "enterprise on-campus workstation", bringing real customer service work to the campus, and students handle emails and orders from foreign customers under the guidance of the company's teachers. As of now, the number of participating students has increased from the initial 20 to 80, and the training location has expanded from one training room to the entire building, achieving the connection between classroom and position. The greatest significance of the "school-in-plant" model is that the company entrusts its less important but truly existing business processes to the school, avoiding significant business risks while providing students with excellent practical opportunities.

The "learning-practicing-testing-fighting" capability advancement system opens up the vertical growth channel of practical teaching. Guangdong Foreign Language and Art Vocational College can draw lessons from this, using digital virtual simulation scenarios for learning, digital trade industry college scenario training, large-scale foreign trade exhibition scenario exhibition practice, and cross-border e-commerce industrial park scenario real job operation. These four steps are closely linked and progressively deepening, achieving the transformation

from "knowledge to ability, adaptation to competence", allowing students to complete a complete "learning-practicing-testing-fighting" loop during their studies and avoiding the awkward situation of "starting all over again" upon graduation.

3.3 Enhancement of Teaching Staff Capacity: "Knowledge Transmitters" → "Practical Guides" The original paragraph mentions "enhancement of teaching staff capacity". Replace "knowledge transmitters" with

To address the shortcomings in the practical capabilities of teaching staff, a two-pronged approach of "bringing in" and "sending out" is highly necessary. Regarding the "bringing in" aspect, forming a dual-teacher team consisting of "in-house full-time teachers and senior executives from foreign trade companies or industry translators" has become a consensus among most institutions. The key point is that external mentors should not merely give "formal lectures" but should deeply participate in the process of course production and teaching execution. Some institutions have indicated that inviting business personnel to jointly develop courses, implement practical training, and assist in competitions, etc., has a much better overall effect than a single lecture.

In the "sending out" aspect, the most effective method is to regularly assign full-time teachers to work in foreign trade companies on temporary positions. Some scholars suggest: "Universities should have teachers who teach simulated practical courses visit departments or enterprises with foreign trade business every once in a while to conduct on-site research and bring new methods and technologies of foreign trade practice into the classroom." Some schools

have already made it a part of the evaluation system for professional titles and workloads, providing institutional support.

3.4 Deepening of School-Enterprise Cooperation: From "Project-Based" to "Platform-Based"

As school-enterprise cooperation progresses from shallow to deep, a stable cooperation mechanism and platform need to be established. Regarding the current research situation, there are three modes worth noting:

The first is the "teaching enterprise model". Some scholars propose that a "teaching enterprise" can be established to jointly build internship bases, thereby avoiding the gap between schools and enterprises. "Teaching enterprises" have both profitability and the responsibility of talent cultivation. The courses they develop are more in line with the skills requirements of enterprises, and they can also recruit a large number of graduates to ensure the stability of school-enterprise cooperation.

The second is the "industry college" model. Based on the on-campus training space, attracting actual business operations of enterprises to settle in, establishing "in-school factories" or "enterprise-station workstations" on campus, making school-enterprise cooperation shift from phased projects to a regular platform. Its advantages include: enterprises obtain a stable source of talent and business support, and schools obtain continuous teaching resources and internship positions, forming a mutually beneficial situation.

The third is the "education-industry integration community" model. Industry

associations + leading enterprises + multiple institutions form an education-industry integration community, allowing for the large-scale allocation of resources and unified standards. Guangdong Foreign Languages and Arts Vocational College uses the "Belt and Road Cross-border Digital Trade Industry Education-Industry Integration Community" as the foundation, gathering more industry resources on a larger scale, and assisting the adaptive development of the Business English major.

4. Conclusion

The practical teaching of business English for foreign trade in applied universities is currently undergoing a transition from "simulated practice" to "real combat". The essence of this transformation is not an improvement in teaching methods and technologies, but a shift in the logic of talent cultivation, that is, from "teaching students what to do" to "letting students do what", from "teaching knowledge" to "teaching skills".

The reorganization of the curriculum system, the innovation of teaching forms, the improvement of teachers' qualifications, and the strengthening of school-enterprise connections are not mutually independent. Instead, they can help each other and move forward together. The actual project-driven teaching activities must rely on the teaching ability of a dual-teacher team and also depend on the continuous support from the enterprise side. The stability of cooperation also needs to be supported by course improvement and teacher training. Such a comprehensive improvement idea is probably closer to reality than finding a "universal cure"?

Of course, there are also some practical problems during the transformation process. How to balance the enterprise's business risks and teaching demands, how to build an incentive mechanism for improving teachers' practical abilities, and whether the school's teacher assessment and evaluation system can support teachers to carry out high-cost practical teaching reforms? There is no fixed answer to these questions. Only through continuous practice can the answers be sought. But the direction is clear. Only by allowing students to truly enter the real foreign trade business scenarios and solve real problems to accumulate experience and establish judgment can truly industry-relevant talents be cultivated.

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