

On Construction of Chengdu Economic Zone Oriented Practical Teaching System in Business English Major---Taking Leshan Normal University as an Example

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Abstract

With the development of Chengdu Economic Zone, practical business English talents are badly needed. Thus, the training objective for business English majors in Leshan Normal University should be Chengdu Economic Zone oriented to cultivate professionals with both business skills and English competence who can fluently use English to cope with business affairs. However, through the surveys of companies and enterprises in the Zone as well as the graduates in the university, it is found that the business English professional graduates still fail to fully meet the demand of the companies. There are still some problems in the practical training system in the university, such as sufficient practical training bases, lack of teaching staff with bi-expertise, and imperfect management and evaluation system for the practical teaching. The paper aims to study the construction of practical teaching system in business English major which can not only ensure the cultivation of satisfactory practical business English talents but also improve the graduates' competitiveness.

Keywords: Construction; Chengdu economic zone; Business English practical teaching system; Leshan normal university.



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1. Introduction

Although business English is a hot major in China, there is an embarrassing fact that current teaching pattern of business English is somewhat like that of EGP (English for General Purpose) teaching. The supposed ESP (English for Special Purpose) teaching pattern and characteristics in business English fail to form and theory teaching outweighs practical teaching. Thus, business English graduates cultivated through this kind of pattern are struggled in practical business work.

The objectives of business English talents training should be geared to market demand. Specifically for Leshan Normal University, it should be Chengdu Economic Zone oriented. On January of 2010, Chengdu Economic Zone developed into a group of 8 cities including Chengdu, Deyang, Mianyang, Meishan, Leshan, Ziyang, Shuining and Yaan. With the further development of the zone, the demand for business English talents is increasing like foreign-oriented secretaries, foreign trade specialists, business English translators, merchandisers, customs declarers, salesmen and logistics personnel, etc. Leshan Normal University used to cultivate teachers only, but now it is in a period of application-oriented transformation. Chengdu Economic Zone provides good opportunities for the university to serve the local area and cultivate practical talents.

2. Analysis of Status Quo of Business English Practical Teaching in Leshan Normal University

2.1. Indistinctive Objectives of Talents Training

The objectives of business English talents training in Leshan Normal University are relatively OK but lack local color: to cultivate practical talents with English competence, business culture, and international business knowledge who are competent in international business activities. The objectives should be practice-oriented and adjusted to meet the demand of the local job market.

2.2. Imperfect Curriculum Design

The current curriculum design for business English still has room to be improved in that some of the courses are still basic English such as *English Grammar*, *English Speaking and Listening* and *Integrated Skills of English*, etc. Furthermore, most of the courses are theoretical and only a few courses (*International Business Negotiation*, *Business Practice*, *Business English Interpretation* and *Business English Writing*, etc.) are practical teaching.

2.3. Single Training Model of Talents

The current training model of business English talents in Leshan Normal University is single, still following the traditional training model of talents.

2.4. Imperfect Practical Conditions

The current practical places in Leshan Normal University for business English majors are mostly multi-media classrooms. Both on-campus and off-campus training bases are badly needed.

2.5. Lack of Double-Qualified Teachers in Business English

Most of the current teachers are not business English majors. They don't have a good command of business knowledge, nor are they trained in the field.

2.6. Poor Practical Teaching Management

For business English majors in Leshan Normal University, there are practice weeks of 1-6 in the first 7 terms and the internship is arranged in the last term. But in the practice week, most of the tasks are done in an internet-based business platform. There are only a few chances for students to visit the enterprises. In addition, for the internship, teachers' guidance, scientific evaluation and effective management are still big problems.

3. Analysis of Chengdu Economic Zone's Demand for Business English Talents

After the analysis of Chengdu Economic Zone's demand for business English talents, it is found that the following jobs are needed: foreign-oriented secretaries, foreign trade specialists, business English translators, merchandisers, customs declarers, export sales staff, exhibition personnel and logistics personnel. The author carried out a survey with questionnaires in more than 10 companies and enterprises in Chengdu Economic Zone of different industries like foreign trade, food production, service, textile and fashion, etc. Based on the findings of the survey, the author further interviewed some recruiting specialists or managers in order to get more information about what kind of business English talents are mostly welcomed in the job market.

In summary, the employers have a high demand of the employees' practical competence. Specifically, the employees are supposed to possess both English certificates like TEM-4 or even TEM-8 and professional certificates such as BEC, International Trade Agent, Custom Declarer, and Logistics Manager, etc. In real work, in addition to English skills, modern office capacity, social acceptability, international communication ability and even self-employment ability are also required for the employees. But as a matter of fact, the author found that the employers are not very satisfied with the practical ability of the employees, especially the business negotiation competence and organization ability, etc.

4. Investigation and Analysis of Employment Status of Business English Majors of Grade 2014 of Leshan Normal University

Business English majors of Grade 2014 are the first students in Leshan Normal University, who just graduated in June, 2018. Thus, the author carried out a survey for the employment status of the business English majors of Grade 2014 in terms of satisfaction of teaching, their post of duty, adaptability to their job, and job satisfaction, etc.

The findings are as follows: First of all, most of the graduates are not satisfied with the teaching quality in the university, especially practical teaching. They are short of opportunities to put theory into practice while in school. Secondly, only 28% of the graduates land jobs in their field. Thirdly, most of the graduates find difficulty adapting to the part of the job that needs practical competence such as organizing a meeting, and negotiating with foreign businessmen, etc. Finally, half of the students are not satisfied with the current jobs.

In this case, we need to reflect and reconstruct the practical teaching system of business English major, which plays a vital role in improving the university's social acceptance and promoting the graduates' employability.

5. Construction of Chengdu Economic Zone Oriented Practical Teaching System in Business English Major

5.1. Objectives of Talents Training

As for the objectives of talents training, the university should have a clear orientation, that is, to stress more on practice and to serve the local area. Taking advantage of the development of Chengdu Economic Zone, the talents training should meet the demand of the local job market in Chengdu Economic Zone. The university should make more market survey and establish good rapport with the companies and enterprises of the zone. It is advisable that the university should invite the employers of the companies and enterprises of the zone to give their valuable and practical advice in the process of revising the training objectives of the business English talents.

5.2. Curriculum Design

Accordingly, the university should optimize the curriculum design to stress more on practical teaching. Besides the traditional textbooks used in teaching theory, the university should boldly introduce new self-compiled teaching materials especially in practical teaching. Specifically, the university should invite the employers or experienced employees of the companies and enterprises of the zone with real-world experience to compile the teaching materials together with the teachers. And even the practical operation manuals in the companies and enterprises can be made use of in the classroom so that the students can learn a lot practical experience that they can never acquire from the traditional books.

5.3. Training Model of Talents

The training model of talents should be innovated instead the traditional single mode. Specifically, diversified training models are as follows: Firstly, the talent training pattern of combination of learning with working should be conducted. In this way, the enterprises and the university are in close contact with each other and the order-oriented training pattern is realized. Secondly, the talent training pattern of Chinese-foreign cooperation should be implemented. In this pattern, the university can cooperate with the advanced foreign schools to cultivate the talents. And the talents cultivated in this way can possess practical competence. Finally, the university is in a period of application-oriented transformation. So the university can integrate the resources to run enterprises itself, which can provide more opportunities for the students' internship and employment.

5.4. Practical Conditions

The practical conditions for business English majors are far from satisfaction. Currently, only multi-media classrooms and an internet-based business platform are available for the students' practice. Therefore, business conference center and business training room should be built for the business English majors. Besides, besides on-campus practical conditions, the off-campus training bases should be increased and stabilized. So far, the university has only one or two companies for the business English majors to practice, which is not enough. The cooperation between schools and enterprises especially those in Chengdu Economic Zone should be strengthened. Order-oriented training, combination of learning with working and post practice are valuable for the students to acquire experience which is important for their future job-hunting and practical competence.

5.5. Double-Qualified Teachers in Business English

Another non-negligible factor is the teaching staff. The university should put emphasis on training double-qualified teachers in business English especially advisers in practical teaching. In view of the fact that most of the teachers lack the background of business English and business activities, the university can adopt flexible approaches, such as inviting the employers or employees with real-world experience to be part-time teachers to teach in the classroom or give lectures to the students, organizing teachers to be trained in the companies and enterprises or in the foreign countries.

5.6. Practical Teaching Management

The university should also take measures to put more emphasis on practical teaching, such as increasing the proportion of practice performance in the grading criteria for the business English majors, etc. Specifically, the advised approaches are as follows: First, replacing the traditional test with diversified evaluation methods such as investigation report, questionnaire survey and teamwork organization, etc. Secondly, off-campus evaluation should be innovated. The off-campus evaluation mainly refers to the students' internship. Previously, the students only need to submit practical training report. And enterprise appraisal and tracking reports by the advisers should be increased which can improve the students' internship and practical competence. Thirdly, the students should be encouraged to acquire different kinds of certificates, which is another way to earn credits. Finally, examination board should be established to test the students' practical skills. And the result is a key element for the students' graduation. In this way, the students have to put emphasis on their internship instead of taking it as a formality.

6. Conclusion

All in all, practical teaching is an indispensable part in business English teaching in that it truly reflects the teaching concept of combining learning and working. The construction of a perfect practical teaching system for business English majors is not only the guarantee for realizing the training objectives of business English talents, but also a key factor for improving the employment competitiveness of the graduates and promoting the school's transformation from traditional style to application-oriented pattern.

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