Application of Computer Technology in Business English Teaching Reform in Vocational Colleges in China

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Abstract. This article analyses the possibility of using computer modern technology on business English teaching reform in vocational college in China and the challenges which computer technology brings for the revolution. It points out that the proper application of modern computer technology could break through the limitations of traditional business English teaching system. Since the development of China’s economy and the strengthening of globalization, China’s international trade is increasingly thriving and the total volume of trade is growing as well.

Keywords: Business English, International Trade, Computer Technology

1. Introduction

The curriculum based on computer and network has changed the main body of teaching from the traditional teaching mode (teachers as the main body) to the independent learning mode (students as the main body), which is not only to teachers’ conducive of the learning situation of students but also to improve students’ independent learning ability. “In view of the globalization of English and its dominance in non-native contexts, business, new media and other area, research has shown that Business English plays a remarkable and practical role in the social workplace” (Trinder, 2013). In Trinder’s point of view, Business English is a social variant of English. It is also a branch of English for specific purposes (ESP) and an application of English in business situations. The situational context of language and economic globalization create many challenges in teaching English for Chinese vocational college students. For contemporary Chinese college students, English is no longer a reflection of their personal qualities but a necessary skill for their future career. As a result, the development of Business English courses in Chinese vocational college is inevitable. Many believe that more attention should be given to Business English reform. The application of Internet and computer technology provides the technical support for the reform of business English by providing the network platform, changing teaching methods, utilizing the abundant network teaching materials, stimulating students’ interest in learning effectively as well as improving students’ ability of using business English knowledge to solve practical problems, which is a symbol of modern demand for the development of college students.

1.1. Statement of the Problem
Computer and network are challenges to traditional learning concepts and methods. In traditional teaching system, students acquire knowledge mainly through textbook and teachers. With the help of computers, students are possible to choose suitable teaching content according to their level of knowledge and ability. Besides, the leaning time is also more flexible. When talking about business reform, there is a contradiction between the learning difficulty of Business English and the characteristics of vocational college students. Most students study English to prepare for the English exam, such as College English test-Grade 4 (CET-4), so their practical English application ability is insufficient because of their limited knowledge.

This paper focuses on the below three questions: (a) How can Business English instructors understand the learning needs of students? (b) How can instructors get a better connection between English basic courses and professional English courses? (c) What are the advantages and disadvantages of network and computer technology?

1.2. Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to seize the opportunities brought by the computer and network and make effort to break through the traditional business English teaching mode so as to promote the all-round development of college students.

This paper will explore how teachers can develop effective Business English strategies on the basis of full analysis of students’ learning situation so as to enhance students’ motivation and interest and to increase the passing rate of BEC and pave the way for career after graduation. Business knowledge, however, is the foundation of English language knowledge. The goal of studying English at this career specific level is acquiring contextually-based practical use of language within the given domain, rather than focusing on grammar and structure (Milos, 2018).

1.3. Significance of the Study
Teaching model is assisted by the development of multimedia in modern science which is supported by rapid progress of modern computer information technology. The integration of computing network and foreign language courses, especially business English courses, is a deep reflection on the relationship among learning, education and technology. In traditional teaching system, students don’t have enough opportunities to practice their oral English, however, this situation will change under the application of computer technology and Internet. The content involves each aspect of the business activity, such as statistical charts, meeting minutes, deliveries and shipments, counter offers, price negotiations, etc. This content puts forward higher requirements for Business English teaching at ordinary times. With the help of online learning platform, students’ language training can be strengthened to solve this problem. It’s necessary to develop Business English reform in order to increase students’ chances of finding employment successfully and have excellent performance in their future work. Ruth (2013) states that “learners’ and teachers’ evaluation of what constitutes useful, appropriate, and goal-relevant English may well shift in view of the globalization of English and its dominance in non-native contexts, business, and new media” (p. 134).

2. Review of Literature
In today’s society, the Internet, with rich resources and powerful interactivity, has opened up a new world for foreign language teaching. The most important thing in foreign language teaching is to provide students with an environment suitable for foreign language learning, while the Internet provides students with a language learning with low pressure. There are three teaching requirements of ESP courses: authentic materials, purpose-oriented guidance and independent study (Carter, 1983).

2.1. Current situation of the Business English teaching mode
In recent years, with the rapid development of the economy, China’s business trade has grown quickly; however, many problems have been exposed at the same time. The biggest problem is the shortage of qualified people who can master both English and business. Although many colleges have
set up Business English as an important major course, there are still few people who can use English language proficiently in the business area (Ai, 2018). “Facing the unknown opportunities and challenges, only by doing a good job in basic foundation of teaching can Business English develop in a positive and flourishing direction” (Ai, 2018, p. 272).

2.1.1. The lack of the experienced Business English teacher
Business English learning focuses on students’ practical abilities in language application. However, there are many colleges that still use the traditional, old-fashioned EGP teaching methods for Business English teaching. Rigid teaching method cannot mobilize the enthusiasm of students; in fact, it wastes a lot of time. Many English teachers make full use of the computer and the Internet to share the latest information in the world. Furthermore, many educators are concerned about how online Business English course can be used in higher education (Alenka, 2019).

2.2. Benefits of Business English teaching strategies supported by computer technology
Computer technology can play the guiding role of teachers and cultivate students’ independent English learning ability. The degree of students’ network operation skills affects their interests in learning business English as well as teachers’ teaching qualities. How to use the computer and Internet to search the information they need promptly can greatly enhance students’ interests and enthusiasm for business English learning.

2.2.1. Organize Business training for English teacher regularly
Teachers are the organizers and guides of teaching activities. Business English courses include not only language skills but also relevant cultural background. That is to say, the cultural information transferred by language is an important part of Business English teaching. Jingzi (2017) gave a further explanation about this view, stating. It is vital for teachers to master computer skills and online teaching methods.

It may or may not be feasible for universities to regularly organize Business English training for English teachers and hire experienced business professionals who work in famous firms to hold lectures on business knowledge. Some universities try to create conditions to guide and encourage English teachers to take part-time jobs in trade firms during their summer and winter vacations. Yapin (2016) showed the theoretical foundation and suggested,

2.2.2. Integrate curriculum setting and adjust Business English teaching plan
Business English courses do not only train students’ English language ability; they also impart western business management concepts, working psychology, working documents, and ways to cooperate with them. All these abilities must be acquired through daily business activities. Therefore, the curriculum setting of a Business English major must take into account the relevant supporting disciplines and courses, such as cross-cultural communication, advertising, marketing, and practice of international trade. Li (2007) agreed with this point and states that “as a means to achieve the goal of education, curriculum design is of great significance for the development of business English major. On the basis of needs analysis, we need to analyze business English majors, business English students, business English office affairs and the person who teach English” (p. 308). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze fully the actual situation of students to set up relevant Business English courses.

Lee (1972) demonstrated his idea that teaching plan is a subject plan, which is the main document to guide the teaching progress of the subject. The teaching plan is designed to assist in teaching certain fundamental concepts associated with the meaning and importance of agribusiness. It could be better for teachers to abandon the traditional teaching method and shorten the lecture time to devote more time to the special training for BEC exam to improve the passing rate of students. That is to say, teaching plans can correspond to the BEC test from 4 sections: speaking, reading, writing and listening.
2.3. **Train students with correct learning strategies with the proper usage of computer**

Business English is a very much practical course. Students’ comprehensive abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing are critical in passing the BEC exam. In addition, according to the test syllabus of BEC, BEC has its unique characteristics, which means the final test purpose is neither Business background knowledge nor General English ability, but the language application ability and problem solving ability of candidates in the Business context.

2.3.1. **Listening Strategies**

Listening is an important part of the BEC test, consisting of a quarter of the total score. The online courses supported by computer technology have sufficient listening system practices which are able to meet students’ needs for examination. There are three sections in the listening test, short telephone conversations, monologues, and long conversations. There are three methods in listening training: extensive listening, intensive listening, and selective listening. Mojtaba (2013) believed that students should be guided to the predication and inference of listening materials beforehand, he also said that “it became evident that having students adapt listening materials improved listening comprehension performance” (p. 45). Moreover, most topics of telephone conversation are generally including customer complaints, apologies, orders, arrangements, inquiries, and reservations etc. Students can practice these topics and business scenarios over and over again during the class.

In addition to these necessary listening strategies, the students should be given a lot of listening tasks and then tested in stages during the class or after the class. A survey presented that “listening is an interpretive language process in which a variety of strategies are interwoven and that textural and non-textual information combined with the strategies used determines the listener’s interpretation of what the student hears” (Murphy, 1985). One implication of the study for the classroom is that methods of listening instruction should be integrated with activities involving reading, speaking, and writing.

2.3.2. **Reading Strategies**

The reading section accounts for a significant portion of the BEC test because Business English reading is an important way for Business English practitioners to obtain business knowledge and information. That is why students need to acquire some related business background knowledge except the necessary reading skills. Considering that most college students do not have work experience in business cooperation, teachers may feel inadequate for the practical professional knowledge explanation in the class. Therefore, according to Alina (2017), “students need a lot of input of materials such as newspapers, magazines and the internet, which includes substantial knowledge of finance, insurance, hotel, IT, automobile, aviation and every aspects of economic life. Reading newspaper articles, therefore, is also an effective tool for intercultural competences” (p. 27).

2.3.3. **Writing Strategies**

The requirements for the writing part of the examination mainly tests students’ communication abilities in Business English activities, including inquiry, contract, complain, claim, report, questionnaire, etc. Therefore, students can be trained to adopt task-based teaching methods, which are available to set up different workshop scenarios and practices. “Task-based language teaching in ESP environment provides learners with natural sources of meaningful materials, various situations for greater opportunities in using language, it will give insight for teachers to design and implement real communicative tasks in ESP classes” (Ariana, 2014).

Task-Based language teaching is a writing training mode based on different business working activities (David, 2004). Teachers formulate language-learning tasks according to the communicative situation in business scenarios and provide some real cases as classroom teaching corpus for students to imitate and practice. Not only this, Ruby (2013) demonstrated that writing skills in specific writing tasks can build their writing skills through self-reflection and peer feedback. During the writing training process, instead of requiring students to directly complete the writing tasks according to the
relevant materials and requirements assigned by the teachers, students are divided into groups according to different tasks goals, then discuss, analyze, and write on their own tasks.

Writing templates in Business commercial correspondence may also help to improve students’ writing skills. So do we usually use writing skills in the jobs? Appleman (2009) answered this question like this: “Poorly written documents can cause employees to reread instructions, perform tasks incorrectly, and miscommunicate with their customers, the good news is that business writing can be taught on fundamental principles of clarity, conciseness and organization” (p. 10).

2.3.4. Oral English Strategies
The commonly used training method for the oral exercises are based on the materials and requirements in Business English textbooks, including communication exercises between teachers and students, and role-play exercises among students. However, the final class effect is not satisfactory because of the limitation of the class time (Cai, 2018). Computer application with sufficient network resources address the lack of a language environment in which students can practice oral speaking.

3. Summary
The increasing number of vocational colleges are putting more attention on Business English teaching right now because of its practical communicative characteristics. Through computers, teachers can assign research learning tasks to motivate students to use online resources. The task of research-based learning is to arrange a broad subject honestly. Students should give full play to their subjective initiative, collect and analyze information resources and raise questions actively according to the given problems.

4. Conclusion
In conclusion, one if the biggest advantages of computer technology and Internet is that it create a real and natural language environment. Internet books, music, movies, videos, global news, traveling, chatting and other service information technology has already created a relaxed virtual environment and suitable conditions for language learners. “Business English Teaching aims at cultivating students’ ability to analyze and solve problems, improving students’ comprehensive language competence and honing their business practical skills” (Guiyu, 2017). The application of computer technology and Internet not only provides students with abundant input and communication materials but also enables them to practice specific language expression skills through meaningful context, which will enhance students’ practical language ability effectively.

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