

# Business English Learning Based on College-enterprise Cooperation

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**Abstract**—College-enterprise cooperation is an important mode used to develop innovative talents training. This paper try to discuss College-enterprise cooperation in business English teaching from the aspects of renewing education idea, optimizing curriculum, intensified training on faculty, and training students' practice innovation. To make the business English-major graduates more competitive in the labor market, it is necessary to adjust, modify, and innovate the existing talents training mode, make it integrate into the development of local industry deeply, and support the economic and social development with advantages and characteristics to meet social demands and market needs.

**Keywords**—business English; college-enterprise cooperation; talent training; creativity

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, international trades in the world become unprecedentedly frequent with the development of global economy. Chinese enterprises are facing a lot of opportunities to reach out the world, and there is a substantial increase in the number of Chinese enterprises engaging in foreign trade, which enable large number of foreign businesses in China for these enterprises. In this situation, a reasonable set of majors and courses based on the cooperation is required to meet the needs of the enterprises and the society.

Requirements for undergraduate students majored in business English in modern society is not only limited to the use basic English knowledge, but more business expertise and the overall quality of business communication skills (Shi, 2014). The necessity of building a bridge between workplace communicative needs and curriculum of business English courses has been argued by many scholars and researchers on business English learning and teaching (Chan, 2014). College-enterprise cooperation refers to the college and enterprise the two entities of technological innovation implementing jointly in accordance with the principle of benefit-sharing, risk-sharing, complementing and co-developing, creating higher economic efficiency (Zhou, 2008) and reaching the talent training goal meanwhile. College-enterprise cooperation is an inevitable way of the combination of market economy and knowledge economy (Zhou, 2008). College-enterprise cooperation is the developing direction of applied English majors (Zhou, 2015) such as business English. Nowadays, with the development

of global economy and international trade, business English majors in the universities and colleges are required to be skilled both at English language knowledge and business knowledge.

Based on the development situation of current Chinese economy and the requirements of the labor market, the mode of the cooperation between colleges and enterprises is an important way to cultivate business talents (Li, 2014). Through the continuing survey of the college graduates majored in business English, it is found that their employment have the following characters: they are mainly work in coastal areas, serve in small and medium enterprises as the foreign trade sales, documentation specialist, international business assistants and managers of foreign hotels (Zhou 2015). For the above reasons, it is urgent for the college to rearrange the business English courses to cultivate the business skills of students who are majored in business English so that they can meet the requirement of these posts in their future career.

According to Krich (2016), using English effectively is one of the most vital communication skills for international trading. Krich's (2016) research tries to study the nature of international communicative situations, supplying the language proficiency, ability to perform English-related tasks and their views on the use of the English language of some Thai staffs working in an international work place. Krich's (2016) research displays that English language proficiency is crucial in the workplace, and the interpersonal communication is also vital for reaching the communicative goals in the workplace, which requires the specific business English curriculum and courses design for practical knowledge and skills.

## II. WELL-KNOWN SCHOOL-ENTERPRISE COOPERATION MODES ABROAD

Ye (2013) and Kong (2016) introduce the most well-known school-enterprise cooperation modes in the world. Most of them emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the rudiment of school-enterprise cooperation, and gradually formed the present systematical modes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by trial and error. Currently, the most well-known influential school-enterprise cooperation modes are illustrated (Ye, 2013, p102) as follows:

- The “Dual System” vocational education mode in Germany. In this mode, the school and enterprise are regarded as one system respectively. Students learn theoretical knowledge at school and at the same time they work in the enterprise workplace to take skills training as apprentices.
- The “Sandwich” vocational education mode in the UK. The students who enroll the four-year study should study the theoretical knowledge in the school for the first two years, and then take a paid internship introduced by the college for one year, after that they go back to school to complete the final year study. For students who enroll five-year study should take the internship for two years and spend three years for school courses learning.
- Competency Based Education also known as CBE and Working-learning Alternation in the US. This mode is widely used both in the United States and Canada for vocational education, which emphasizes cultivating students’ vocational capability. The teaching syllabus based on this mode is designed with the participation of the representatives from the cooperative enterprise. The education mode of Working-learning Alternation means that after half a year study in the college, students take practical training in enterprises and theoretical courses at school in alternation around every two months, and concentrated to the school to take courses half a year before graduation until graduation.
- Competency Based Education and Cooperative Education in Canada. BCE is also broadly used in Canadian universities and colleges. An academic year in Canadian colleges are usually divided into three semesters, but different majors take their specific division methods owing to their professional dissimilarities. Some majors resort to “1+1” cycle mode. Students study in the college for one semester or one year first, and then go to the enterprise to take one semester or one year practical internship with the cycle of study and practice. Students alternate a semester or a year of academic coursework with an equal amount of time in paid internship. This cycle is repeated until their graduation. Others majors require students to study in the college for the first two or three years and then work in the enterprises for one-year practice.
- Technical and Further Education in Australia, also known as TAFE. It is a vocational education mode dominated by the government, which processes college-enterprise cooperation oriented on students’ capability training, and conduct academic credential training to technicians with the combination of credential education and on-the-job training.
- Apprenticeship Training in France. According to the mode of Apprenticeship Training in France, courses should be completed by the students in apprenticeship training centers while practices completed in

enterprise. Apprentices sign training contracts with the enterprises, and the enterprises take the responsibility to train the apprentices systematically and pay wages for the apprentices.

- “Teaching Factory” mode in Singapore. Teaching Factory is an education mode which tries to create real working environments for the students through the means of situation simulation aiming to narrow down the distance between the school and enterprise so that students can learn the practical knowledge and skills at school, and accumulate working experiences.
- Industry-University-Government Collaboration in Japan. This education mode plays an important role in forming the national innovation system of Japan and the rise of Japanese economy. This mode advocate that universities or research institutions be responsible for basic and academic research, industries take charge of market exploring, and governments supply policy and financial support.
- Customer-oriented Education Mode in Korea. In this education mode, college treat enterprises as customers taking the customers’ demands as training goals, and adjust the teaching contents based on their demands changing. The professional skills acquired by the students through this mode may match with the actual job requirements well to a great degree.

### III. PROBLEMS EXISTING IN CURRENT CURRICULUM OF BUSINESS ENGLISH

Nowadays, there are some problems existing in current curriculum of business English, which prevent the development of business English teaching as well as business English talent training.

Firstly, the courses of business English still mainly focus on delivering basic the English language knowledge although concerns little trading or business background information in teaching within the class or in the practices outside of the class, without forming a relatively complete combined system of both language knowledge and business practice. Current business courses arrangement is rather antiquated, and cannot keep up with the pace of the rapid development of international e-commerce (Zhou, 2015). Business English courses should concern business English majors’ abilities and competitiveness, so that enable the students to meet the professional requirements of the post and personal requirements of their sustainable development (Zhou, 2015).

Secondly, teachers who are qualified with both English language and practical business knowledge are in lack. Most teacher teaching business English in colleges are majored in general English literature or linguistics rather than Business English, so they often cannot give the students proper instructions on professional business during the process of teaching. Moreover, teachers are generally overworked, and rarely have opportunities for continuing education and training (Zhou, 2015). Teachers who teach business English

courses must have very solid English language knowledge and skills which can be taught to the students English and systematical business knowledge and wealthy practical business experience (Zhou, 2015).

Thirdly, pure classroom simulation training is hard to arouse students' enthusiasm for learning and motivation. Students are unfamiliar with business environment and lack reality, which makes their English proficiency cannot be freely used in a real business environment, so that directly results in the poor ability of students adapting to the working environment. According to Chan's (2014) questionnaire survey, it is shown that a lot of people in employment encounter a lot of challenges in their workplaces, such as the spoken and written needs of professionals, communication means on speaking and writing, and the ability to deal with business affairs (Chan, 2014).

In addition, current teaching and learning assessment of business English courses mainly focuses students' academic level rather than their practical ability (Zhou, 2015), which makes much students ignore the practical practice but only pay their attentions to academic knowledge learning. The assessment for students' learning should not only assess the final results, but also their performance during the process of learning and practice as well as their self-evaluation and feedback (Zhao, 2014). The assessment content should also contain the learners' capability of independent study and problem solving, cooperative working ability (Zhao, 2014) besides students' academic knowledge.

In order to enable the students to reach the training aim of acquiring both academic English knowledge and practical business capacity, current business English courses must be reformed. We have to develop the teaching method in which theory and practice are isolated and the students cannot completely devote themselves into the situation to have an insight into the characteristics of the profession, make a good use of working languages, take good operations, and have a strong sense of profession (Zhao, 2014). On account of the above reasons, college-enterprise cooperation is an important and effective mode for the reform of business English teaching.

#### IV. STRATEGIES ON IMPROVING BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSES BASED ON COLLEGE-ENTERPRISE COOPERATION

##### A. *Setting the Training Goals of Business English Courses*

Therefore, the main goals to learn English, especially business English is to better fit the job, learning environment, and specific business communication environment (Li, 2014). These learning objectives as an important part of cultivating mode of business English, must be clearly reflected in the curriculum, training plans, training needs and training methods (Li, 2014). Therefore, it is needed that schools, governments, enterprises, training institutions, service sectors and other organizations outside of the college to cooperate closely and explore a creative training mode of business English talents (Li, 2014) with a firm base, strong practice and high quality.

Business English courses should enable the students to master basic English language knowledge as well as business knowledge, and adapt current economic situation. The graduates should be competent for dealing with international trading, foreign reception, translation, and secretarial work with necessary practical capability, cross-cultural capability and high humanistic quality (Li, 2014). They should be able to take the trading and translation work in foreign trade agency or department (Li, 2014) engaging in economic and trade.

##### B. *Improving Current Business English Curriculum*

Course curriculum is the key to talent training, and a reasonable curriculum is the foundation of talent training (Li, 2014), but current curriculum of business English is out of line with industry needs. We should system integration and optimization of the curriculum through the cooperation of governance, colleges, enterprises, training institutions and other aspects to enhance the training quality of talents (Li, 2014). The curriculum design should be oriented by the demands of business English talents training, and the courses of the English language and course of business should with rationally integrated (Li, 2014). It is better to invited experts and cooperative enterprises to give proposals and amendments for the curriculum design, because only in this way can the courses curriculum avoid being isolated from the society and realization of school-Enterprise docking (Zhou, 2015). In order to ensure that graduates are qualified for the professional positions, purely theoretical courses should be reduced or concentrate, and core business courses in different directions should be increased (Zhou, 2015). Based on the students' mastering the language skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, the curriculum of business English courses should be guaranteed to reflect the technical ability and practical skills, and the business English courses design should be arranged from the core skills required by the professional position setting (Zhou, 2015). Moreover, we should strengthen the combination of theoretical teaching and practical teaching, focusing on the students' ability of innovation, business English communication skills, critical thinking and the cultivation of professional ethics (Li, 2014). The new arising courses closely related with business activities can be set, like the courses of cross-border e-commerce (Tao, 2016), business practical negotiation.

##### C. *Improving Teachers' Ability*

Colleges should cooperate with enterprises to build a new "double qualification" teachers (Li, 2014), strengthening the practical skill training of teachers by the enterprises and institutions. Teachers should be encouraged to go to the cooperated enterprises to learn more practical knowledge (Zhou, 2015; (Li, 2014), so that the teachers' teaching level could be developed both on English language knowledge as well as practical business knowledge. Via penetrating to enterprises, on the one hand, teachers can gather a wealth of teaching cases, improve the structure of the knowledge and ability, and get to know the development trends, the latest rules and operating methods of their research orientation in the real business situation currently (Li, 2014).



Teachers should also attend some conferences on business English courses and take relevant teaching training to develop their ability and teaching level. Furthermore, teachers should possess the quality to encourage students and reduce their anxious emotions (Zhao, 2014) when they encounter some problems, and help them to rebuild the confidence and develop on learning and practice strategies to overcome the difficulties.

#### *D. Improving the Content of Business English Courses*

According to the real situation as well as the requirements for the business talents, the content of business English courses should be rearranged and deepened. For example, for some courses focusing case study, we should input more case studies, and strengthen practices for the courses with strong practicalness (Li, 2014). Colleges can edit the courses syllabus and course books together with the enterprises, industry faculties (Li, 2014). Colleges can invite some enterprisers and professional personnel in business to give lectures to the students to infuse and interpret more practical knowledge to them (Zhou, 2015; Li, 2014), such as the current situation of the global and civil market, practical applications of the English language as well as foreign trade skills and experience in the business environment, and strategies on international business with typical case studies. As a result, students are able to acquire the latest information about the development of business (Li, 2014).

Besides, business English training should increase the courses and teaching content which improve students' quality and morality (Li, 2014). Students should be taught on how to learn and master the suitable learning methods, so that they are able to possess the initiative, enthusiasm, and a strong ability for learning (Li, 2014). We should also adapt a combination training model of general education and professional education broadening the students' knowledge, so that the students can acquire more opportunities to know the society and the world, can become the innovative personnel with a multidisciplinary background and a horizon of various thinking aspects (Li, 2014).

#### *E. Building Imitating Practical Bases in the College for the Students*

Teaching reform of professional practical training on business English practice and internship should be student-centered and enterprise needs-orientated (Zhou, 2015), and make full use of various method to organize practical teaching. The practical forms mainly include simulation training in the college and the comprehensive practice and internship in the cooperated enterprises. The forms are adopted according to the conditions and characteristics of the implementation about the practical teaching (Zhou, 2015). If the trade consultation and communication with customers are taken through the e-commerce platform in the actual business, these types of training can be carried out in a simulated environment in the college (Zhou, 2015). Students can make a full application of the practical business training lavatories and business English learning systems equipped by the colleges for business English majors. Students' business knowledge can be increased, their practice ability

can be cultivated and their cross-cultural communication skills can be enhanced through the imitating classroom training and campus practice.

#### *F. Building Practical Bases in the Cooperating Enterprises for the Students*

For the operations of documentary bill with strong personalized practices cannot be implemented in a simulated environment (Zhou, 2015), but only be assigned to the specific post in the cooperated enterprises since customers' requirements vary widely (Zhou, 2015). According to the principle of voluntary cooperation, mutual benefit and co-development, colleges and enterprises can build cooperating partnerships in scientific research and development, talent training and so on.

Students not familiar with relevant business environments will make the application of their English proficiency incapable in a real business environment. Enterprises can provide internships and practical training bases outside the college so that the students can learn can steel themselves in a real business environment (Li, 2014). The working situations and occasions based on college-enterprise cooperation model, which students' practices involve in, are real-world business environments and situations, and will engaged in their future careers and jobs frequently. In such real work situations, students are able to learn and consolidate relevant professional expertise and business knowledge of English, knowledge of enterprise operation models as well as the ways of dealing with business through participating in real businesses (Li, 2014).

The real working places and practical practices supplied by the enterprises can train students' comprehensive ability in international activities. For instance, students are able to develop their listening ability, oral ability and strain ability through participating, negotiation, conversation, contacts as well as telephone communication with foreigners. Their cross-culture ability can be lifted through communicating with foreign merchants with different culture backgrounds. They acquire professional business management knowledge through processing businesses as assistants, and master the formal rules and standards for basic commercial correspondences through writing with foreign customers.

College teachers who are arranged to enter the enterprises with the students should work with the inductors in the enterprises to manage internship (Zhou, 2015), involving into the study and work of business English practice in the enterprise with the students (Zhou, 2015). In that way, they are able to manage the students and meanwhile devote into the learning in the enterprise to better promote college-enterprise cooperation for the future based on the accumulated experience and lay the foundation for future work (Zhou, 2015). In order to ensure the students' practical training effective, when students participate in the college-enterprise cooperation, dual tutorial system can be implemented (Li, 2014), that is, to select instructors with practical experience from the college and the staffs with high business quality and strong sense of responsibility in the enterprises (Li, 2014) to instruct the students together. The

enterprise tutors are responsible as the main instructors, while the college teachers as supplements to enhance students' ability of practice and innovation (Li, 2014).

#### G. Encouraging Students to Participate Business Activities

Students should be encouraged to participate business activities, such as the internship of trade fairs. Through these formal and successional practical teaching activities, the students' abilities of using the English language and communication with foreign investors are practiced, and their professional confidence is enhanced, business experience is increased (Tao, 2016). College should try to apply available both college and social recourses to supply opportunities for the students to start their own business, improving the system of building students' own business. Colleges and cooperated enterprises can support the students who are planning to set up their business with relevant information and material, such as providing the office for the students who run their own workshops or small companies. Students are able to learn about the basic policies, laws and regulations of company registration during the entrepreneurial process.

In addition, students can be encourage to take the authorized national certification of vocational qualification exams on business English or business (Zhou, 2015) depending on students' level. These examinations include Certificate of English Interpreting, Business English Certificate, Foreign Trade Sales Certificate, Qualified Customs Clearance Officer Certificate, and Merchandiser National Foreign Trade Certificate, etc. These certificate exams can be applied to A as a more comprehensive assessment to evaluate students learning and meanwhile make the students learn to specify their learning goals and the direction they work for (Zhou, 2015). Through preparing and enrolling these practical business exams (Tao, 2016), their English knowledge level and business knowledge level are definitely develop, which benefit their learning a lot.

#### H. Improving the Assessment System

The business English assessment methods should be developed according to the specified teaching and learning situation as well as the requirement of the reality (Zhou, 2015). Multiple strategies can be applied to check and assess students' academic knowledge learning and practical practice (Zhou, 2015). The learning assessment of business English should assess both the final results and learners' practical performance during the process, both their academic knowledge and their capability of independent study and problem solving as well as cooperative working ability (Zhao, 2014), both teachers' or enterprises' feedback from and learners' self-evaluation (Zhao, 2014). In addition, it is necessary and helpful for teachers to give full recognition and praise for all the positive factors that are presented by the students during the process of completing projects (Zhao, 2014), such as enthusiasm, active participation, patience, collaboration, innovation, and persistence, etc.

Colleges can invite their cooperating enterprises to give support on assessment on certain degree. For example, we can turn to some E-commerce companies for help to assist us

in evaluating students' abilities in computer operation and serving customers (Zhao, 2014). Foreign trade enterprises can help us assess students' knowledge on foreign trade flow and their capability on dealing with some simple foreign trade businesses (Zhao, 2014). Some certification exams are also very good ways to evaluate the students' knowledge and capability (Zhou, 2015) as well.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The business courses in college-enterprise cooperation mode are able to provide students with the platforms for scientific research innovation, talents display and the work places for theory application. Competitions, challenges and practical experiences derive from the cooperative enterprises are able to stimulate students' potential and sense of competition, a lesson and avoid detours, avoiding too much mistakes in their future professional career. Students are able to be in close touch with the production line of the enterprises through the practices, and experience their management methods and operation modes of enterprises, grasping the basic practical business skills to improve their ability of integrating academic theories with practices.

In conclusion, college-enterprise cooperation is an effective way for the universities to cultivate creative talents. College-enterprise cooperation can strongly improve the combination between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, bridge the gap between learning process and production process as well as the gap between college talents training objectives and enterprises' demands, really realizing the training goal of students' high professional qualification. It is definitely an education mode which serves as a reference for education and benefits the colleges, enterprises and the society. The real working places and practices supplied by the enterprises can train students' comprehensive ability in international business activities. To make the college students in the community more highly competitive and adaptable, we have to continually explore and research the ways on how to improve and solve the practical problems found in business English teaching. Based on the requirements of the enterprise, and the labor market, we should try to develop the innovation business English talent training mode through the close cooperation of the schools, Government, enterprises, training institutions, and service faculties, outside institutions beyond the college, aiming to cultivate more business talents with high quality, professional skills and practical capabilities (Li, 2014).

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