

Study on the Teaching Reform of International Trade Practice Curriculum for Foreign Languages Major Students under the Background of the Belt and Road Initiative

Dalei Li*, Yue Li, Xu Xu

School of Foreign Languages, Qilu University of Technology (Shandong Academy of Sciences), Jinan, China

lidalei@qlu.edu.cn

**Corresponding author*

Abstract: *This paper based on the nature of the international trade practice course, combining with the domestic colleges and universities foreign language teaching present situation and its outstanding problems, puts forward the corresponding teaching reform measures, with the expectation of providing some ideas for reference so as to cultivate the interdisciplinary talents with “English knowledge+professional knowledge” to meet the urgent needs of society under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative.*

Keywords: *The Belt and Road Initiative, Foreign Languages Major, International Trade Practice, Teaching Reforms*

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the continuous deepening of China's opening policy and the construction of the Belt and Road, the trade relationships between the countries along the Belt and Road and China have become increasingly close. At the same time, the society's demands of all walks for high-quality and compound talents are more urgent. In the teaching mode for cultivating compound talents, the curriculum system of foreign language majors in most Chinese universities not only covers traditional language skills courses (such as grammar, listening, writing, reading, etc.) and language theory courses (such as introduction to linguistics, foreign literature, cross-cultural communication, etc.), but also includes other relevant course in specific fields. Among them, the course International Trade Practice is one of the most common field courses for most foreign language majors. This course is characterized by its theoretical, practical and operational nature, which makes it a platform for cultivating the abilities of foreign language majors in many aspects. However, due to its many knowledge points, strong application practice, and the existence of a large number of professional terms and basic theoretical knowledge, the course is boring and difficult for foreign language majors to understand, and the traditional teaching mode is not easy to motivate students' learning initiative and enthusiasm. Therefore, in order to meet the actual needs of high-quality development of China's foreign trade in the context of the the Belt and Road construction, the current teaching reform of international trade practice courses for foreign language majors in colleges and universities has become inevitable. It is not only of great practical significance for improving the teaching effect and quality of the courses for foreign language majors, but also can train and transport more compound talents for regional economic development and the the Belt and Road construction.

2. Current Teaching Situation and Problems of International Trade Practice for Foreign Languages Major Students

2.1. Students' Low Learning Initiative

On the whole, contemporary college students inevitably have subject differences, and teachers need to formulate course outlines according to individual differences of students. In addition, some college students' learning initiative and enthusiasm is poor, whose listening efficiency needs to be improved^[1]. What's more, it is difficult to motivate students' interest in courses like international trade practice, since

most courses of foreign languages major students is linguistics or literature related course with almost no international trade related knowledge in the early stage, and the content of International Trade Practice is professional and practical but obscure and boring for most of the foreign language students.

2.2. Value Theory over Practice

International Trade Practice is a strong practical course, so the Belt and Road strategy requires foreign language professionals to have strong practical ability and application capability. Therefore, in terms of classroom teaching, it is necessary to combine theory with practice. Teachers should not be stubborn in theoretical knowledge in textbooks, but to select certain practical examples from the current society and world to explain theories.

Teachers should be flexible and follow the trend of the times when taking examples. This requires teachers to do a good job of preparing lessons before and after class. Teachers should not only pay attention to the book knowledge, but also meet the needs and trends of market development. New requirements for teachers are also put forward in order to promote teachers' comprehensive teaching level^[2].

For example, in 2020, while facing the sudden changes in the domestic and international situation and the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, our foreign trade is breaking through all the obstacles, achieving growth against the trend, and the scale of foreign trade keeps hitting new highs. From January to July in 2021, China's scale of both the import and export all hits a record in the same period, growing by 24.5 percent and 24.4 percent year-on-year. Respectively, the growth rate was the highest in the recent 10 years. At the same time, new drivers of foreign trade continued to strengthen. This is the current foreign trade environment status. Accordingly, in the classroom design, it is necessary to combine with the actual development of foreign trade to carry out the study of relevant theories. In short, it needs some latest and current happening or hot (has already happened) real business cases as the examples in the teaching process for students to analyze and do the practical analysis and so on.

2.3. The Single Curriculum System

When setting up the course, teachers from most of the foreign languages majors did not fully embody its professionalism. They often see the course International Trade Practice the same as the other English courses, ignoring to cultivate the students' business knowledge, which leads to the poor professional term translation ability. Furthermore, it would be hard for students to show themselves in a specific situation in the process of communication. There are also a small number of students who pay too much attention to the study of business knowledge, resulting in obvious deficiencies in English proficiency. Especially under the background of the Belt and Road, with the development of the Internet economy, the trades between regions are becoming more and more frequent. While students seriously lack the understanding of specific cultural knowledge among regions, which may lead to inferior position in the early stage of business communication. On the whole, the business English curriculum of colleges and universities has not been fully integrated with the actual market demands. In other words, it cannot meet the requirements of discipline professional ability under the Belt and Road Initiative.

2.4. Lack of Bilingual Teachers

Teachers are the organizers and managers in the classroom teaching activities. And in the class, teaching plays a leading role. The quality of teaching depends on the teachers' teaching level and teaching attitude, which is the comprehensive quality of teachers. But the reality is that, as far as the course of international trade practice is concerned, neither the professional teachers of international trade nor the teachers of English major are willing to engage in bilingual teaching. The reason is that the teachers of specialized course are not good at spoken English, while the English teachers are weak in the related professional knowledge. Therefore, there is no stable source of bilingual teaching teachers. Bilingual teachers are scarce especially in the central and western regions.

At present, in our country teachers who are engaged in the international trade practice curriculum have insufficient both their work experience and the social practice experience. Even though the professional teaching level is higher, teachers cannot carry out the effective guidance of practical teaching based on students' actual situation, which would easily make the teaching content separate from the actual market demand^[3]. Therefore it's unlikely to cultivate talented students who are able to better integrate the market demand and effectively use the knowledge they have learned to solve the practical problems

encountered in business or trade activities. And it is difficult to meet the diversified demand for interdisciplinary talents in the implementation process of the Belt and Road Initiative.

3. Some Ideas on the Curriculum Teaching Reforms

3.1. Better Integration of Modern Technology and Teaching Design

Classroom teaching design is not only the basis for teachers to prepare good lessons and write good teaching plans, but also an important way to reflect teachers' teaching ability and reflect their own teaching characteristics and style. In order to enhance the students' interest in the course International Trade Practice and improve the quality of classroom teaching, it is necessary for teachers to optimize the classroom teaching design. Chinese University MOOC (hereinafter referred to as MOOC) is a popular high-quality Chinese learning platform in China nowadays. There are more than 1,000 courses offered by some famous colleges and universities (includes 985 Project and 211 Project) on the platform. MOOC is popular among the younger generation for its convenience, flexibility and wide range of knowledge.

Similarly, MOOC also offers online courses on international trade practices. Here the international trade practice course offered by Shanghai University of International Business and Economics is chosen as an example. The course takes "Contract of International Sale of goods" as the basic framework, and studies the basic knowledge of international sale of goods and reasonable description methods of contract terms from the perspective of traders^[4]. And there are up to 30 videos explaining the core business. In addition, the course features more than 10 thematic case studies. Therefore, its professionalism and time efficiency are strong, providing students with a lot of practical knowledge, and can also improve learners' ability to analyze and solve practical problems in international trade to a certain extent^[5]. From the perspective of classroom teaching design, this new form of online courses is to further integrate teaching content, according to the teaching objectives. It can not only highlight the key points and difficulties of the course, but also help learners to clarify their learning objectives and sort out their thoughts. In addition, appropriate learning situations and discussion activities can also be designed for each teaching step in class. Because these learning situations and discussion activities can help students have truly experience and achieve the learning goals finally through the communication with classmates and the guidance of teachers.

3.2. Optimization of the Talent Training Model

The Belt and Road initiative is full of new opportunities. The strategy is a grand strategic concept. Its construction process involves not only many countries and regions, but also many industries and a huge amount of factor mobilization^[6]. The opportunities generated in the process are incalculable. In addition, foreign trade policies support the development of cross-border E-commerce. The potential of E-commerce can be seen in the rapid development of online shopping apps, such as Taobao and Pinduoduo in China, which is supported by real data. In 2020, the import and export volume of China's cross-border e-commerce reached 1.69 trillion RMB, increasing 31.1%. And the scale of cross-border E-commerce increased nearly 10 times in the recent five years. Therefore, from the perspective of education, it is necessary to make corresponding reforms in teaching to meet the needs of the market. In other words, the cultivation of talents should be oriented by the market demands, so as to develop interdisciplinary compound bilingual talents to meet the needs of society^[7]. At the same time, for students from foreign language majors who are studying international trade practice course, it is considered to establish a dynamic tracking evaluation feedback platform for improving training quality, and then build a long-term evaluation feedback mechanism for enhancing the training management, so as to inject new impetus to promote the teaching reform of this course, and to improve the quality of talent training.

3.3. Promotion of the Deep Cooperation of Production and Learning

The professional term Production-Learning Cooperation specifically means as follows. Its "production" refers to the industry and enterprises. And the "learning" refers to the academic community, which includes universities or scientific research institutions. Sometimes, it is called the "Production-Learning-Research Cooperation", because it includes scientific research institutions. For colleges and universities, the talents training model of "Production-Learning" integration has become an internationally recognized way to cultivate applied talents. Colleges and universities can adopt different implementation policies and measures according to the specific situation of different schools^[8]. The model focuses on cultivating students' comprehensive quality and practical ability. The combination of

industry and education can not only help to improve the overall quality of practitioners, but also reduce the cost of enterprise reform and innovation, increase its development potential, kill two birds with one stone, achieve a win-win situation, and even solve the employment problem of college students after graduation.

3.4. Enhancement of the Construction of Bilingual Teachers

The cultivation of compound talents is inseparable from the international compound teaching staff. As far as the current domestic foreign language professional teachers engaged in international trade practice course teaching, their overall strength is far from the requirements of training compound talents. Therefore, the colleges and universities should focus on introducing prominent teachers with overseas famous educational background, promote the development of bilingual teachers, and constantly improve the overall strength of teachers to adapt to the internationalization of education. Establishing an incentive and restraint mechanism for teachers to study abroad, and encouraging the young as well as the middle-aged academic backbone to study in first-class universities and research institutes overseas, and broaden their academic horizons; At the same time, colleges and universities can try the best to attract foreign experts and scholars to come to be teachers, and strive to build a high-quality teaching team that can adapt to the economic globalization and the internationalization of higher education.

4. Conclusions

The achievement of the Belt and Road initiative cannot be achieved without the support of all kinds of talents. In this environment, it is inevitable that a large number of compound talents will be needed who not only understand the professional knowledge related to business, but also master foreign languages, so as to achieve barrier-free communication. For this purpose, international trade major in the college foreign language teaching should comply to this trend, combining the teachers with the advantage of discipline characteristics, integrating the language teaching and professional teaching organically. High-quality all-round talents armed with skilled foreign language and foreign trade knowledge for the Belt and Road initiative can be cultivated by the teaching reform including advancing the reform of teaching mode, optimizing the talent training mode, promoting the deep cooperation of production and learning, and enhancing the construction of teaching staff, which highlights the intersection of majors, curriculum integration and innovation.

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