

Cultural Literacy and the Teaching of *Comprehensive Business English*

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Abstract: *Culture is the essence of human social attributes. The formation of cultural literacy is of great significance for people's growth and development. Compound talents trained in business English must have good cultural literacy. Therefore, when teaching Comprehensive Business English, teachers should dig deeply into cultural elements in textbooks and pay attention to helping students build corresponding cultural literacy, especially Chinese cultural literacy, so as to guide and cultivate business talents with "China's heart and love", as well as a global vision.*

Keywords: *business English; cultural literacy; teaching*

1. Introduction: Present situation of cultural literacy in comprehensive Business English teaching

With the frequent contact and integration of international economic activities, English has developed rapidly as an instrumental language. The English language coupled with professional business knowledge forms business English, which is rich in knowledge and skills, covering all areas of business activities. At the same time, it should follow the changes of business activities and timely upgrade and change itself, so as to adapt to the changing needs of business demands. Comprehensive Business English is the most typically representative course of business English program. Its "comprehensiveness" nature not only interprets the breadth of business field, but also well explains the systematicness and integrity of language courses as part of a bigger whole. The linguistic attribution as "English" builds a perfect connection between business profession and English language, reflecting the connection among things in the whole world. It also reflects the nature of the world as an organic whole. The current researches on business English teaching all are almost focused on cross-cultural analysis, sorting out and putting forward relevant suggestions. This paper discusses the relationship between business profession and its corresponding cultural literacy, which is based on the dual mission of cultural identity and inheritance of Chinese cultures. In view of the current domestic and international context, "cultural going global strategy" can not only highlight the subjectivity of Chinese culture, but also reflect the significance of Chinese culture to the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind. Therefore, the marketing talents trained by Business English must have both excellent cultural literacy and competent skills. Such talents should have warm feelings of home and country as well as the social responsibility of "helping the world".

The course of *Integrated Business English* aims to comprehensively cultivate the overall quality of future business talents in instrumental language and professional knowledge related to various fields of business, such as cultural literacy and professional skills. Therefore, this course is one of the basic courses for business English majors, and some colleges call it "core course".

2. The importance of cultural literacy in comprehensive business English teaching

2.1 *Culture is the foundation of success and the nourishment of business talents*

Culture is a strong bond of social existence, thus a powerful invisible force. Culture is inclusive, and at the same time it shapes everything that exists in its sphere. People who live in a culture are born with a gift that "everyday people use it but without knowing it", but when they are out of the culture, they immediately experience an "uneasiness" or "shock". Therefore, for talents trained in business English, they will frequently confront the fact alternating their own culture and other cultures in their daily work. Language is only a carrier of culture. The existence of a language must depend on a culture, for a language cannot exist without culture. Business English can exist only on the basis of business and its associated culture. Therefore, the content of *comprehensive Business English* course must teach

cultural knowledge related to business, and finally survive, develop and continue as a specific form of its contextual culture. In the long history of China, especially in the Ming and Qing dynasties, many commercial clans or region-based business-styles emerged throughout the country, among which the most famous are Zhejiang-style Businessman, Guangdong-styles, Fujian-style(then Shanxi-style), Jin-style, Hui-style(then Anhui-style), Lu-style(shangdon-style), Su-style(then Jiangsu-style), etc. They all have regional characteristics and all created different commercial miracles in the development of Chinese commercial civilization.

Such as "Hui-style businessman", "Jin-style Businessman", and "Zhe-style businessman", they not only represented a business model, but also reflected a business culture and business spirit. In addition to their industrial and regional characteristics, many of the business groups formed in Chinese history were integrated with Confucianism, hence the name "Confucian Businessmen." "Confucian Businessman" originates from the harmonious integration of Confucianism and Commerce. "Confucianism" stands for "morality, cultivation and intelligence" and "Commerce" stands for "wealth, vision, pioneering, creative and good at seizing opportunities" and many other excellent qualities. "Confucian businessmen" are the model of the business community, for they pay attention to personal cultivation, integrity management, they focus on cooperation, righteous wealth and harmonious in making money, and they possess a high cultural literacy, boasted of a high sense of social responsibility, and respected for the ideal of "saving the world and helping the people" and a strong sense of "survival in crisis", "they both want to establish themselves and others at the same time, achieving and helping to achieve". Therefore, the teaching of *Comprehensive Business English* should not only pay attention to the "guiding" role of language skills and business professional knowledge, but also handle the dialectical relationship between "morality" and "talent" with the enlightenment and guidance of business culture and good business morality. As was said by Sima Guang(a great historian in Chinese North Song Dynasty):good morality, the commander-in-chief of talent; talent, the capital of good morality ".*Comprehensive Business English* class is to cultivate business talents with "integrity and capability", contributing to the country and individual family as well.

2.2 Cultural literacy ensures the sustainable development of business talents

"Observing the changes of clouds is to observe the changes of weather; looking into the humanities is to constitute a harmonious society ".Cultural literacy is the fundamental guarantee for the sustainable development of business talents." Observing clouds" and "looking into humanities", we can arrive at the law, can fundamentally understand the development of things, do "take advantage of the situation" and "foster strengths and circumvent weaknesses", can live in nature comfortably and carry forward constantly. Talents trained by business English teaching should meet the needs of the long-term development of the market, which should not be an expedient measure. Therefore, a strong business culture and the stable formation of the overall social cultural environment required by the formation of business culture and the constant change and development with the Times are the fertile nutritional basis for the cultivation of excellent business talents. The famous business groups, such as "Hui-styled businessman" and "Jin-styled businessman", are the results of the shaping function of the Hui culture and Jin culture. Without the Hui culture and Jin culture, there would be no "Hui businessman" and "Jin businessman", not to mention their present good influence and continuity. Today's business talents must also take culture as the cornerstone and nourish them to grow into well-cultured businessmen or business talents.

Main target of the teaching of comprehensive business English major is to cultivate the needed cross-language business talents, with English as working language and skillful at cross-cultural communication. So we develop business talents with Chinese culture as the nutrition base, and the cornerstone of its growth and success, we must submerge the future talents in Chinese cultural education and edification, shaping them in good Chinese character and spirit of high quality businessman. In other words, first of all, we should cultivate talents who are willing to serve China's commercial construction and development, and always have business talents with a Chinese heart. Therefore, only in China's cultural environment can we achieve this; only with Chinese culture to cultivate such business talent, can we cultivate developing our own business talents. Therefore, in the teaching of *Comprehensive Business English*, Chinese culture should be constantly integrated into the classroom teaching, and become an integral part of the flowing blood of students.

3. The connotation of cultural literacy in comprehensive Business English teaching

3.1 Chinese culture: Cast the soul of business talents and carry forward the light of Chinese culture

On March 6, 2021, General Secretary Xi visited members of the medical, health and education sectors at the Fourth Session of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and stressed we(educators) should cultivate the talents for our countries, socialist drive and the construction of a shared future for whole humanity; we should cultivate talents at all levels and stages; we work hard to “raise tender roots, cast the soul, guide intelligence and nurture happy heats” in future talents.

"To raise tender roots and cast the soul", said by President Xi, points out to the point that the key to the cultivation of business talents is casting soul, casting a soul with Chinese culture and Chinese national spirit. Such "soul" who exists in Chinese culture, can only come from Chinese culture, and they help to inherit and carry forward Chinese culture.

The current comprehensive business English textbook used by the Business English Department of the author's school is *Comprehensive Business English Course* edited by Wang Lifei, published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, which is a state-level planning textbook for undergraduate education in China's "12th Five-Year Plan" general higher education. Each unit of the textbook well integrates Chinese and western elements, which not only helps to increase students' business knowledge, expand students' global vision, but also enables students to have a deep understanding of Chinese cultural elements. The textbook is well accepted for the reasons: “the combination of English language and professional business knowledge, the dialogue between Chinese and Western culture in the textbook, the future and reality in the book frame, inheritance and debate, cooperation and innovation, etc.” Therefore, when teaching the course, teachers should tap into the teaching materials of Chinese cultural elements to build students confidence in Chinese culture, and promote students awareness of protecting and advocating Chinese fine cultures, contributing to the construction of a shared future for mankind.

3.2 Cultures beyond Chinese culture: create a global vision for business talents and form an inclusive world-outlook

The concept of "global village" is the best description of the world as a whole. We should protect the integrity of the earth and should not treat it as "fragmented" artificially. From the economic field alone, the modern economic development needs business talents featured internationalizedness, and an international vision of a bigger pattern. Despite the current world economy impacted by new coronavirus pandemic, and affected by the United States and other countries imposing regional protectionism, and the negative impact of the de-globalization, the internationalization trend of business talent shall not be blocked, because the "local protectionism" and de-globalization run counter to the law of development of world economy, and it runs counter to the aspirations of the world's people for a better life.

The *Comprehensive Course of Business English*, edited by Wang Lifei, presents the international elements quite well. There are three texts in each unit of this set of textbooks, one of which focuses on professional knowledge itself; one, on the presentation of professional knowledge in foreign contexts (mainly Britain and the United States); one, on the elaboration of professional knowledge in Chinese contexts. For example, In Unit 5 *Empire of Wealth*, text I “In Praise of Competitive Urges”, text II “self-made Wealth in America: Robber Barons and Silicon Sultans”, Text III “The Gods of Wealth”. The three texts all focus on the theme of "Wealth" and the presentation of Wealth in the Chinese context and the foreign context form a good contrast, complementing each other or mutually supplementing each other. We can also take advantage of the foreign context to look back at the Chinese context, learning from each other's strengths and pushing it forward. Therefore, in daily teaching practice, teachers should manage to use the Chinese elements as the breakthrough point to expand the Chinese culture, compete for a comprehensive and further description of corresponding cultural elements, design proper class discussions and activities, and strengthen students' understanding of Chinese culture, rather than blindly introduce British and American culture elements, making Chinese culture elements accordingly absent, ignoring the highlights in the counterpart field of Chinese culture. Therefore, for each subject area, teachers should strive to teach Chinese culture and foreign cultural elements to students scientifically and fairly, which can not only broaden students' world vision, but also enhance students' confidence in our national culture, and shape excellent

business talents with both domestic feelings and global vision.

4. The construction of cultural literacy in comprehensive Business English teaching

4.1 Select Textbooks: The return of cultural turn in English teaching

In modern times, under the influence of classical linguistics, foreign language teaching has paid too much attention to the study of language itself, focusing on the construction or deconstruction of grammar and syntax, and classroom teaching has also paid too much attention to the training of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation skills, which has "eclipsed" the culture carried by language. However, language has been inseparable from culture since its emergence. The reason lies in the fact that "we turn life experience into language and add meaning to language under the influence of cultural constraints. Different languages are different from each other due to different cultures". Therefore, language teaching and culture teaching are inseparable, instead, complement each other.

In view of this, in a narrow sense, business English teaching and business English culture are inseparable; in a broad sense, business English teaching must be inseparable from the larger social context culture that forms this business culture. Therefore, in the selection of teaching materials, teachers should carefully distinguish and select some materials focused on culture, especially Chinese and Western culture, because teaching materials are teachers teaching "outline", just like "rice" for "cooking". "Even the cleverest wife can not cook a meal without rice". Equipped with quality teaching materials, teachers can exert their talents and competence in teaching and cultivating future talents. In this paper, the author's university has chosen *Business English: An Integrated Course* by li-fei Wang editor in chief. The thematic and combined cultural elements, are beneficial to the cultivation of students' language knowledge and skills, and can enhance students' cultural quality, especially about the Chinese culture accomplishment, and also can update students' business knowledge and outlook of the world.

4.2 "He who possess a better learning can be a teacher": give full play to teachers' subjectivity and reflect the nature and functions of being teachers

According to *The Book of Rituals and Learning*: "It is because of learning that you can know your weaknesses; it is because of conducting teaching that you are short of effective approaching to teaching; when getting improved in the previous two aspects, self-improvement can be achieved." Thus, it is very necessary and important to give play to the teacher's subjectivity. On the one hand, "we can never believe all we read" and teaching must not be "scripted"; on the other hand, what the textbooks present directly can be self-learned by students themselves. And as a teacher, how can their great learning be embodied? In this regard, it is important for teacher to accumulate the corresponding knowledge well beforehand, but it is even more important to treat knowledge "from a higher perspective". Therefore, it is very important for teachers to integrate, refine and supplement the contents of teaching materials, and it is this point that can better reflect the nature of "teachers". In order to cultivate students' cultural literacy through teaching materials, teachers must first acquire corresponding cultural literacy and at the same time have the consciousness to guide students to construct their own cultural literacy.

For example, the Text I "Universities and Their Function" in Unit3 College Education: *Searching for a Change*, how can the teacher use this article to cultivate students' corresponding cultural literacy? This text discusses that the function of universities lies in "maintaining the connection between knowledge and enthusiasm for life through imagination". In fact, the author emphasizes that university education should stimulate and sustain students' "imagination" and enable it to play a role in life and study. Accordingly, *Great learning* 《大学》, one of the *Great Four Books* of Chinese culture, contains much more ideological content than the core of this English text. The "Three Principles" of the University: "The way of a university is to be honest, to be friendly to the people, and to be perfect". These three principles cover all the educational purposes of a university. "Eight items": to observe things, to acquire knowledge, to be self-determined, to be righteous, to be self-disciplined, to support family, to administer the state, to govern the whole country and to harmonize all under the heaven. These eight combined indicate: how to learn, what to learn, why to learn in both "subtle", and "grand" ways, both "individually" and "collectively", both "realizing self" and "helping others". It reflects how high and how great the Chinese wisdom is, and how proud we should be as Chinese.

Therefore, after "conduct teaching, the teacher can then know difficulties", teachers through guidance, integrating and supplementing textbook content, they then can achieve self-improvement". In

this way, students' cultural literacy is cultivated imperceptibly, and business talents are molded into practical talents with good cultural literacy.

4.3 Edit school-based textbooks: reflect the "localization" characteristics of cultural literacy

Regional culture, or local culture, is the most direct embodiment of a university's integration into the local economy, culture, art, food, architecture and other fields. Therefore, university education cannot ignore the cultural education and inheritance of the region. In this respect, the development of school-based textbooks is the best way, because school-based textbooks can directly take local cultural characteristics as the teaching content. Through the development of school-based teaching materials and education, students are trained to have cultural literacy with local characteristics, so as to promote the development and inheritance of local culture and promote local culture to the whole country and the world." The more national it is, the more it should belong to the world; the more local it is, the more national and international it should be."

The author's school has developed several school-based courses, one of which is *Huainan Culture and External Publicity*. The purpose of this course is to help students learn: 1. To understand the local cultural history, cultural forms and cultural resources; 2. Make local culture supplement and promote mainstream culture through classroom teaching and related activities, and explore the development and revitalization strategies of disadvantaged local culture in the development of global cultural competition; 3. Explore the strategies of using English to spread and promote local culture, and examine the tool role and channel significance of English language in this process, so as to cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness and improve their ability to use English for intercultural communication.

Therefore, the development and opening of school-based textbooks are of great significance to the protection, inheritance and publicity of local culture, as well as to the cultivation of local characteristics of students' cultural literacy.

5. Conclusion

Business talents, first of all, must be "persons of good virtues", and must have good moral qualities." Good cultural literacy can help to achieve self-disciplinedness. And in teachers' cultivating one's morality", good cultural literacy is highly conducive. Therefore, in the teaching practice of *Comprehensive Business English*, teachers should not only "tackle students' questions", but also "preach truth and impart knowledge".

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