

Research on the Modularization of Business English Major Courses in Local Vocational Colleges in Hainan Free Trade Port Construction

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Abstract: *With the continuous development of the Hainan Free Trade Port construction, Hainan urgently needs highly skilled and versatile professional talents with international perspectives, proficient foreign language abilities, and a deep understanding of international rules. This paper focuses on the modularization of business English major courses, exploring the characteristics of talent demand based on the Hainan Free Trade Port construction. The discussion revolves around modules such as business knowledge and skills, professional capabilities and expansion, English language and cross-cultural communication abilities, comprehensive quality cultivation, and vocational skill training. By proposing a modularization approach to designing business English major courses, this research aims to further optimize the curriculum system, improve the quality of talent cultivation, and foster versatile professionals, thereby providing better talent assurance for the future development of Hainan Free Trade Port.*

Keywords: *Free Trade Port construction; Business English; Course modularization*

1. Characteristics of talent demand in Hainan free trade port construction

As the largest free trade zone, economic special zone, and the only free trade port with Chinese characteristics, Hainan plays a crucial role as a new pivot for international land and sea trade, actively contributing to high-level openness, high-quality development, and the construction of a human community with a shared future. The construction of free trade ports has boosted the rapid development of import and export trade in Hainan^[1].

Currently, Hainan's foreign trade cooperation partners cover 183 countries and regions worldwide. According to statistics, since 2020, Hainan has added 19,200 new foreign trade companies, with a growth rate of 412%. In 2022, the total import and export value of goods in Hainan reached 200.95 billion yuan, an increase of 36.8% compared to 2021, with a growth rate 29.1 percentage points higher than the national average, ranking third nationwide. In 2021, nearly 40% of Hainan's foreign trade import and export was with RCEP member countries, with a rapid growth in trade with countries along the "Belt and Road," and closer trade ties with developed economies such as Europe and the United States. Hainan's imports and exports with the other 14 RCEP member countries totaled 58.08 billion yuan, an increase of 46.7%, accounting for 39.3% of the total. In 2022, Hainan's goods trade maintained dynamic trade quality with both imports and exports exceeding 200 billion yuan for the first time, growing by 36.8% over the previous year to 200.95 billion yuan, a growth rate 29.1 percentage points higher than the national average.

The above data fully demonstrates the vitality and potential of Hainan's free trade port construction. At the same time, it also reflects the urgent need for future international business professionals in the context of Hainan's free trade port construction. However, the current foreign trade business sector in Hainan lacks a sufficient number of high-quality composite talents, with inadequate talent reserves and weak overall competitiveness. The alignment between talent supply and Hainan's socio-economic development needs is not high, making the cultivation of high-level talents a top priority for Hainan's free trade port construction. Therefore, cultivating high-quality composite talents will be a key focus of Hainan's free trade port construction. As an important place for training local talents, local vocational colleges and universities in Hainan shoulder a significant responsibility.

2. The Necessity and Feasibility of Modular Setting of Business English Major Courses

The concept of modular design was first proposed by some countries in Europe and America in the 1950s and has since gained widespread attention and in-depth research in the global education community. The advantages of modular course design lie in its ability to promote collaborative talent training between schools and enterprises, facilitate dynamic updates of course content, and support students' career development. It not only considers the dynamics and openness of professional construction but also effectively balances students' knowledge system building and individual development. Modularization allows for better integration of different field professional qualifications, diverse choices for personal career planning, and the resulting flexibility in adaptability to industrial and labor market demands. Many developed countries, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, widely adopt modular course design in vocational and technical education.

Currently, most domestic vocational colleges and universities focus on improving English language skills in business English majors, with relatively low proportions of business knowledge and cross-cultural communication courses in the curriculum system. Practical courses are even fewer. The current curriculum design for business English majors in vocational colleges and universities exhibits weaknesses in targeting talent cultivation and lacks higher-level courses that align with the diverse and individualized needs of contemporary college students. Moreover, it fails to meet the demand for high-quality composite talents required by Hainan's social and economic development and free trade port construction. Therefore, modularizing business English major courses in vocational colleges and universities can effectively solve these problems by achieving an effective combination of theoretical learning and practical scenarios in the curriculum, establishing a course resource library, and offering flexibility for students.

3. Modular Setting of Business English Major Courses in Local Higher Vocational Colleges Based on Hainan Free Trade Port Construction

Core Objectives of Professional Training: In the construction of business English major courses in local higher vocational colleges in Hainan, the actual needs of Hainan Free Trade Port construction and future enterprises for talents should be fully considered. The curriculum design should emphasize the principles of applicability and practicality, with language proficiency as the core and knowledge and skills application as the main thread. A reasonable and application-oriented knowledge structure for business English professionals should be established, highlighting practicality and applicability^[2].

Adapting to contemporary demands, the process involves consistently enhancing and refreshing the unique, closely intertwined teaching content and practical elements within the major. Furthermore, specific modules are established for business English courses, aimed at reinforcing students' foundational grasp of the English language. The goal is to cultivate students' abilities in social reception and negotiation and promotion in business activities, and enhance their abilities to engage in foreign economic and trade activities related to business, foreign trade, cross-border e-commerce, and related businesses. The aim is to enhance students' English language foundation and improve their English language proficiency, fully reflecting the characteristics of higher vocational education oriented towards employment, effectively improving students' employability, and achieving the goal of cultivating high-level, composite, and innovative technical and skilled professionals needed for Hainan Free Trade Port construction^[3].

3.1 Modular Course Setting Based on Core Objectives

3.1.1 English Language and Cross-Cultural Communication Ability Module

In terms of abilities, students are required to possess a solid foundation in language and flexible language proficiency. The basic part of the entire course is the English language and cross-cultural communication ability module, which demands students to have strong comprehensive language application and organizational abilities. Only when students have good business English language skills can they develop competent business English skills.

(1) English Language Proficiency Module

The English language proficiency module can be divided into two sub-modules: language knowledge and language skills. The aim is to help students master the necessary language knowledge and skills for business activities, enabling them to have comprehensive language application abilities

such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, which are essential for foreign language majors. Guiding students through fundamental courses in phonetics (English phonetics, English listening, etc.) and offering business English courses in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, this module achieves effective alignment with business English major courses, enhancing students' practical application abilities to adapt to social demands. English is treated as a tool and means of communication in business exchanges. The English language proficiency module is illustrated in Figure 1.

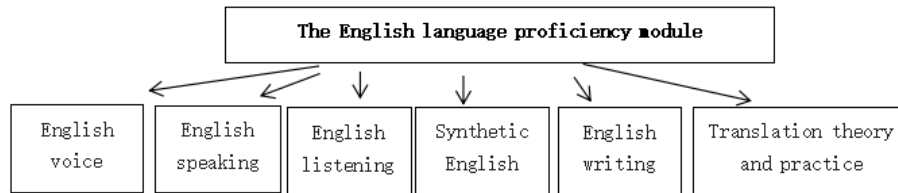


Figure 1: The English language ability module

(2) Cross-Cultural Communication Ability Module

The Cross-Cultural Communication Ability Module aims to help students deepen their understanding of both their own national culture and Western cultures. It emphasizes cultivating global awareness and international perspectives, familiarizing students with international conventions, and enhancing their knowledge of foreign communication etiquette. This module aims to increase students' international competitiveness and sensitivity, tolerance, and understanding of cultural differences. It focuses on developing strong interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills, enabling effective communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. By acquiring strong cross-cultural communication abilities, students can engage in effective interactions with foreigners, enhance their interpersonal and business communication skills, and improve their overall abilities and qualities. This module also equips students with the capability to flexibly handle and resolve communication challenges in cross-cultural settings, thus achieving successful international business interactions. The enhancement of students' cross-cultural communication ability is of paramount importance. For detailed information on the Cross-Cultural Communication Ability Module, please refer to Figure 2: Cross-Cultural Communication Ability Module.

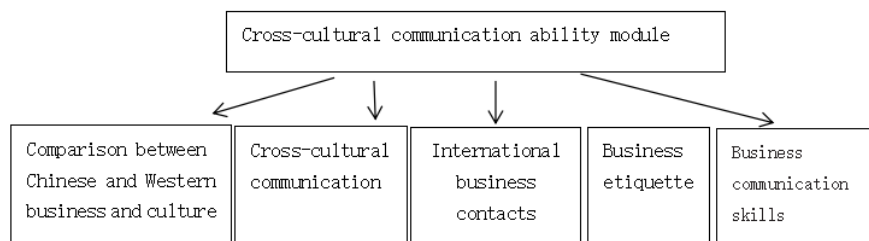


Figure 2: Cross-cultural communication ability module

3.1.2 Business English Knowledge and Skills Module

Students majoring in Business English need to possess solid knowledge of international business and proficient English language skills, with a strong ability to organize international business activities. The Business English Knowledge and Skills Module aims to provide students with a solid foundation in professional learning and a broad knowledge structure. It helps students systematically master business-related knowledge, and cultivates their ability to use language proficiently, flexibly, and appropriately in international business environments. This module strives to achieve the goal of "thick foundation, wide caliber" training, enabling students to gradually develop disciplinary thinking and business English thinking that truly benefit their future development. It is a curriculum module that tightly integrates disciplinary knowledge and skills.

The Business English Knowledge and Skills Module covers a range of courses related to international business, as shown in Figure 3.

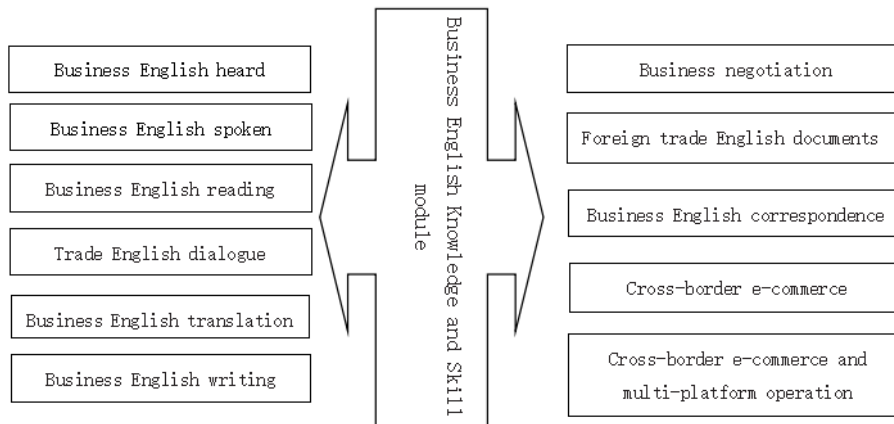


Figure 3: Business English Knowledge and Skills module

3.1.3 Vocational Skills and Development Module

The Business English major's Vocational Skills and Development Module is divided into five directions, specifically: International Trade, E-commerce, Economics, Finance, and Management.

Among them: Module A - International Trade, includes courses such as "International Trade Practices," "Foreign Trade Documentation Practices," "Foreign Trade English Documentation," and "International Market Marketing."

Module B - E-commerce, includes courses like "Fundamentals of E-commerce," "Economic Law and E-commerce Law," "Cross-border E-commerce," and "Cross-border E-commerce Multi-platform Operations."

Module C - Economics, includes courses such as "Fundamentals of Economics," "Western Economics," and "Trade English Dialogues."

Module D - Finance, includes courses like "International Commercial Law," "International Payments and Settlements," and "International Finance."

Module E - Management, includes courses such as "Principles of Management," "International Market Marketing," "Introduction to Business Administration," and "Human Resources Management."

The Vocational Skills and Development Module is depicted in Figure 4.

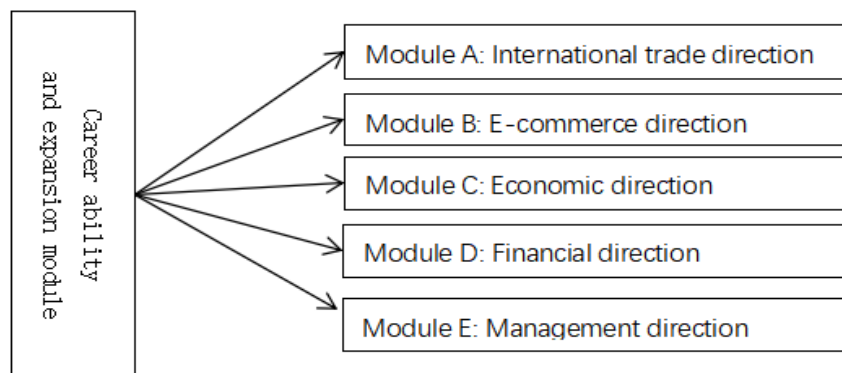


Figure 4: Career ability and expansion module

3.1.4 Comprehensive Skills Development Module

The Comprehensive Skills Development Module aims to cultivate students with a strong political stance, patriotism, noble ideological and moral qualities, as well as the ability to think, analyze, and solve practical social and humanistic problems. It also aims to enhance students' comprehensive cultural literacy and professional ethics, foster an innovative consciousness, equip them with the ability to acquire knowledge and apply it practically, and encourage lifelong learning. In addition to the ideological and political education goals required in each course, this module primarily includes courses such as Military Training, Ideological and Political Education, Fundamentals of Law, Basic

Computer Applications, Physical Education, and Employment Guidance.

3.1.5 Vocational Skills Training Module

The Vocational Skills Training Module is divided into two parts: on-campus training courses and vocational skills training during internships. Through concentrated training, students can acquire relevant vocational skills for specific positions, enhance their ability to apply knowledge in practice, and adapt effectively to different situations. This module emphasizes practical training and systematic practice to develop standard vocational skills that seamlessly integrate with employment, ensuring smooth transition for students from graduation to employment. The module advocates a combination of on-campus training and practical training in enterprises to improve students' flexibility in applying knowledge and skills.

(1) On-campus Training

Through on-campus training courses, students enhance their vocational skills in business English communication, trade transactions, business operations, and negotiations. Some of the offered training courses include: Comprehensive Training in Foreign Trade Documentation, Practical Operations of Foreign Trade Procedures, Practical Operations of Foreign Trade Documents, Foreign Trade Customs Declaration, Foreign Trade Inspection Declaration, International Cargo Transportation Insurance, Simulated International Trade Fairs, Cross-border E-commerce, and Live-streaming Sales Practice.

(2) Internship Training

The establishment of an off-campus internship platform allows schools and enterprises to establish a long-term and stable cooperation mechanism. Implementing a dual-mentor system involving both school and enterprise, educational and teaching resources are combined, and enterprise demands for talents are integrated into talent development plans, curriculum development, course design, and teaching content. This integration facilitates the alignment of vocational skills and professional ethics training with enterprise needs. Through internships at enterprises, students can experience in-depth integration of teaching and practical work, effectively improving their practical work skills and enabling them to adapt to changing occupational scenarios and job forms. Based on the feedback from internship partner companies and the employment situation of recent graduates, most graduates from this major have adapted well to internships and employment. However, challenges such as increasing demands from enterprises for business English professionals and intense competition in the job market still exist. Therefore, students need to accumulate more practical experiences in addition to diversified skill training during their studies.

3.2 Establish an Information-based Teaching Platform and Enrich the Teaching

Build an information teaching platform and build a rich teaching resource database. Particular emphasis is placed on library construction, especially focusing on the development of modular curriculum units within the learning suite. This approach aligns with changes in the regional industrial policies, shifts in the socio-economic landscape, and evolving market demands. It directly pertains to the requisite qualities, knowledge, and skills for closely affiliated professional roles or groups. This approach embodies the essence of the "ability standards" ideology, enabling real-time adjustment of teaching content to align with the ever-changing social and economic developmental context. This fully reflects the characteristics of flexible and open modular curriculum. The modular course consists of several learning units, whose fundamental essence is the learning suite (Learning Package), including the corresponding training objectives, learning materials, teaching materials and training materials, as well as assessment and evaluation standards. Teachers can choose corresponding learning units for teaching according to their teaching objectives and needs. Students can also freely choose and teach students according to their own interests, abilities or career planning, and on the basis of maximizing their learning benefits.

4. Conclusion

The modularization of the Business English major curriculum is a comprehensive approach that aligns with the demands of social and economic development and industry enterprises for talents. It is designed based on the qualities, knowledge, and skills required for students' employment in various positions or industries, taking into account their career planning. The teaching content is decomposed into independent modules according to different competency themes, which include various courses,

internships, and practical training. Leveraging information-based teaching platforms and resource repositories, different specialized course modules are integrated. Teachers and students can choose the modules that suit their needs to complete the course of study. This approach balances the dynamism and openness of professional development and ensures better coordination between students' knowledge structure construction and individual development. It provides a three-dimensional nurturing environment for students and further optimizes the curriculum system. Under the background of Hainan Free Trade Port construction, it better fosters versatile talents capable of engaging in international business activities and offers students better opportunities for learning and employment in the Business English profession.

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