

Research and Practice of Task-based reform of bilingual class “International Trade Practice”

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Abstract. International Trade Practice is a highly practical class that studies exchange and transaction of international goods, involving foreign issues. In light of characteristics of colleges, this paper proposes the content, objectives, measures and practice results of reforms of International Trade Practice. The characteristics and innovation highlights of the class are also pointed out to improve bilingual teaching of International Trade Practice for undergraduate students.

1. Introduction

As economic globalization gathers pace and recovery of global economy quickens, international exchanges increase, thus the demand for talents that are versed in international trade theories, skilled in foreign trading and proficient in foreign languages grows.

The strategy of “silk road economic belt” creates a historical opportunity. Ningxia is an underdeveloped province along the Silk Road and the first open economy pilot area in mainland China. How to grasp historical opportunity, deepen China-Arab States cooperation, develop foreign-bounded economy of Ningxia—these are the key issues that should be considered in talent education in universities and local economic development. Therefore, our university proposes the strategy of developing the practice-oriented talents by cultivating the students’ language proficiency and skills. Reforms and development of the class “International Trade Practice” follow these guidelines and make bold moves for reform.

Development of the university-level special subject of “International Trade” grasps the before-mentioned opportunity. Reform of this class is an initiative to develop university-level special subject and revolutionize educational methods. It will improve the students’ abilities, develop professional talents and lay a solid foundation for development of key disciplines in the autonomous region.

2. Reform Content and Objectives

This program follows the guidelines of the “National Long- and Middle-term Educational Reform and Development Outline (2010-2020)” and “National Long- and Middle-term Talent Development Outline (2010-2020)”, the basic requirements for the practical talent cultivation reform system. The program is also employment-oriented and selects the content of the class according to requirements of occupations of international trade. According to different levels and types of foreign trade talents required by enterprises, this program cultivates the students’ all-round skills and English proficiency, designs projects and tasks step by step. Meanwhile, by making use of “flipped classroom” and bilingual teaching experience of teachers, this program increases the proportion of bilingual teaching and realizes high-level integration of “teaching, learning and doing”.

When implemented, this program suit the requirements of developing the open economy pilot zone of Ningxia, combines the actual study conditions of our university’s International Trade students, and explores a series of feasible task-based bilingual teaching strategies for the class of

International Trade Practice. Through surveys, this program is planned to reform the class with regard to the following aspects.

2.1 Reform Content

2.1.1. To reform teaching objectives of the class

Task-based teaching of the class “International Trade Practice” emphasizes developing the students’ learning methods, takes self-motivated learning as the center, improves the students’ English proficiency and professional skills, and highlights the professionalism of English learning and professional content. It aims to improve the students’ learning motivation, encourages the students to convert from teaching methods to learning methods, and combines English learning tasks with training of professional skills. On the basis of the “three basic skills”, the major of international trade aims to strengthen the students’ professional skills and English proficiency at the same time.

2.1.2. To reform teaching methods

Reform of the bilingual class “International Trade Practice” uses the task-based teaching/learning method, and in the process of bilingual teaching, the method of solving problems is used generally to allow the students to combine learning with practice. The detailed professional tasks are used to organize the class to improve the students’ skills to communicate in English, emphasize the teaching content and the students’ recognition structure and the language utilization efficiency. The reformed teaching method aims to improve the students’ English skills, enhance their professional and occupational skills to stimulate their learning motivation and help form effective learning strategies.

2.1.3 To reform teaching content

Bilingual teaching of professional courses not only means teaching professional content bilingually (Chinese and English); to achieve the ideal teaching effect, it is necessary to find the optimal connection point for bilingual teaching so that the teacher can teach smoothly and the students can fully take in what is taught. In the teaching process, the teacher should divide the key points, difficult points, knowledge points and skill points, and according to the specific content of teaching and language programs, design detailed and operable tasks. By organizing large amounts of group and pair bilingual activities for expression, communication, negotiation, explanation and queries, students can complete professional tasks so as to realize the dual objectives of language proficiency and professional skills.

2.2. Reform objectives

2.2.1. To clarify the teaching objectives.

By implementing reforms of the new teaching system, the program aims to strengthen the students’ English proficiency and professional skills. In this way, the class of international trade practice can be connected with the requirements for foreign trade talents to equip the students with a solid foundation in international trade theories, strong foreign trade skills and all-round qualities. By providing training in professional skills and English proficiency, the students can extend their job prospect.

2.2.2 To practice new teaching methods and improve teaching effect.

By researching on and implementing the program, the task-based teaching method can be tested and improved in teaching practice to find the most suitable teaching method for our university and then promote the bilingual teaching method to other schools and improve talent training quality.

2.2.3 To enrich the teaching content and satisfy the students’ employment demand.

In the teaching content, basic theories and skills are emphasized, and on that basis, the proportion of bilingual teaching content will be increased and the task-based teaching method will also be increasingly used to extend the breadth and depth of the class and improve the teaching quality.

3. Reform Methods

3.1. Strengthening learning.

It is necessary to improve the students' bilingual learning skills, refresh their teaching ideas, and by strengthening communication with experienced teachers in bilingual teaching, the students' bilingual understanding skills can be improved and the teachers' enthusiasm for bilingual teaching reform can be stimulated.

3.2. Combining with the actual conditions to solve actual problems.

The program will combine the teaching work of our university and conduct themed research activities in which the teachers can prepare courseware collaboratively and evaluate demonstration classes to realize transformation of professional teachers. In this way, the problem of lack of professional teachers can be solved and the bilingual teaching faculty's qualities can be improved.

3.3. Strengthening guide and optimizing strategies.

It is necessary to improve guidance of teaching methods, improve the students' self-teaching skills and their learning interest, and stimulate their motivation. It is also necessary to research the requirements for theoretical teaching and practical teaching, to orientate the class to the students' interest and learning efficiency, and to improve their learning efficiency.

This program first analyzes the talent cultivation plan of our university's international trade major and the teaching practice of the class "International Trade Practice" to find the matching point with bilingual teaching practice. Secondly, it analyzes the students' English proficiency, orients the students to bilingual teaching practice, and develop suitable bilingual teaching methods. Last, it researches and practices new teaching methods, finds defects in the reform, solves problems on by one and at last develops an improved set of bilingual teaching methods.

4. Reform Effect and Achievement

First, this reform program will help improve the students' self-motivation and creative learning skills. Bilingual teaching is also what the students expects. In the past, students in our university are strong in English reading and writing, but weak in listening and speaking. The phenomena of "Deaf English" and "Dumb English" prevail. International trade students who are facing heavy employment pressure have realized the severity of the problem and expect to "use" English in English-speaking environments. Task-based bilingual teaching reform takes tasks as the orientation, motivates the students, encourages students to carry out more in-depth research, and improve their skills for creativity.

Second, this reform can help cultivate students' "three basic skills" and "professional and bilingual skills". Cultivation of "three basic skills" is the center of talent development of our university's international trade major. According to the requirements for all-round talents with professional skills and foreign language proficiency (English), this reform proposes the reform objectives of "three basic skills" and "professional and bilingual skills", which meets the requirements of foreign trade enterprises for talents.

Moreover, this reform can promote development of the special major of international trade and prepare for development of key majors in Ningxia. According to the characteristics of international trade and the experience of developing the quality classes of "International Trade Practice" and "International Trade Theory", this reform aims to develop an integrated system with innovative teaching methods and teaching content that suits social needs to lay a foundation for developing the key discipline of international trade in Ningxia. This reform initiative can also contribute to development of foreign-bound economy, deepen China-Arab States cooperation and grasp the opportunity the Silk Road offers.

5. Reform Characteristics and Innovation Points

To fulfill the objective of developing practical talents of our university, this program refers to the teaching objective of developing the students' "three basic skills" of international trade students, and proposes the reform of task-based bilingual class to improve the students' professional skills and language proficiency. It for the first time applies the task-based bilingual teaching mode to our university's teaching practice, and by combining with existing reforms on bilingual practice, improves the teaching effect of professional classes, expands the international trade students' vision, and realizes international application of professional knowledge.

This reform program introduces task-based bilingual teaching to professional class teaching and hence fills the vacuum of bilingual teaching of the class of International Trade Practice. Success of this program cannot only promote reforms of bilingual teaching of other business and trade classes in our university and even Ningxia, improve the quality of talent training, but also improve the international trade students' job-seeking skills and promote foreign-bound economy of Ningxia.

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