

Reform of Business English Talent Training Model Based on Demand Characteristics in the Context of the “Belt and Road” Initiative

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Abstract: Based on the complexity and regional differences of the political, economic, and cultural environments of countries along the “Belt and Road,” this paper analyzes the new characteristics of the current demand for business English talents. Combining this with the existing problems in China’s current training models, it proposes a reform path for talent training models that are adapted to the construction of the “Belt and Road” Initiative. The aim is to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for enhancing the international competitiveness of business English talents.

Keywords: Belt and Road; Business English; Talent demand; Training model; Reform strategy

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1. Introduction

As an important tool for international business communication, the quality of business English talent training directly affects the effectiveness of the “Belt and Road” construction. However, there is still a significant gap between China’s current business English talent training model and the actual needs of the “Belt and Road” construction. In this context, it is of great practical significance to deeply analyze the demand characteristics of business English talents in the “Belt and Road” context and explore reform paths for training models. This will promote the high-quality development of business English education in China and provide solid talent support for the “Belt and Road” construction. This paper will conduct research from aspects such as demand characteristic analysis, current training status diagnosis, and reform strategy exploration, aiming to provide theoretical references and practical insights for the innovation of business English talent training models.

2. Analysis of business English talent demand characteristics in the context of the “Belt and Road”

2.1. Analysis of the business environment of countries along the “Belt and Road”

The “Belt and Road” Initiative covers many countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa. From a political perspective, some countries have mature and stable political systems, providing solid guarantees for business activities. However, there is a certain degree of uncertainty in the political situation of other countries, posing potential risks to cross-border business cooperation. In terms of the economic environment, there are significant differences in the economic development levels of countries along the route. There are developed countries with highly developed economies and well-structured industrial systems, emerging economies with rapid economic development and huge market potential, as well as countries with weak economic foundations and relatively lagging development. This imbalance in economic development determines the diversity of business cooperation fields and models. In terms of cultural environment, different cultural backgrounds lead to significant differences in business communication styles, negotiation techniques, and business practices. At the same time, the legal systems of various countries are also different, with many differences in trade rules, intellectual property protection, labor rights, and other aspects, posing challenges to the compliance of cross-border business activities.

2.2. New characteristics of business English talent demand in the context of the “Belt and Road”

With the increasing economic and trade exchanges between the countries involved in the “Belt and Road” initiative, there is an urgent need for applied talents with international vision and strategic thinking, high-quality professional technical skills, cross-cultural communication abilities, and the ability to solve complex practical problems to participate in and provide intellectual and talent support for the initiative ^[1]. In this context, the requirements for talent language ability have been deepened. Not only must they be able to conduct smooth daily and business communication, but they also need to accurately use professional terminology and industry jargon in international trade negotiations to avoid language misunderstandings. With the development of digital business, talents must master language norms such as network language and electronic contracts, and be proficient in online business communication and document processing. The professional knowledge of business English talents also needs to be diversified. Besides solid English and business English knowledge, they must also be familiar with multiple fields such as international trade, international finance, marketing, and international logistics. Cross-cultural communication ability has become an essential skill for business English talents. Due to the significant cultural differences among countries along the route, it is necessary to deeply understand the cultural customs, values, and religious beliefs of each country, respect and adapt to differences in business activities, and avoid cultural conflicts ^[2]. Business negotiations require adjusting strategies based on the other party’s culture, following the etiquette norms of various countries, and demonstrating good professional qualities. At the same time, they must have the ability to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and maintain business cooperation relationships. Facing a complex and changing business environment, they must have rich practical experience, be able to flexibly apply knowledge and skills to solve problems in actual business scenarios, and possess innovation abilities to explore new business models and cooperation methods, helping enterprises compete in the international market.

2.3. Differences in business English talent demand in different regions of the “Belt and Road”

Southeast Asia is geographically close to China, with frequent trade, investment, and tourism exchanges.

The demand for business English talents is concentrated in trade practices and tourism services. Most of Southeast Asia's industries are labor-intensive and resource-based, requiring talents familiar with agricultural and light industrial product trade, who have knowledge of import and export processes, customs policies, and commodity inspection and quarantine, and can negotiate and sign contracts in English proficiently. In terms of tourism services, as a popular tourist destination, talents with English communication and tourism professional knowledge are needed to provide services to tourists and assist tourism enterprises in marketing^[3]. The Middle East is rich in oil resources and has extensive cooperation with China in energy trade and infrastructure construction. Talents familiar with energy product trade rules and market dynamics are required, who can negotiate contracts and prices in English. Given the influence of religious culture, talents need to have a deep understanding of Islamic culture and good cross-cultural communication skills to ensure smooth communication and cooperation with locals. In infrastructure construction, compound talents with engineering technology knowledge and good English skills are needed to participate in project bidding, construction management, and technical exchanges. Europe has a developed economy and high technological level, leading in high-end manufacturing, technological innovation, and financial services. It has extremely high requirements for the comprehensive quality of business English talents. In the fields of high-end manufacturing and technological innovation, talents with professional technical English abilities are required, who can accurately translate technical documents and participate in technical exchanges and research and development cooperation^[4]. In the field of financial services, talents familiar with international financial market rules, product innovation, and risk management are needed, who can conduct financial transactions, investment and financing analysis, and institutional cooperation in English. At the same time, because Europe emphasizes legal compliance, talents also need to understand local laws, regulations, and business regulatory policies.

3. Analysis of the current situation and problems of the business English talent training mode in China

3.1. Current situation of business English talent training mode in China

Currently, the training of business English talents in China mainly relies on higher education institutions and vocational education systems. In terms of curriculum design, most universities have established a composite curriculum system consisting of "English language courses + business major courses." Additionally, some institutions offer expansion courses such as cross-cultural communication and international business law to broaden students' knowledge and better adapt them to the international business environment. Traditional classroom teaching methods remain the primary approach, but with the updating of educational concepts, more and more institutions are introducing new teaching methods such as case-based teaching and project-based teaching^[5]. Furthermore, some institutions actively carry out online and offline hybrid teaching, utilizing network platforms to enrich teaching resources, expand learning channels, and improve teaching effectiveness. Regarding teacher team construction, the business English faculty mainly consists of English language teachers and teachers with certain business knowledge. Some institutions also hire corporate executives and industry experts as part-time teachers to bring students the latest industry trends and practical experiences, promoting the combination of theory and practice. In practical teaching, many institutions have established on-campus training bases that simulate business office environments and international trade processes, allowing students to conduct practical operations in a simulated environment.

3.2. Problems with the existing training mode

In terms of curriculum, there is insufficient integration between English language courses and business major courses. Some institutions simply superimpose the two types of courses without achieving organic integration, making it difficult for students to integrate language knowledge with business knowledge and apply it flexibly in actual business scenarios. Additionally, the course content is lagging in updates and has not kept up with the rapid changes in the business environment under the “Belt and Road” initiative ^[6]. Regarding teaching methods, although new teaching methods have been introduced, traditional lecture-based teaching still dominates in practical teaching, and students’ initiative and creativity are not fully utilized. Online and offline hybrid teaching also faces issues such as inconsistent quality of online resources and inadequate teacher-student interaction. On the one hand, there is a shortage of “dual-qualified” teachers who have both profound English language skills and rich business practical experience. Most teachers either focus on English teaching but lack business practical ability, or they have rich business knowledge but need to improve their English teaching level ^[7]. On the other hand, the hiring and management of part-time corporate teachers are not standardized, leading to issues such as unstable teaching schedules and a lack of tight integration between teaching content and the curriculum system. There are significant shortcomings in practical teaching. The equipment and software updates for on-campus training bases are slow, unable to simulate the latest business scenarios and business processes. The number of off-campus internship bases is limited, making it difficult to meet students’ internship needs, and some internship positions are not strongly related to the business English major, preventing students from effectively improving their professional abilities during the internship. Furthermore, practical teaching lacks a scientific evaluation system, making it difficult to accurately measure students’ practical abilities and learning achievements.

4. Reform strategies for business English talent training mode in the context of the “Belt and Road” initiative

4.1. Optimizing the curriculum system

To better adapt business English talent training to the “Belt and Road” initiative, the curriculum system needs to be comprehensively optimized. We should break down the barriers between English language courses and business courses, promoting deep integration between the two. Integrated courses can be developed, such as a “Business English Correspondence and International Trade Practices Integrated Course.” This type of course should be guided by real business scenarios in teaching, allowing students to master the business processes of international trade while learning the writing norms of English business letters, thus achieving the simultaneous application of language and business knowledge ^[8]. Keeping up with the dynamic changes in the business environment of the “Belt and Road,” course content should be updated in a timely manner. Courses in emerging fields such as cross-border e-commerce operations, digital trade rules, and international business big data analytics should be added to impart cutting-edge knowledge and skills to students. For example, by offering a “‘Belt and Road’ Cross-border E-commerce Practice” course, students can learn about the operational models of e-commerce platforms, cross-border logistics, and payments in countries along the route, cultivating their competitiveness in emerging business areas. Additionally, strengthening the construction of regionally distinctive courses aimed at the business characteristics and cultural differences of different regions along the “Belt and Road” is important. Courses such as “Southeast Asian Business Culture and Trade” and “Middle Eastern Business Environment and Energy Cooperation” can help students gain a deeper understanding of their target regions and enhance their cross-cultural business communication skills.

4.2. Innovating teaching methods

New teaching methods such as case-based teaching and project-based teaching should be further promoted and improved. In selecting cases, a focus should be placed on real and timely business cases in the context of the “Belt and Road.” This allows students to conduct in-depth analysis and discussion, guiding them to propose solutions using the knowledge they have learned and cultivating their problem-solving abilities and critical thinking^[9]. For project-based teaching, the systematic and complete design of projects should be strengthened. Collaborating with enterprises to develop practical business projects can allow students to participate in the entire process of project planning, execution, and evaluation. For example, developing a “Belt and Road” market expansion plan for enterprises can help students exercise their team collaboration, communication, and business operation skills in the practical process. On the other hand, modern information technology should be fully utilized to deepen the mixed online and offline teaching model. By integrating high-quality online teaching resources, such as internationally renowned business courses and videos of industry expert lectures, a rich online learning platform can be constructed. In offline classrooms, teachers can answer questions, organize small group discussions, and conduct practical activities based on online learning content, achieving complementary advantages between online and offline learning and improving teaching effectiveness. Additionally, the introduction of technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) can simulate real business scenarios, allowing students to immerse themselves in business activities and enhance their practical experience.

4.3. Strengthening the construction of teaching faculty and enhancing the level of internationalization

The teaching faculty is the core force for talent cultivation, and strengthening its construction needs to be approached from multiple angles. We should intensify efforts to cultivate “dual-qualified” teachers, encourage teachers to take up positions in enterprises, participate in practical business projects, and accumulate practical experience. At the same time, we should support teachers to participate in domestic and international business English professional training and academic exchange activities to enhance their professional quality and international perspective. For example, schools can cooperate with enterprises to establish a teacher practice base, regularly assigning teachers to serve as business consultants or participate in business operations in enterprises, so that they can integrate practical experience into teaching. We should standardize the recruitment and management of part-time teachers from enterprises, establish strict selection criteria for part-time teachers, and preferentially hire executives and industry elites with rich experience in the “Belt and Road” business field. A sound teaching assessment and incentive mechanism for part-time teachers should be established to ensure their teaching time and quality, and promote the close connection between the teaching content of part-time teachers and the curriculum system^[10]. In addition, we should introduce outstanding talents with international education backgrounds or overseas work experience to enrich the teaching faculty, bring international concepts and methods to teaching, and enhance the internationalization level of the overall teaching faculty.

4.4. Deepening school-enterprise cooperation and building a diversified practice platform

Deepening school-enterprise cooperation is an important way to build a diversified practice platform. Institutions should establish long-term, stable cooperative relationships with more enterprises, and jointly develop internship plans and training programs based on enterprise needs and student professional development directions. Beyond traditional internship positions, actively expand internship opportunities related to the “Belt and Road,” such as recommending students to intern in enterprises involved in projects along the route or cross-border e-commerce enterprises, allowing students to engage in international business operations in their actual

work and enhance their professional abilities. Meanwhile, a practical teaching base should be jointly established with enterprises, investing funds and resources to create a comprehensive platform integrating teaching, practice, and research. For example, a cross-border e-commerce training base can be jointly built by schools and enterprises, where enterprises provide a real e-commerce operation platform and business resources, while schools are responsible for teaching management and student guidance. Students can carry out practical activities such as cross-border e-commerce store operations and product promotion in the base. Additionally, enterprises are encouraged to participate in the school's curriculum design, teaching evaluation, and other aspects, achieving precise alignment between school talent cultivation and enterprise talent demand. Activities such as school-enterprise joint business competitions and innovative entrepreneurship projects can also be organized to stimulate students' enthusiasm for practice and innovation, providing them with more opportunities to showcase their talents and gain practical experience.

5. Conclusion

The deepening development of the “Belt and Road” initiative has raised new requirements for business English talents, emphasizing professionalism, versatility, and internationalization. The diversity of politics, economy, and culture among countries along the route demands that business English talents possess precise language skills, cross-domain professional knowledge, a keen awareness of cross-cultural communication, and innovative practical abilities. However, the current training model in China has shortcomings in terms of curriculum systems, teaching methods, teaching staff, and practical platforms, which restrict the precise alignment of talent cultivation with market demand. This paper proposes reform strategies such as optimizing the curriculum system, innovating teaching methods, strengthening the teaching staff, and deepening school-enterprise cooperation. The aim is to construct a new demand-oriented and practice-centered training model for business English talents. By breaking down disciplinary barriers, introducing cutting-edge technologies, and integrating multiple resources, we aim to shift talent cultivation from traditional knowledge imparting to enhancing abilities and qualities, thus providing high-quality, versatile talents who can adapt to the complex international business environment for the “Belt and Road” construction.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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