

Research on the Cultivation of Business English Talents for the Regional Digital Economic Development

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Abstract. With the rapid development of the digital economy, the demand for language talents has increased significantly, especially for Business English majors. However, the traditional talent cultivation model has failed to keep up with the needs of regional digital economic development. This research aims to explore a suitable path for cultivating language talents to empower regional digital economic development through language services. Firstly, the current state of regional digital economic development and the demand for language talents are analysed. It is found that there is a mismatch between talent supply and demand, which hinders the development of regional digital economic industries. Next, the research reviews the existing talent cultivation models and identifies their limitations. The traditional language education focuses on language proficiency without addressing the specific needs of the digital economy. Lastly, the research provides suggestions for improving the talent cultivation system, including curriculum reform, industry-academia collaboration, and internships in language service companies. The research proposes an innovative cultivation path for business English talents, which combines language proficiency, digital skills, and industry-specific knowledge, aiming to meet the needs of the rapidly evolving digital economy.

1 Introduction

Currently, in order to implement the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the 2035 Vision Plan, the Belt and Road Initiative, and to serve local economic development and promote digital industries, it is urgent to cultivate new talents in business. At the same time, facing the new technological revolution of the artificial intelligence, big data analytics, virtual reality, 5G communication technology, and other emerging technologies, there is also an urgent need for new talents in business [1].

Language service is an emerging interdisciplinary field that has emerged in recent years through the intersection of linguistics, language economics, language management, and service economics. It plays an important role in the "Belt and Road" Initiative, China's "Going Global" strategy, and the promotion of Chinese culture in foreign countries [2]. The higher foreign language education should actively serve the country's strategic development, and proactively respond to the challenges of the new technological revolution. Universities should cultivate internationally-oriented talents who are "specialized in one field and capable in multiple areas" and have a diverse range of skills [3]. As a major that integrates international business, language, and culture, Business English should fully seize the opportunities presented by the upgrading of the cross-border e-commerce industry.

2 The digital economy and demands for Business English talents

2.1 Understanding of the digital economy

The digital economy refers to an economic form that utilizes the functions of big data, such as identification, selection, filtering, and storage, to achieve rapid optimization, configuration, and regeneration of resources between enterprises, thereby realizing high-quality economic development. With the continuous development of network technology, the global economic form is transforming from an industrial economy to an integrated economy with information, knowledge, and artificial intelligence. Many enterprises are undergoing digital transformation, which is an inevitable trend in social and economic development, as well as a necessary requirement for their self-development [4].

Firstly, in the digital economy, the transaction costs required by traditional trade, such as transaction venues and transaction fees, are significantly reduced due to the openness of network-based transactions, thus alleviating the burden on enterprises. Secondly, trade information becomes more abundant and transparent, providing possibilities for small and medium-sized enterprises to access and enter international markets, to a certain extent, breaking market monopolies. Thirdly, compared to the tedious procedures and strict limitations of

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traditional trade in terms of transaction time and space, digital trade can be conducted anytime and anywhere, breaking down barriers of time and space, making transactions more flexible and convenient. Currently, one of the important missions of Chinese enterprises is digital transformation. The digital economy encompasses various disciplines such as communication, economics, management, and data statistics, which determines that the digital transformation of enterprises requires professionals from various disciplines.

2.2 Demands for Business English talents

With the development of the digital economy, students majoring in languages not only need to be proficient in using English to communicate with customers orally or in writing, but also need to master relevant knowledge in foreign trade. They also need to acquire the basic skills of digital commerce since the web platforms of Cross-border Electronic Commerce are important sites for language service implementation [5].

Firstly, Business English talents need to have the ability to analyze customers' consumption psychology, cultural customs, family backgrounds, occupational backgrounds, and consumption potential. Secondly, they need to have the ability to conduct research on domestic and international markets and carry out appropriate product promotion and sales activities by using the data analysis software. Thirdly, they need to have the ability to write English promotion copy on international social platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Fourthly, they need to have cross-cultural communication awareness, accurately to grasp the needs of foreign customers, provide good after-sales service, and enhance customer satisfaction.

While the digital economy is rapidly developing, the cultivation of talents in the field of digital economy has not caught up, especially the lack of digital economy skilled talents that enterprises urgently need to quickly invest in industrial development. Graduates from applied universities majoring in English mainly find employment in small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises. Currently, what such enterprises need the most are new digital trade talents who are proficient in both foreign trade English skills and familiar with foreign trade processes. These talents are also skilled in using various international trade platforms and possess knowledge in data analysis, product promotion, customer maintenance, and international market development.

2.3 Demands from the cross-border e-commerce

Cross-border e-commerce talent can be mainly divided into business professionals responsible for cross-border transactions, customs clearance logistics, online marketing, etc., language professionals responsible for language optimization of product pages, customer service and post-sales communication, etc., and technical professionals responsible for website maintenance, data analysis, and graphic design [6]. In the early stage of rapid development, there is a large

talent gap in customer service, internet promoters, and visual design.

As the cross-border e-commerce integrates with various industries, enterprises have a higher demand for mid-level professionals (68.4%) with certain skills and practical training, compared to highly experienced senior professionals (17.8%) who are industry leaders, and entry-level professionals who possess basic operational skills and knowledge [7]. Research data from Alibaba Research Institute shows a severe shortage of talents in areas such as online-store operation and management, overseas marketing, and relevant law and regulations.

Moreover, the current construction models of cross-border e-commerce language services mainly include self-construction by e-commerce companies, joint construction by e-commerce and sellers, localization-oriented joint construction, and participation of language service providers. Cross-border e-commerce language service models include manual translation, crowdsourcing translation, e-commerce language service training, pure machine translation, post-editing, localization, information consulting, label assistance, and product page automation. However, the overall level of cross-border e-commerce language services in China is not high, since small and medium-sized enterprises tend to use translation software to reduce language service costs. Therefore, those enterprises may encounter problems such as low precision rate, high translation cost, and lack of timely communication [8]. The translated text may not be readable or may simply replicate the translation of others' products, leading to weak product description differences and inability to stand out among numerous products [9]. Cross-border e-commerce industry goods are updated quickly, while processing capacity of translation data is relatively limited. There are many translation errors and omissions in product pages, which mainly relate to the professionalism, diversity, versatility, repetitiveness, and timeliness of cross-border e-commerce language service needs [10], and is also due to the current lack of attention to cross-border e-commerce language service talent cultivation.

3 Current situation of Business English talent cultivation

Currently, there are three main issues in the development of language majors. Firstly, there is a mismatch between the positioning of education objectives and market demand. Secondly, there is a shortage of professional faculty and practical teaching resources. Lastly, there is insufficient integration between universities, local communities, and enterprises in terms of collaborative education.

3.1 A mismatch between the positioning of education objectives and market demands

There is a mismatch between the positioning of education objectives and market demands, which is not in line with regional economic development. According

to the *Zhejiang Province Cross-border E-commerce Annual Report 2021* released by the Zhejiang Provincial E-commerce Promotion Association in January 2022, the province achieved a total of 330.29 billion yuan in cross-border e-commerce imports and exports from January to December 2021, a year-on-year increase of 30.7%. The scale accounted for about one-sixth of the national total, and 86.1% of companies had a demand for operational talents. However, in recent years, most of English graduates have been found competent in the traditional international trade, administrative management, and language training, which cannot meet the personnel requirements of rapidly developing cross-border e-commerce enterprises. Therefore, the college curricula for language majors have not found a matching point with the market demand.

The "2022 China Cross-border E-commerce Talent Survey Report" shows that when companies choose cross-border e-commerce talents, the top three preferred majors are international trade, e-commerce, and foreign languages. 85.9% of companies believe that there is a serious shortage of cross-border e-commerce talents and hope to hire interdisciplinary talents. These data indicate that talent cultivation in universities fails to meet the actual needs of the industry. Taking the Business English major as an example, there is a debate about whether the talent cultivation should focus more on business or English [11], leading to two biased positions in talent cultivation: business-oriented talents with a focus on business knowledge and language-oriented talents with a focus on English language learning.

3.2 A shortage of professional faculty and teaching resources

There is a shortage of professional faculty and teaching resources. Moreover, the curriculum evaluation system is insufficient. In terms of professional faculty, due to the transition from English to Business English, because many teachers lack business knowledge because they mostly come from language and literature majors. As a result, many Business English teachers do not have industry background or practical experience. Although international business faculty have been recruited in recent years, they still lack knowledge in cross-border e-commerce and practical experience, as well as the ability to provide in-depth and timely guidance. However, hiring industry professionals for class training is expensive and has low relevance to the knowledge taught in the curriculum, lacking continuity.

According to *The National Standard for Undergraduate Education Quality of Business English*, it points out that as for the proportion of content modules in Business English education, language and skills courses account for 50%-60%, and business knowledge and practice courses account for 20%-30%, while intercultural communication courses account for 5%-10% and humanities literacy courses account for 5%-10%. This aligns well with the requirements for talents in the cross-border e-commerce [12]. However, the current talent training still focuses on language skills and fails to find an innovative path that can serve the cross-border

e-commerce. This has resulted in unreasonable curriculum design, lack of targeted teaching, and a lack of practical teaching.

In terms of evaluation system, many colleges have introduced measures such as cross-border e-commerce entrepreneurship classes and use students' store performance as assessment criteria, which have incentives and practical guidance. However, they focus too much on short-term effects and neglect to diagnose the students' learning process. The undergraduate evaluation system mainly relies on summative assessments, such as tests on theoretical knowledge of cross-border e-commerce, but lack evaluation on students' practical abilities, problem-solving abilities, and reflective learning in the process, resulting in an insufficient evaluation system [13].

3.3 Insufficient integration between universities, local communities and enterprises

The cross-border e-commerce industry involves disciplines such as e-commerce, international trade, international logistics, marketing, and foreign languages. However, the current curriculum lacks integration of interdisciplinary knowledge, and teaching materials are slow to update and cannot keep up with the pace of industry development. Many institutions currently use cross-border e-commerce teaching software as an auxiliary tool, but there is a lack of real projects, detachment from real workplace scenarios, and a lack of students' sense of autonomy, which hinders the improvement of students' professional competence in the industry.

Although universities have strengthened the proportion of practical teaching, most rely on individual social resources of teachers and lack sustainable enterprise training channels. The existing university-enterprise cooperation methods are too extensive, and some companies only see university students as cheap labour for their short-term interests, rather than having long-term goals of serving society. Universities also tend to focus on short-term internships and order-based training to meet task-oriented goals, without conducting in-depth research on enterprises or exploring integration mechanisms that truly serve society and achieve long-term win-win situations for both universities and enterprises.

4 Suggestion on the approaches to Business English talent cultivation

In accordance with the national "Belt and Road" initiative, to seize the opportunities brought by the development of cross-border e-commerce, it is proposed to construct an English talent cultivation model characterized by the collaboration between universities, local communities, and enterprises, integrating coursework, certification, and internship, thus empowering the high-quality development of the regional digital economy.

4.1 Make the talent development objectives precise

It is critical to make the talent development objectives precise, especially for Business English majors. In order to achieve the talent personality and accurately meet the needs of digital economic development, it is necessary to break through the traditional model of college education.

Taking the Business English major of Zhejiang Gongshang University Hangzhou College of Commerce as an example, the talent development objectives for the cross-border e-commerce direction are added to accurately target the skill-based courses for digital economy positions, achieving precise positioning of high-quality English talents with skills. In terms of curriculum design, a series of courses can be set up, including theory, practice, and comprehensive courses. Students can choose suitable directions based on their interests and abilities, and achieve personalized development through a combination of compulsory and elective courses.

4.2 Explore the integrated talent development system featured with three-core and four-wheel-driven

As for the talent development system, the word integrated refers to a solid foundation of English language skills, supplemented by the study of second foreign languages to meet the language demands of the "Belt and Road" initiative, thus to achieve a curriculum reform of English major. Three-core refers to three core competencies, including cross-border e-commerce platform operation, digital trade skills, and cross-cultural pragmatics. In the context of the digital economy, with most trade conducted on cross-border e-commerce platforms, students will form "entrepreneurial teams" through innovative projects, in guidance from faculty and industry mentors, to learn professional skills in practical sessions and strengthen their abilities in cross-border business operations. By relying on the digital economy training base, complementary skills in areas such as big data technology, artificial intelligence technology, and data-driven operations will be explored to cultivate skilled talents with digital skills. Cross-cultural pragmatics requires students to apply language in a cross-cultural context. Students should not just have basic knowledge of the language but also be familiar with the rules of language, such as using politeness and cooperation principles according to local culture to ensure smooth communication.

Four-wheel refers to practice teaching, international cooperation, diverse learning spaces, and industry-education integration. These four components jointly support the curriculum system of English major. In traditional trade environments, companies cannot accommodate a large number of internships for Business English majors. In the digital trade environment, the advantages of digitalization can be fully utilized to achieve paperless operations and reduce the cost of internships in school-enterprise cooperation, changing the traditional model where students go out for internships to one where companies are brought in, thereby achieving deep integration of industry and education. Business English majors have a relative

advantage in language skills, allowing for enhanced and expanded school exchanges and cooperation with countries along the "Belt and Road" through joint training and cooperative education programs. By utilizing international cooperation, students can understand the different cultures, to cultivate their cross-cultural communication abilities, and improve their professional competence. Breaking the barriers between colleges, disciplines, and majors, establishing a digital economy professional cluster, and allowing students to take cross-disciplinary elective courses under the condition of consistent credits, will fully leverage the advantages of faculty and teaching resources in various disciplines to create a platform for cultivating talents with a comprehensive knowledge structure.

4.3 Create a school-enterprise-government collaboration

A collaborative talent development system for the digital economy should be established with the participation of the government, enterprises, industries, and universities, creating a cooperative atmosphere for school-enterprise collaboration.

Firstly, the government should coordinate and integrate resources to promote the establishment of digital economy industry-education integration training bases, achieving integration between enterprises and universities. Secondly, relying on the power of government and industry organizations, a digital economy network platform should be built to provide industry-leading teaching resources, enabling undergraduates to receive online training for digital economy skill development. Lastly, the government and enterprises can provide project funding to support students in obtaining professional qualifications in digital economy, such as digital management professionals or cross-border e-commerce operation professionals, strengthening the talent development in positions that are in high demand in the digital economy.

Moreover, to achieve the goal of "the integration of courses, certificates, competitions, and jobs", the teaching evaluation system should be transformed along with the above facts. It is important to inherit the traditional strengths of the language discipline, and meanwhile it should be guided by the goal of "educating talents", to innovate a professional evaluation system that integrates "courses, certificates, competitions, and jobs". The evaluation transformation can be realized by reforming the form of final course assessment, emphasizing process-based evaluation, combining disciplines competitions, professional certification exams, and employment internships. Adopting multiple evaluation methods oriented at achievements and effectiveness can effectively improve the innovation abilities of students majoring in Business English.

5 Conclusion

Currently, most business English majors in China still follow traditional foreign language teaching concepts and models, and their cognition remains at the level of

foreign language skills teaching or macro-humanities education. There are inherent deficiencies in terms of demand orientation and applied education, which urgently require reform and transformation and upgrading. In the context of the digital economy, this study aims to cultivate interdisciplinary and composite professional talents with the goal of seizing opportunities for cross-border e-commerce development, focusing on innovative reforms in the talent training system of business English majors, comprehensively optimizing the "system-course-teacher-student-practice base" from all aspects, and proposing to establish a business English major talent training model with the characteristics of "school-enterprise cooperation, course certification, competition and job integration", in order to empower the high-quality development of regional digital economy.

In conclusion, the English major should adapt to the changes and boldly innovate, transforming the traditional thinking mode of talent development and setting goals for talent cultivation through curriculum design. Reforms should be made in faculty construction and exploring new models of industry-education integration and school-enterprise cooperation to achieve goals in the digital economy.

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