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This special issue is to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the University of International Business and Economics and the School of International Studies

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Index

Publisher's Introduction

Welcome to this very special and unique volume of Business English papers written by some of the leading academics in China in the field of Business English.

I wish to thank Professors Wang Lifei and Zhang Zuocheng at the University of International Business and Economics Beijing China for their dedication, support and encouragement in seeing this edition from start to finish.

The teaching and study of Business English in China has become of great importance over the last few years, with universities and schools across China seeking knowledge and information on how to not only teach this vitally important subject, but also how to prepare curriculums and how to deliver the programs in English. This volume will give valuable guidance to not only those in China but academics across Asia where the growth in ESP studies and teaching grows unabated.

This Special Edition will greatly assist in China's expansion and domination in the field of Business English teaching and learning.

Dr. Paul Robertson
Publisher
Asian ESP Journal Founder

2nd Editorial Introduction

The teaching of Business English has had a history of over 50 years in China. A milestone event in its history was the accreditation of the Business English program at the University of International Business and Economics as an undergraduate program by the Ministry of Education of China in 2007. By the end of 2010, fifteen institutions of higher learning in China have won approval to operate their Business English program.

To run the new undergraduate program requires answering a number of questions such as the syllabus, content, course design, and methodology. These are issues applied linguistics should address.

The booming of Business English in China has come in response to the need of China's socio-economic development, the reform of English language education in China, and the advances in research in business discourse and English for Specific Purposes. While China's economy is increasingly globalized, there arises the demand for a large number of talents well-attuned to international business and adept at intercultural communication. As part of the reform of English language education in China since the 1990s, the program for English majors has been called upon to train composite-type talents and to promote the integration of language learning and study of a specialized field, such as language and literature, language and culture, language and business, language and law, and language and diplomacy. Questions have arisen as to what a composite-type talent needs to learn and how language learning and the study of subject matter can be integrated. The answers to these questions can be found in business discourse studies and English for Specific Purposes. Business discourse studies provide a thorough account of how English is used in the field and activities of business, which contributes to specifying the content of Business English

teaching, while English for Specific Purposes is the source of ideas for syllabus design and teaching methodology. Similar to the rise of English for Specific Purposes in the 1950s and 60s, the popularity that Business English now enjoys in China derives from the social need, the advances in applied linguistics, and the reform of English language education.

This special issue comes in at a critical moment for Business English in China. We are pleased to have received fourteen contributions from universities and colleges across the country, nine of which are included in this issue. These articles cover the major aspects of concern for Business English in China. Zhang and Wang take the Business English program at the University of International Business English as an exemplar in discussing the key theoretical issues involved in developing a Business English program. Wang, Chen, and Zhang elaborate on the more technical aspects of the program, in particular the specification of the major modules and units and the requirements of knowledge, skills, and abilities, and some guiding principles for the teaching of Business English. The next five articles by Jiang, Wang, Jiang and Zeng, Mu and Liu, and Zhang respectively concern specific issues in teaching Business English, such as course design, intercultural communication and case method, teaching listening comprehension, training of interpreters for exhibition and convention, and information literacy. Liu and Xu's discussion of two merger and acquisition cases involving Chinese enterprises provide a glimpse of the rich content of business activities that create and are created by business discourse. This article testifies to the importance of disciplinary knowledge as an essential component in the teaching of Business English. Sun proposes a framework of business pragmatics, a welcome attempt of a linguist drawing on pragmatics and business discourse to explain the use of language in the business field.

This special issue of the journal showcases current research and practice in Business English in China. It is intended to provide a venue for exchange of experiences and thoughts with colleagues in Asia and beyond. I would like to thank all the contributors including those authors whose articles are not included in this issue. Dr. Francesca Bargiela reviewed all the contributions and advised wisely on the title and the order of the articles in the special issue. Professor Wang Lifei, Dr. Zhang Cuiping, Professor Zhu Xiaoshu, and Mr. Ren Chi at the University of International Business and Economics helped with the special issue in various useful ways.

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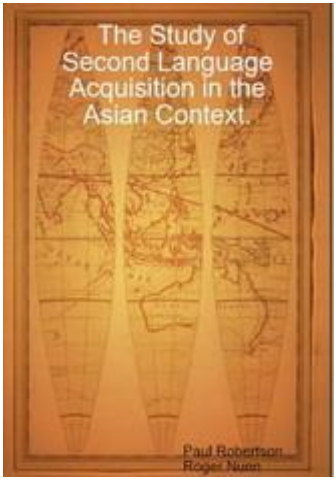

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Title

Curriculum Development for Business English Students in China: The Case of UIBE

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Abstract
This paper is a case study of the development of the curriculum for the Business English majors at a Chinese university. By demonstrating the application and extension of principles of English for Specific Purposes and research in applied linguistics in the curriculum development, the paper shows that an ESP-informed curriculum is able to integrate disciplinary knowledge, professional practice, and language. The implications of the case for curriculum development for Business English students in China are discussed.

Key words. Business English, curriculum development

1. Introduction

Business English (BE) teaching is increasingly important in China. It has outgrown the *yingyuyuyanwenxue* (English language and literature) undergraduate programme and obtained accreditation by the Ministry of Education of China to run parallel with the English language and

literature programme (Chen & Wang, 2009). As more institutions of higher learning in China are preparing to operate their BE programme, issues concerning curriculum development require urgent attention. This article brings under the spot light the case of the BE programme at the University of International Business and Economics in China, discussing the various theoretical and practical issues that have been encountered and addressed in the development of the programme. The implications for the BE curriculum development in general are also discussed.

2. BE under the magnifying glass of English for Specific Purposes

Curriculum is often discussed along with syllabus and programme. It is necessary to explain these three terms at the beginning. A programme, according to Smith (1989, p. 47, quoted in Owen, 2006, p. 26), is "a set of planned activities directed toward bringing about specified change(s) in an identified and identifiable audience." Richards (2001) has made a clear distinction between curriculum and syllabus:

> Curriculum in a school context refers to the whole body of knowledge that children acquire in schools (p. 39).
>
> A syllabus is a specification of the content of a course of instruction and lists what will be taught and tested (p. 2).

Curriculum development is an essential component of an educational programme. Richards states that "Curriculum development focuses on determining what knowledge, skills, and values students learn in schools, what experiences should be provided to bring about intended learning outcomes, and how teaching and learning in schools or educational systems can be planned, measured, and evaluated" (2001, p.

2). This definition specifies the major concerns of curriculum development: what to include in the programme, how to implement it, and how to assess its outcomes. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) provides a rich source of theoretical and practical concepts, which are relevant to the development of BE curriculums.

BE is widely recognised as a branch of ESP, which is characterised by the priority given to learner needs and the design of a focused course that satisfies the needs (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, pp. 123-124), the procedure for identifying learner needs includes four essential activities, namely the target situation analysis (TSA), the learning situation analysis (LSA), the present situation analysis (PSA), and the means analysis (MA). The target situation analysis is concerned with the activities, events, tasks, etc. that the learner expects to participate in on the one hand and the underlying language, skills, discourse on the other. The learning situation analysis involves personal information about the learners such as their previous learning experiences, their reasons for attending the course and expectations of it, and their views on the effective ways of learning skills and language. The present situation analysis provides information on the learner's current level of language and skills and the strengths and weaknesses in their learning experiences. The means analysis is concerned with the environment in which the course will operate. This analysis takes into account the institutional constraints and affordances.

The four types of analysis are important to developing a BE curriculum, particularly in yielding the curriculum content and the criteria for ordering the content. The analyses and the outcomes with regard to a BE curriculum will be elaborated in the next section.

3. Planning the curriculum

3.1 Factors to consider in planning the curriculum

Planning is a process of identifying the goals, objectives, and approaches that will be captured in the curriculum. This process can be guided by the four analyses as mentioned above.

The Business English majors are expected to function in international business, which has been defined broadly as covering a wide range of "economic, public, and social activities such as trade, management, finance, marketing, tourism, journalism, and law" (Chen & Wang, 2009, p. 5). Following the TSA, the target performance situation requires that the students handle the events, activities, and tasks and learn the relevant language and skills. Recent research in professional discourse indicates that weight should be given to professional knowledge and practices in the TSA analysis. For example, Bhatia states that "the process of becoming a competent professional requires the development of professional competence, which is measured in terms of a combination of discursive knowledge and disciplinary knowledge, in the context of professional practices" (2004/2008, p. 147). This understanding of the target performance situation expands the scope of BE teaching to include as essential components the knowledge of international business, practice in international business, and the language and skills necessary to the study of the knowledge and practices (Zhang, 2008b; Chen & Wang, 2009).

With regard to the LSA, the BE majors are fresh from high school. Their enrolment in the BE programme indicates their interest in the opportunity to learn both English and international business in order to end up as a composite-type talent employable in the job market.

The PSA, like the LSA, of the BE majors, can only be stated in general terms given the diversity of the origins of the learners. They are pre-experience learners in the sense that they need both knowledge of international business and the language for learning this knowledge.

They also need knowledge of professional practice. Concerning their English proficiency, they have learned English for at least six years (six years of high school where English is compulsory), with a minimum vocabulary of 2,000 words and mastery of basic English grammar.

The MA is a crucial procedure of the analysis of the needs of the BE students as it addresses the institutional concerns. There are three essential considerations. First of all, BE is supposed to be a tertiary educational programme rather than a training project. As it is, it should be guided by educational objectives. Biehler and Snowman (1990) group educational objectives into three major domains: the cognitive domain, which highlights knowledge and intellectual skills, the affective domain, which concerns values and attitudes, and the psychomotor domain, which involves physical abilities and skills. In the Business English context, this means that a Business English programme should promote all-round development of students by advancing them intellectually, affectively, and behaviourally. Secondly, the programme should treat the *sibianquexizheng* (syndrome of absence of abstract thinking). This is often taken as a deficiency in English majors (Huang, 1999; Wen & Liu, 2006). Thirdly, there is the need to address worries that the programme may fail to enable learners to study either business or language adequately given that the programme is a four-year one and involves business and language, which are two distinct disciplines.

There is also the factor of the forces of tradition at work. One facet of this factor is the influence of the traditional English language and literature programme. Hu and Sun (2006) argue for literature and linguistics and studies of English-speaking nations as the core of the discipline of English. Although BE has evolved into a separate programme, the impact of the parent programme is still keenly felt. The other facet of the tradition is that of BE itself. The surge of interest in

Business English is against the background of 50 years of BE teaching in China (Zhang, 2007). There have been three stages of the BE curriculum since the early 1950s. They can be represented as: Translation for Foreign Trade, English for Foreign Trade, and English for International Business (characterized by trade of goods, services, and investment). A review of these curricula identifies a few essential features. One is that BE has been geared to the needs of the state in its drive to expand its trade with the rest of the world. These needs derive from the institutional requirements. The needs of the state are assumed to be the needs of learners, who enrol in the government-run universities in the first place and whose needs are extrapolated from the state needs. The other is the recognition of business knowledge as an indispensable component of the curriculum apart from language. For example, courses in business knowledge were part of the very first curriculum and have been enhanced systematically, from a few courses covering the narrow scope of foreign trade to a wide range of courses corresponding to the broader scene of international business.

3.2 Curriculum content

The TAS, LSA, PSA, and MA contribute to specifying the goals, objectives, and content of the BE programme. According to the Division of Academic Affairs UIBE (2007), the programme aims to "cultivate composite-type English talents who have sound English knowledge and skills, master fundamental theories and knowledge of international business, have comparatively high humanistic quality, are adept at intercultural communication, can meet the needs of economic globalisation, and are competitive internationally." The objectives are as follows:

1. Have sound English knowledge and skills and pass Test for English Majors Band 8;
2. Master fundamental theories, knowledge, and skills in international economics, management, and law;
3. Are familiar with Chinese and Western politics, economies, and cultures;
4. Have fine intercultural communication abilities;
5. Take a second foreign language and achieve the university-set proficiency level;
6. Possess essential IT application skills;
7. Have strong ability of autonomous learning and basic ability of academic research.

When these aims and objectives are translated into the curriculum content, they can be grouped into business knowledge and practices, business discourse, English proficiency, knowledge and understanding of humanities. The first component includes business-related courses, such as economics, management, and business law. These courses do not involve the functional treatment of subject knowledge or use them as carrier content (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) as is usually the case in the content-based approach to language teaching (But see Brinton et al. (1989)). Instead, they treat disciplinary knowledge systematically and in depth. They also acquaint students with disciplinary cultures and prepare them for developing insights into the ways of perceiving, structuring, questioning, and hypothesizing in the business disciplines. By means of this in-depth and systematic study of business disciplines, the programme is intended to address the cognitive objectives of education, that is, to provide academic training, promote intellectual growth, and develop skills transferable to other fields of work.

To this first component can be added courses in business practice, including practice in international business, international business culture, and practices in international business communication. These courses introduce students to procedural and factual information as well as cultivate critical awareness of business practices. They allow students "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the business world by taking part in such activities as simulations and on-site observations, which will allow them to gain certain hands-on experience. In the process of participation, they sharpen their sensitivity to the culture of international business and acquire tacit knowledge of their target community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Business discourse involves the use of language in business settings to achieve goals and get business done (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, & Planken, 2007). Business discourse is a bridging component in two senses. First, it deals with genres that are typical of business disciplines, such as academic writing, discussion, and presentations, and of business practices, such as meetings, negotiating, socializing, telephoning, and corresponding. Business discourse thus acts as a service to the study of other courses. Secondly, the carrier content (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) is graded according to its level of sophistication and complexity. Less complicated or sophisticated carrier content is incorporated into the language courses, i.e. *jinengzhishihua* (skills training materials are knowledge-based), as in Hu and Sun (2006) or the content-based language teaching discussed by Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989). This arrangement saves time for in-depth and systematic study of more theoretically sophisticated knowledge of business disciplines.

Business discourse is also the site where intercultural communication is enacted. The teaching of English takes the form of speaking, listening, reading, writing, and translating in English in international business contexts. This enhances students' ability to reflect on the use

of language in business in terms of accuracy and appropriacy. Along with courses in humanities (English literature, linguistics, cultures of English-speaking countries, etc.), business discourse courses take care of the affective and psychomotor domains.

These components are interdependent and integrated. When the BE majors live out the curriculum, they will fulfil the requirements of the educational programme: acquire transferable academic skills, develop critical thinking, and learn both language and business in a thorough and systematic fashion.

3.3 Issues in implementing and evaluating the curriculum

Implementing and evaluating the curriculum are on-going as the first cohort of BE majors are in their final year of study at the University of International Business and Economics. The methodology, materials, and teachers will be discussed as they are important to the success of the curriculum.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) argue that "ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves" (p. 4). As the teaching of BE involves subject knowledge, business discourse, and business practice, there can be no uniform methodology. In fact, to prepare the students to perform proficiently in the field of international business, the methodology for teaching is necessarily eclectic and learner-centred. Ellis and Johnson (1994) list a few methods for teaching BE, namely, simulations (acting out a task with personal preferences or stances), role plays (playing a role as set despite personal preferences or stances), and case studies (learn from business professionals' experience). These methods help the learners both to take in knowledge and to gain hands-on experience of business operations and the language in use in these practices.

Learning BE is more about picking up a practice and taking on professional identities than acquiring English proficiency alone, so it can be regarded as a process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), i.e. students of BE are socialised into the community of international business practice under the guidance of their teachers who, ideally, are expert members and provide them with role models. At present, the teachers of BE on the BE programme fall into two types: subject-trained and language and literature-qualified. Most of the latter have no or inadequate knowledge of business disciplines nor have they been exposed to international business practices apart from being ordinary consumers of internationally produced goods. Without such knowledge and exposure, it is difficult for them to select appropriate teaching materials, identify relevant information in speech and writing, or provide valid feedback to students' spoken word and writing. For the former cohort of BE teachers, teachers with specialised training in business disciplines, quite surprisingly, they are uncertain about their identities. Most of such teachers were language students who later switched to business studies in their higher degrees. They experience difficulties in gaining recognition from the discipline of business studies and the discipline of language studies. A possible solution is to organise BE teacher development programmes where ELT and business subjects are organic components; to run seminars where ELT specialists and business practitioners discuss issues of language use and business practices together; to keep up with collaborative research by academics and business professionals such as the research reported by Cheng and Mok (2008).

Materials are another issue. ESP has been materials-led (St John, 1996). Although we know more about language use in ESP than before, as Nickerson (2005) argues, we are far from knowing enough about professional expertise. More cooperation is needed between linguists,

professional communications researchers, professional practitioners so that we can gain insights into the business expertise that constitutes the professional identities which are targets of our pre-experience learners. Research findings also need to be translated into teaching materials (Nickerson, 2005; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010).

The evaluation is another major pending issue. As business expertise is more than language performance, the commercially available tests such as BEC, TOEIC, and BULATS fail to meet the needs of BE assessment (Zhang, 2008a). Douglas (2000, p. 19) defines ESP test as follows:

> A specific purpose language test is one in which test content and methods are derived from an analysis of a specific purpose target language use situation, so that test tasks and content are authentically representative of tasks in the target situation, allowing for an interaction between the test taker's language ability and specific purpose content knowledge, on the one hand, and the test tasks on the other. Such a test allows us to make inferences about a test-taker's capacity to use language in the specific purpose domain.

This is a step ahead because it recognises the importance of the interaction between language and content. Other important components of BE learning such as professional identities are practically neglected.

4. Discussion

There are a number of points we would like to discuss as implications for BE curriculum development and teaching in general. The first is concerned with the nature of BE in the Chinese educational setting. Two issues need to be addressed here. ESP as a branch of English language teaching is taken as a "service industry" (Hutchinson &

Waters, 1987, p. 164). It would follow that ESP is training by nature. Yet the BE programme as outlined above is a proper university programme in its own right. The other issue is the division of labour between BE and the English language and literature programme, which had been in place long before the BE programme started. When BE assumes the status of an independent programme, the division of academic and educational labour is clear. While the traditional English programme takes as its core English literature, linguistics, and studies of English-speaking nations, BE claims as its domain the use of English in various socio-economic fields. Each one is complementary to the other and neither is inferior to or conspires to displace the other.

The second relates to the ultimate goals of teaching BE in China. The BE programme at the University of International Business and Economics is designed to train business professionals in the sense that it aims to help students learn how to do business with English, to enable them to pick up a practice, to perform professional roles, and to take on professional identities. It also has the crucial goal of nurturing all-round persons. Wenger argues that

> Education, in its deepest sense and at whatever age it takes place, concerns the opening of identities – exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state. Whereas training aims to create an inbound trajectory targeted at competence in a specific practice, education must strive to open new dimensions for the negotiation of the self. It places students on an outbound trajectory toward a broad field of possible identities. Education is not merely formative – it is transformative (1998, p. 263).

There have been allusions to BE as a sort of vocational or professional training, falling short of a proper English education (Hu & Sun, 2006).

Although we argue that the Business English programme as presented in this article is not necessarily limiting in terms of the range of trajectories offered to its learners, the warning of Wenger should be kept in the back of the mind all the time. There are challenges for curriculum developers, textbook writers, teachers, and administrators.

The third point to note is the role of language and content in BE teaching. The BE curriculum is meaning-focused. It is commonly believed that learning language in a meaningful context is motivating to learners. In content-based learning, learners deal with subject-relevant materials, access disciplinary cultures and practices. This learning context motivates learners and increases effectiveness of language learning. The BE curriculum adopts an integrated approach, i.e. English is taught along with knowledge of business disciplines and business practices. It recognises the interrelatedness of language features and business practices and incorporates the insight that BE cannot be usefully described without making reference to the business activities it accompanies or enables to take place. Business English is social action rather than merely a representation of business operations. When this view is taken, the practice of breaking down target events into language, skills, notions and functions, etc. is problematic as underlying the practice is the assumption that language and content are separable. This situation poses a problem for BE practitioners and theorists.

The next issue is that Business English teaching should pay serious attention to the "accomodationist" (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 231) approach, that is, being uncritical about and restricted to helping learners to cope with their target performance situations. Research indicates that business discourse is ideology-laden, likely to enact inequality in power, gender, and race (Mullany, 2009; Parker & Grimes, 2009). Teaching business English should not end in preparing learners to acquire business expertise for the business world. It is important also

to encourage these students to be sensitive to the inequity and social injustice and be agents of change.

Last but not least, there is the issue of the competitive/comparative advantage of BE majors in comparison with other university majors. The coming years will witness the continuing boom of the BE programme as the demand is high. Since 2007, fifteen universities and colleges in China have won the approval of the Ministry of Education to run a BE undergraduate programme (Chen & Wang, 2009). According to Wu (2009), director of the Training Section of the Bureau of Personnel of the Ministry of Commerce of China, talents of the following types are required to implement the *zouzhuchu* (go global) strategy: *kuaguojingyingguanli* (international operation and management), *guojishangwuyingxiao* (international business marketing), *guojitouziguanli* (international investment management), *guojijingjifalu* (international business law), and *guojishangwutanpan* (international business negotiation). While the expertise of these talents varies according to the specific business operations involved, they all need to possess global vision, pioneering and innovative spirit, and intercultural communication skills (Wu, 2009). In other words, they need to know how professionals of different cultural backgrounds communicate in relevant business operations and activities. This means that the content of the BE programme may increasingly converge with that of the curriculum for business majors. The question arises of what differentiates BE majors from business majors. It seems that BE practitioners need to be aware of this tendency and answer the question properly. One possible way of responding to this is, once again, to cast the eye at the target situation the students are to serve in the end. In the age of globalisation, communication within multinationals and between multinationals and other entities is increasing. The need to handle communication-related issues is on the rise. The niche for BE majors is

their expertise to handle such issues. If this is a valid observation, then the curriculum content should be adjusted to reflect this. The curriculum for business communication for the business students at the School of Economics, Aalto University, Finland, can be commended on their inclusion of the various forms of international communications in the curriculum. Their students are exposed to the communication taking place in the corporate world to develop skills for handling it. This may give a renewed focus to the BE curriculum at the University of International Business and Economics and even Business English curricula elsewhere in China.

5. Concluding remarks

The BE programme at UIBE demonstrates the relevance of ESP to BE. It is an exemplar of integrating disciplinary knowledge, professional practice, and language in a curriculum that is designed to educate composite-type talents. It has the potential of feeding back on applied linguistics research by raising questions for theoretical inquiry and practical discussion.

BE has gained momentum. While BE keeps expanding, it is necessary to reflect on the rationale for it and the various issues pending for consideration in its implementation. There are many further questions to ask, for example, what students of Business English themselves feel about their programme, what changes they undergo in learning Business English, in particular the Business English program currently implemented in China, and what can be offered if they want to pursue a postgraduate level education, to name but a few.

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Title

Developing a National Curriculum for BA Program in Business English of China

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Abstract
Until 2010, the Ministry of Education has granted BA Program of Business English to fifteen universities in China. This paper tries to describe the current development of business English programs, and discuss such important issues as the program missions, theoretical bases for curriculum design, components of knowledge and abilities, requirements of proficiency levels, course design, and teaching principles and methods.

Key words. Business English Program, curriculum design, English language teaching

1. Introduction

The teaching of English in China has undergone a tremendous change. In addition to the traditional English major program which is literature and linguistics-centered, there are two new programs, i.e. the Translation Program and Business English Program. Both of the new programs are accredited by the Ministry of Education of China. National curricula for the Business English program and the Translation

program have been developed and put into practice. Research in Business English has been active (Chen, Wang, Zhang, & Xing, 2006; Zhang, 2007; Zhang, 2008). Business English is now understood to refer to English in use in economic, public, and social activities concerning trade and investment in the era of globalization. It covers the use of English in the fields of trade, management, finance, marketing, tourism, journalism, law, and foreign affairs. As such, it is an umbrella term for English for Tourism, English for Law, English for Finance, and English for Maritime Affairs. As a type of ESP education in China with a history of over 50 years, three patterns in organizing teaching have emerged. The first can be referred to as English-mediated Business Education represented by Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. The second can be referred to as Combined English Bachelor's and Commerce Bachelor's degree program represented by Beijing Foreign Studies University. And the third is represented by the University of International Business and Economics where Business English teaching follows an integrated Business English approach.

Now that fifteen universities have won approval to run the Business English program and around 700 universities and colleges are offering various courses in Business English, there is a constant call from teachers and administrators for a national curriculum for Business English as a guide.

Curriculum development is an essential component of an educational program. Richards (2001, p. 2) states that curriculum development "focuses on determining what knowledge, skills, and values students learn in schools, what experiences should be provided to bring about intended learning outcomes, and how teaching and learning in schools or educational systems can be planned, measured, and evaluated". This definition specifies the major concerns of curriculum development:

what to include in the program, how to implement it, and how to assess its outcomes.

This article reports the recent national effort to develop a national curriculum for Business English in China. It concerns such important issues as the program mission, theoretical bases for curriculum design, components of knowledge and abilities, requirements of proficiency levels, course design, and teaching principles and methods.

2. Theoretical and practical considerations

The planning process is informed by a number of sources of information. Needs analysis and situation analysis are important to planning (Richards, 2001). From needs analysis, planners get to know what learners and other stakeholders think the program should be able to achieve, i.e. produce information on the aim and goals of the program. Situation analysis reveals institutional affordances and constraints. In developing the curriculum for Business English, the following are taken into account.

First of all, Business English is supposed to be a tertiary educational program rather than a training project. As it is, it should be guided by educational objectives. Biehler and Snowman (1990) group educational objectives into three large domains: the cognitive domain, which highlights knowledge and intellectual skills, the affective domain, which concerns values and attitudes, and the psychomotor domain, which involves physical abilities and skills. In the Business English context, this means that a Business English program should promote all-round development of students in the sense of advancing them intellectually, affectively, and behaviorally.

Secondly, the program should treat the syndrome of absence of critical thinking. This is often taken as a deficiency in English majors

(Wen & Liu, 2006). Achieving this objective can be a justification for the new program.

Thirdly, there is the need to remove worries that the program may 'scratch the surface' of both business and language. The program involves business and language, which are two distinct disciplines. Given that time is a constraining factor for any educational program, there are worries that the mix may fail to advance learners in either business or language.

Contemporary curriculum development is theory-informed. In developing a curriculum, four questions need to be answered: What are the theoretical bases? What are the core knowledge and abilities and skills to be covered? What are the criteria for teaching contents selection and classification? How to sequence the teaching contents?

Wilkins (1976) identities two types of curricula: synthetic and analytic. Traditional foreign language curricula, for example, language form syllabus, situational syllabus, notional syllabus, and lexis syllabus, are of the first type. The assumptions underlying the syllabi are that foreign language learning is an accumulation of foreign language knowledge and learners are able to learn the different components of language knowledge, such as structures, vocabulary, and functions, which will be synthesized in communication (Lu & Shi, 2002).

Language forms syllabus is guided by structural linguistics. The focus is on language system and structural forms. In this approach, language is taken as a system guided by a limited set of rules. Language rules can be learned on a one by one basis in an incremental manner.

Situational syllabus is also a type of synthetic syllabus. Its emphasis is put on situations that are predicted for learners. The predictions are the bases of teaching contents selection and organization. Situational syllabi represent a turn in language form syllabi from the discipline as the basis to learners as the basis. As due consideration is given to the

situations where learners are to use language and the needs of learners, the motivation of learners is remarkably boosted.

Notional syllabi are synthetic. They take into account grammatical structures and semantic features. Communicative teaching syllabi are guided by functional linguistics with the focus on the training of communicative competence. The selection of contents follows two essential criteria: notions and functions. Notions refer to such concepts as time, space, motion, and causality. Functions are the purposes and goals of communication. Notional and functional syllabi are more concerned with communicative functions, an obvious impact of Hymes' work on communicative competence.

Task-based syllabi take language tasks as the basic unit of selection and organization for teaching contents. Such syllabi are guided by cognitive linguistics, which sheds light on the role of learners in the learning process. Learners are not just passive receivers of knowledge but active pursuers and participants in the learning process. Drawing on their prior life experiences, they construct knowledge and are active and creative language users. Task-based syllabi train both communicative competence and abilities to learn. Learners' language knowledge, including mother language knowledge, is taken as the basis for developing new language competence. While they are engaged in foreign language tasks, learners make full use of mother language knowledge and experience. In their interaction with their peers for meaning transmission and meaning making, they develop their inter-language.

The Business English curriculum draws on theories of modern linguistics and foreign language teaching, such as curriculum development principles, cognitive linguistics, cross-cultural communication theories and English for specific purposes theories, task-based language teaching theories, and needs analysis of business

knowledge. Language tasks and knowledge are graded, which is the basis of the abilities bands and course design. Therefore, the curriculum materializes the synthetic syllabus, representing the current trend in language teaching syllabus design.

3. Components of knowledge and abilities

Based on needs analysis and situation analysis and principles for curriculum development, as specified in the preceding section, the Business English curriculum specifies the aim and the components of knowledge and abilities.

3.1 Aim

The program aims to cultivate composite-type English talents who have sound mastery of English language and broad international outlook, appreciate knowledge of and skills in international business, acquire the fundamentals of economics, management, law, and other related disciplines, possess strong intercultural communication skills and fine humanistic qualities, and are capable of performing in English in the fields of commerce, trade and economics, management, finance, foreign affairs, etc.

3.2 Components of knowledge and abilities

The Business English program aims to cultivate in the students abilities and qualities including language abilities, cross-cultural communicative abilities, business knowledge, and humanistic savvy. Language abilities refer to language knowledge and skills that are required to perform in business. Such abilities constitute the specialty of the Business English major. Intercultural communication abilities refer to an international outlook, familiarity with Chinese and foreign cultures and etiquettes, abilities to follow international practices in

international business, handle various relations, and negotiate and transact. Business knowledge and skills refer to mastery of systematic general and specialized business knowledge, on the basis of which disciplinary thinking and creativity are promoted. Humanistic qualities includes stable political stance, patriotism, morals and ethos, familiarity with Chinese and foreign cultural traditions, proficiency in Chinese spoken and written communication, basic knowledge of sciences and technology, and strong sense of innovation and creativity. The components and their indicators are presented as in Table 1.

Table 1 Business English knowledge and abilities

	Major Types	Sub-type Indicators
Knowledge and abilities	Language knowledge and skills	1. sounds, vocabulary, and grammar of English
		2. skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing
		3. interpreting and translating skills
		4. discourse competence
		5. language learning abilities
	Business knowledge and skills	1. economics
		2. management
		3. international business law
		4. business skills
	Intercultural communication skills	1. intercultural cognitive skills
		2. intercultural accommodation abilities
		3. intercultural interaction abilities
	Humanistic qualities	1. political stance and ethics
		2. critical and innovative thinking
		3. savvy of Chinese and foreign cultures

4. Modules and units

The four-year Business English program is divided into two stages: foundation stage (Year 1 and Year 2) and advanced stage (Year 3 and Year 4). At the foundation stage, the focus is on general English. The objectives include learning language skills and cross-cultural communication skills, awareness of learning strategies, and a fine learning attitude. At the advanced stage, while enhancing English proficiency is essential, the focus is shifted to learning business knowledge, including a select body of knowledge of economics, management, and international business law, and upgrading intercultural communication skills. While the four-year program should maintain consistency and integrity, there should be different priorities at each stage and constant emphasis on improving the ability to use English throughout the program.

The curriculum requires a minimal course load of 1800 teaching hours within the four years excluding hours for compulsory and elective public courses. Institutions concerned may tailor-make their program in light of their specific program goals, features, and available teaching resources in offering compulsory and elective major courses and allocating teaching hours. The rough proportions of the modules are: language skills courses 50-60%, business knowledge courses 20-30%, intercultural communication skills courses 5-10%, humanistic qualities courses 5-10%, dissertation (design), and practicum no less than 15%. Table 2 presents the twelve recommended core courses (marked with *) in addition to the electives with respective proportions.

Table 2 Allocation of teaching hours for major courses

Type	Modules	Core units	Proportion in percentage
Major courses	Language knowledge and skills	Language knowledge: Introduction to Linguistics*, others	50-60%
		Language skills: Integrated (business) English*, listening and speaking*, reading*, writing*, interpreting and translating*	
	Business knowledge and skills	Fundaments of business: economics*, management*, international business law*	20-30%
		Other business subject units	
		Other business skills units	
	Intercultural communication skills	Intercultural communication: Intercultural communication*, practices in business communication*, others	5-10%
	Humanities	Survey of British and American Literatures*, others	5-10%
	Practicum		No less than 15%
	Dissertation (design)		
Total			100%

In addition to the 12 core courses, electives may include the following:

1) Language knowledge and skills modules and units
   Advanced Business English, interpreting for business, readings in business classics, English for finance, English for law, etc.
2) Business knowledge and skills modules and units
   Fundamentals of business, international trade, practice in international trade, international marketing, international finance, e-commerce, accounting, statistics, entrepreneurship, etc.
3) Intercultural communication modules and units
   International business negotiation, public speaking in English, business communication, international business etiquette, international business culture, corporate culture, business ethics, etc.
4) Humanities modules and units
   Survey of European and American cultures, European and American Drama, Survey of Chinese culture (English), etc.

5. Proficiency levels and descriptors

The Business English major is of the practical type with a specified program length of four years. Upon successful completion of the course, students are awarded an undergraduate graduation certificate in Business English and a Bachelor's degree. Teaching progresses through three stages: entry stage, Level 4, and Level 8. By the end of Year 2, students are required to attain Level 4 and upon graduation Level 8. Each stage has its array of specific requirements in terms of language knowledge and skills, business knowledge and skills, intercultural communication skills, and humanistic savvy. The proficiency level descriptions are listed in Table 3.

Table 3 Proficiency level descriptors

Types	Items	Entry level	Level 4	Level 8
Lan-guage	**Phonetics**	Fluently pronouncing new words using phonetic knowledge and alphabet; reading aloud new-word free texts comparable to Senior 3 texts in difficulty level, with clear, generally accurate pronunciation and intonation	Mastery of word and sentence stress, good rhythm in reading aloud and speaking; mastery of phonosyntactic rules in speaking including liaison, explosion, assimilation, and intonation contours for statements, questions, and imperatives; preliminary understanding of the relationship between stress and non-stress and new and given information in speaking	Accurate pronunciation, natural intonation, fluent flow of language
	Grammar	Recognize parts of speech; distinguish countable nouns and uncountable nouns; singular vs plural forms of countable nouns; forms and usage of pronouns; syntactic functions of cardinal and ordinal numerals, common	Mastery of subject-verb agreement, predicative clause, object clause, attributive clause, adverbial clause, direct speech and indirect speech, infinitives and participles of	Mastery of cohesive devices within and beyond sentences including reference, ellipsis, substitution; proper use of cohesion to achieve coherence

		prepositions and conjunctions; adjectives and adverbs, comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives and adverbs; common usage of the articles; categories, tenses, voices of verbs, infinitives, participles and their basic functions; types of sentences, basic sentence patterns and word formation	verbs, tenses, active and passive voices, word formation; mastery of subject clause, appositive clause, inverted structure, and conditional clauses; cohesion between sentences and paragraphs	
	Vocabu-lary	Recognize no fewer than 2000 words; mastery of approximately 1,200 common words and a number of idiomatic expressions and collocations in speaking and writing; recognize approximately 740 words and a number of idiomatic expressions and collocations and infer their meaning in context	Through classroom learning and other means, recognize 5,500-6,500 words (including below-Level 4 words and 1,000 common business words and terms); accurate and fluent use of 3,000-4,000 of them and basic collocations	Through classroom learning and other means, recognize 10,000-12,000 words, including 3,000 business words and terms; fluent and accurate use of 5,000-6000 of them and collocations, including 1,000 common business words and terms
	Listening	Able to understand classroom language, questioning and lecturing language, and news and cultural programs on VOA	Able to comprehend daily conversations of native English speakers, intermediate VOA	Able to comprehend all kinds of English conversations in real communication,

		special English; comprehend passages with few new words, about familiar topics, and slightly more difficult than Senior 3 texts, accuracy of understanding reaching 75%; comprehend ordinary business materials at the rate of 90w/m, e.g. answering a telephone, appointment arrangement, product description, catching the main point and relevant details. Vocabulary not exceeding Level 1.	and BBC news, differences between varieties of English (e.g. American English and British English), accuracy of understanding reaching 90%; recorded passage in English of 150 words within 15 minutes dictated at the rate of 100w/m, accuracy level 90%; able to comprehend business materials at 120w/m, including job interview, itinerary, conference organization, non-specialist business presentations. Able to grasp the main points and relevant details, attitudes, emotions, and intentions of the speakers. Vocabulary not exceeding Level 4, accuracy of understanding above 75%	feature reports concerning political, economic, cultural, educational, scientific and technological topics on English radio and TV (e.g. CNN, CCTV9); presentations, questions and answers concerning the above topics; news reports on TV; dialogues in TV drama; complaints, business reports, speeches, negotiations, press conference at the rate of 150-180w/m. Vocabulary not exceeding Level 8 as specified in the curriculum. Accuracy reaching above 75%. At the first listening, able to understand the main points and take down 900 words of business reports, lectures, speeches within 10 minutes at the rate of 150w/m, accuracy reaching

				above 90%
	Speaking	Able to fluently ask and answer questions on and discuss given texts; with some preparation, able to retell coherently texts heard or read; able to talk about daily topics; able to make a clear and coherent speech of no less than 3 minutes on familiar topics	Able to make talk exchanges with native speakers of English in general social encounters and business contexts including general business contact, reception, company and product briefing, meeting arrangement, trade fair, with accurate expression of thoughts, accurate and natural pronunciation and intonation, with no grammatical or pragmatic mistakes	Able to fluently and appropriately communicate concerning significant domestic and foreign issues and events, such issues in business activities as national economic policies, market analysis, price negotiating, corporate strategy, financial management, marketing, business negotiation, business conferences, personnel training, legal knowledge, business procedures; able to make a systematic, in-depth and coherent presentation of views or speech of no less than 10 minutes
	Reading	Able to comprehend biographic writings, stories, pop science texts, etc. with less than 3% of new words at the rate of 60w/m, accuracy of	Able to comprehend English cultural and literary originals of moderate difficulty and	Able to comprehend editorials and book reviews in general British and American newspapers and

		comprehension reaching 70%; able to comprehend simple practical writings; grasp main ideas and views of materials	length, grasping main points, and properly evaluating their views and contents; able to comprehend general English business materials including business news reports, international business correspondence, advertisements, memoranda, notes, and notices; applying effective reading skills and strategies in getting major facts and relevant details; skimming at the rate of no less than 200w/m, reading at the rate of 120-180w/m, accuracy of comprehension no less than 70%	magazines, historical biography and literary writings of intermediary difficulty, getting to grips with views and ideas, discourse structure, linguistic features, and rhetorical devices; able to comprehend market research reports, major clauses of international business contracts, general commercial documents, reports on world economic situations, international marketing reports, international business plans, financial reports, etc., reading speed at 200w/m, skimming at 320w/m, grasping main ideas and relevant details
	Writing	Able to produce a text or letter of 80-100 words within 30 minutes in response to given topics, outlines or tables, charts, data, prompts, etc., with no glaring	Able to produce a text of 150-200 words within 30 minutes in response to given topics, outlines, tables and charts, data, and prompts;	Able to produce texts of most often used genres; compose business book reports, business reports, business presentations,

		grammatical mistakes, moderately clear expression, complete coverage of information, and correct layout	independently composing memoranda, emails, telephone messages, name cards, business correspondence, resumes, application letters, minutes, summaries of business texts, chart description, speech outlines. The texts should be relevant, logical in structure, clear, grammatical, appropriate, and following proper layout	business plans, business contracts, advertising posters, business articles. The texts should be clearly structured, substantial and accurate in terms of information, logical, fluent and accurate, appropriate, at the rate of 250-300w per 30 minutes. Able to compose a dissertation/design of approximately 5,000 words, with clear thinking, substantial content, fluent language, and proper layout
	Trans-lation and interpreta-tion	Able to correctly render into Chinese phrases and simple sentences comparable to Senior 3 texts	Able to translate English or Chinese paragraphs of intermediary level and general styles; able to translate English or Chinese business letters, product descriptions, documents for foreign trade of comparable difficulty, at the rate of 150-200w/h, with	Able to apply translation theories and techniques to rendering Chinese or English texts of general styles and high difficulty, business texts of comparable difficulty level, such as contracts, business plans, business reports, corporate or product advertisements, bid documents, at the

			accuracy and fluency, conforming to styles of expression of the relevant documents; able to do simultaneous interpretation for general business receptions, meetings, negotiations, presentations, accuracy no less than 70%	speed of 250-300w/h, with accuracy and fluency, conforming to business styles and practice. Able to do simultaneous interpretation for professional encounters like business negotiations, public speaking, interviews, and commentaries, accuracy no less than 80%
Inter-cultural com-muni-cation	**Intercultu-ral thinking**	Open-mindedness and willingness to take the initiative, rudimentary knowledge of foreign cultures and customs, reasonably basic respect, and quite strong interest and willingness to know more	Equipped with a preliminary international outlook and awareness of intercultural communication, abandoning self closure, prejudice against or blind conformation to European and American cultures, acquainted with social values, customs, rules and beliefs, differences between Chinese and Western	With fine international outlook and intercultural thinking capacity, open-minded, tolerant of foreign cultures, comprehensive understanding of the political, economic, historical, geographical, scientific and technological, cultural roots and current state of target trade partners; able to make a systematic

			cultures, with a Chinese perspective on foreign cultures	analysis, synthesis, comparison, and induction of Chinese and Western cultural phenomena
	Intercultu-ral adaptation	Awareness of intercultural communication and respect for other cultures; open-mindedness, curiosity, empathy, humor, tolerance of fuzziness, judgmental power, etc.	In intercultural contexts, being able to make basic mental accommodation and show flexibility, work in a team, maintain good interpersonal relations; able to overcome fear and anxiety and cope with cultural conflicts by means of understanding and analyzing cultural differences	In intercultural contexts, being adept at make mental accommodation and showing flexibility, adapt readily where cultural conflicts arise, overcome barriers resulting from ethnocentrism, racism; able to actively lessen confusion, overcome fear and anxiety, reduce stress, and relax
	Intercultu-ral communi-cation	Having common sense in interpersonal communication, able to express emotions and make compliments, invitations, refusals, etc. in ways acceptable to the other party; able to engage in simple daily exchanges with foreign users of English	Able to correctly and flexibly communicate with users of English from different countries via language and non-linguistic resources, perform effectively in international contexts; able to take up effective	Able to appropriately and effectively communicate with users of English from various countries via linguistic and non-linguistic means and strategies, perform successfully in international contexts; able to

		demonstrating preliminary interpersonal communication skills and strategies with regard to the timing, place, location, manner, participant, language	communicative strategies, including initiating, closing, sustaining a communicative event, managing topic shifts, and making repairs in the event of communication errors; aware of the effect of culture on communication, including time, place, social position, gender, attitude, and topics, and of the appropriateness of language use	make proper use of communicative strategies in initiating, closing, sustaining a communicative event, shifting topics, making repairs when communication errors arise; constantly aware that time, place, social position, genre, attitude, topics are subject to culture
Business knowledge and skills	**General business knowledge and skills**	Basic social etiquette and knowledge of social interaction	Being familiar with and proficient in performing routine business activities and procedures: 1. corporate and departmental profile 2. product description 3. interviews and reception 4. meeting arrangements 5. incoming and	Being familiar with corporate running and managing in terms of : 1. planning, scheduling, reporting 2. briefing on procedures 3. describing products, giving instructions, making product advertisements 4. engaging in business transactions (e.g. price nego-

			outgoing mail and parcel 6. operating office equipment Being acquainted with the international business etiquette in the following areas: 1. telephoning 2. presenting and receiving name cards 3. correspondence 4. office 5. reception and entertaining 6. discussion 7. meeting 8. job application	tiation, making an order, processing complaints, making delivery, handling payment issues and general business documentations） 5. organizing conferences, giving business presentations and making itineraries Being acquainted with knowledge of and rules for human resources management: 1. job description, personnel planning and prediction 2. employee assessment and screening, recruitment interview and screening, employee training and development, career planning 3. quality management and operation management, outcome assessment 4. international

				human resources management 5. relevant laws and statutes, ethics
	Specialized knowledge and skills of business	No pre-requirements	Preliminary understanding of fundamental concepts such as economics, management, international business law, international trade, international finance	Systematic knowledge of economics, as specified below: Production theories, cost theories, externality, public goods and public choice, gross national product, gross national product determinism theory, inflation and unemployment, macro-economic policy Knowledge of economics, as specified below: Price theory, consumer behavior theory, market theory Systematic knowledge of international business management, as specified below:
				Operating

				environment, human resources management, financial and tax management, intercultural management, social responsibility Knowledge of international business management, as specified below: Organizational structure, operating patterns and strategic management, marketing
				Systematic knowledge of international business law, as specified below: the formation, structure, and characteristics of civil law and case law, contract law, law for international goods sale and purchase, product liability law, agency law, business organization law, bill law, law for

				industrial property rights and international technological trade, law for interna-tional cargo transportation, marine insurance law, arbitrary for international commerce, etc.
				Systematic knowledge of international trade, as specified below: Theories of international trade, international trade policy, economic globalization and regional economic integration, WTO rules and practices Knowledge related to international trade: Practices in international trade
				Systematic knowledge of international finance as specified below: International revenue and expenditure, international reserve, financial market,

				international financing, international capital flow, international monetary system, international financial organizations Mastery of knowledge of international finance including foreign currency and exchange rate

6. Principles of Teaching

The path to the program goals is the teaching of major modules. The Business English program should center around knowledge, ability, and qualities and understanding. In particular, the following six pairs of relations should be adequately addressed in teaching.

6.1 Language skills and business knowledge

It is essential to lay a solid foundation in language and develop language skills in a balanced fashion. The training of language skills is the top priority in Business English teaching and should be maintained throughout the four years of the program. The characteristics of application-oriented majors should be properly taken care of when handling the relationship between language skills training and the learning and teaching of business knowledge.

6.2 Language skills and intercultural communication skills

In addition to mastering the basics of language, the training of language communication skills should be foregrounded, in particular

intercultural communication skills. In the teaching of courses in language, intercultural communication, business knowledge and humanistic understanding, emphasis should be put on cultivating sensitivity to differences between cultures, tolerance, and flexibility in handling cultural differences.

6.3 Classroom teaching and autonomous learning

Classroom teaching should live out such notions as student-centered and teacher-guided. Autonomous learning abilities should be cultivated in students, in particular the self-learning ability in the internet technology environment, to prepare students for life-long learning.

6.4 Professional and humanistic qualities

The teaching of major courses should properly deal with the training of professional qualities and cultivation of humanistic qualities making sure that both are organically and harmoniously integrated. Major courses should strengthen the training of thinking skills and creativity in students but also give due weight to morals and ethics, cultural savvy, and psychological wellbeing.

6.5 Teaching and learning of theories and practicum

While emphasis is put on the teaching and learning of theories, more weight should be given to the component of practicum. Dissertation (design) is an important stage in cultivating innovation and practical abilities of students.

6.6 Traditional methods and modern IT approaches

The advantages of traditional teaching methodologies should be brought to full play. Meanwhile, it is important to actively explore the use of modern high-tech technologies in major course teaching so as to

upgrade teaching methodologies and contents and raise efficiency of teaching and learning.

7. Teaching methodologies and techniques

The features of major courses determine that classroom teaching should be student-centered and teacher-guided and that emphasis should be put on students' abilities to learn, research, and solve problems. Teaching methodologies should be constantly improved. Task-based learning, case study, simulation, project method, multimedia teaching should be adopted to motivate students to participate in the whole process of learning. The computer network systems and multimedia learning platforms should be made full use of to improve the outcome of learning. New modes of teaching and learning should be explored and tried to promote autonomous learning, practice, and creativity.

8. Testing and assessment/evaluation

In terms of teaching evaluation, the curriculum combines formative and summative assessment. In formative assessment, a variety of forms and techniques are employed, including self assessment, peer assessment, teacher assessment, student rating of teaching, assessment of students by teaching affairs/academic division. The teaching process should be monitored and feedback be duly provided. The summative assessment takes the forms of final examinations, proficiency test, and dissertation (design). Requirements of course examinations, proficiency test, and dissertation (design) are specified as follows.

8.1 For universities and colleges running a Business English program, core courses should take the form of final examinations. The examinations should be in English.

8.2 To help the stakeholders concerned to know about the execution of the Business English curriculum, the currently enrolled students of Business English are required to sit TEM4 and TEM8 and the oral tests in Semester 4 and Semester 8 respectively. When the Business English testing system is established, students will be required to take Business English Test Level 4 and Level 8 and the corresponding oral tests.

8.3 The dissertation (design) is an important indicator of as well as method of assessing a student's creativity. The dissertation (design) should be written in English, of 5000 words in length. It should be meaningful, clear, and logical in thinking, substantial, fluent, and reasonably original. The design should be strengthened and may take various forms such as business reports (market survey report, business plan, marketing plan, etc.). The length is roughly comparable to the dissertation. The language of writing is English. Grades are awarded on the basis of language, layout, creative thinking, and practical significance.

9. Practicum

Practicum is an important means of teaching Business English. Major forms include lab teaching and learning, professional internships, business plan design, academic activities, social practice, etc.

1) Lab teaching and learning: students are put in a lab environment where they engage in experiments or operations.
2) Professional internships: students complete professional activities as specified in either campus bases or other sites.
3) Business plan design: under the guidance of their teachers, students make a business plan in which they use their professional knowledge and follow professional practices.

The design should cover all the stages of topic selection, survey, data analysis, report writing, and oral defense.

4) Academic activities: under the guidance of their teachers or independently, students take part in various extracurricular academic activities, such as academic project and disciplinary competition. Activities may take various forms, such as doing reading reports, attending academic lectures, seminars, and thesis defense, forming research interest groups, undertaking research projects, founding journals and magazines, filming and making a short movie, interviewing and editing, participating in domestic and international conferences and disciplinary competitions.

5) Social practice: students take part in military training and social practices to gain insights into society and state conditions, obtain new experiences, exercise perseverance, and improve their social adaptation abilities.

10. Concluding remarks

The development of the Business English program as we have discussed above involves much planning. Needs analysis and situation analysis allow us to determine the goals and objectives of the program. These in turn inform us of the components of knowledge and abilities, which are then described in terms of proficiency bands. Given the integrated nature of the program, we have to be sensitive to the relations between business, language, communication, and other components and develop strategies for coping with them.

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Title

ESBP Course Design for Chinese International Business Personnel

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Abstract

English plays an irreplaceable role in international business. According to the statistics, over 80% of international corporations use English as their working language (Zhang H.L, 2007). It is now widely recognized that "…English has become the primary language for doing international business" (Estaban & Pérez Cañado, 2004, p.137). Since China entered the World Trade Organization (WTO), it has merged into the stream of global economic integration. There is a great demand for the Chinese international business personnel to improve their English language proficiency. Although there are quite a few in-service business English training courses throughout China, the current in-company English training courses often copy from the general business English teaching syllabus in colleges. As the learning characteristics and learning needs of target learners are neglected, most of these training courses are inefficient (Zhang J.J, 2007). This paper, based on English for Specific Purpose (ESP) theories, offers a tailored business English training course for Chinese international business personnel.

Key Words. international business personnel, course design

1. Introduction

The present paper delineates a course outline of English for Specific Business Purpose (ESBP), which is intended to be applied to a Chinese international trade company and to fulfill the immediate needs of the target trainees and the expectations of the company' s manager. Before the design of the course syllabus, a Needs Analysis (NA) was carried out through various approaches and sources to involve related stakeholders in the construction of the course. On the basis of all the collected data from needs analysis, objectives for the course were established. The course designer then built the syllabus based upon the course objectives and drew on the concept of multiple approaches to optimize the practicalities of the syllabus. The learners' assessment and course evaluation were conducted during and after the implementation of this ESBP course. The ESP related-theories have been integrated into each section in the course design.

2. Background and context

With the business transactions among countries increasing gradually, English is used widely as a key to the international affairs of commerce. As English being the lingua franca of business (Seidlhofer, 2004; Nickerson, 2005), Business English (BE), as a sub-branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), has attracted increasing interest and awareness with the enormous and unprecedented expansion in economic activities on an international scale. Since China made its way into the global marketplace, the demand for the qualified international business personnel who can communicate effectively with foreign clients has been increasingly immense.

Although the Business English courses are widely offered in the Chinese colleges, most of them are general English courses and do not focus on the language skills required in the real working environment (Zhang Z.C, 2007, p.400). Due to their low English language proficiency, these personnel in the international trade companies, especially the new graduates, always encounter some obstacles in their international business communication and operation. Being a multi-

functional English training approach, an ESBP course is useful for individuals who are eager to increase their business English knowledge, and most importantly, to improve their English language ability in their daily work (Ellis & Johnson, 2002).

The need for this ESBP course has been identified within Eurasia Trading Co. Ltd, which is located in Fuzhou, capital city of Fujian province, China. It is a leading company with many years' experience in footwear export business which has set up a credible sales network and has established business relationship with clients from over 100 countries and regions worldwide. The purpose of this ESBP training course is to provide a small group of Eurasia's international business personnel with the opportunity to improve their English language skills, so that they will be equipped with the language ability necessary to be successful in the entire process of international business operation.

3. Needs analysis

Needs analysis is a vital component in establishing the specifications and parameters of this ESBP course. As Dudley-Evans (2001) has pointed out, needs analysis serves as a preliminary foundation for an ESP course in an attempt to locate the objectives of the course and to prepare the appropriate teaching activities and materials. Inspired by the achievements of Gilabert's (2005) case study of a course for Catalonia journalists and Cowling's (2007) syllabus for a leading Japanese company, a 'task-based NA' (Long, 2005, p.22) is utilized for this course design in responce to what Long (2005) has defined as the 'dynamic qualities of target discourse' (ibid, p.23) and consequently to avoid the possible deficiencies of this ESBP training course generated from the intuition of the language teachers who do not have adequate experiences in international business.

3.1. Sources and methods

'Triangulated sources' (Long, 2005, p. 28) are used so that the course designer can compare the agreements and the disagreements among different informants, which may bring about a more credible and valuable data than using only one source. The multiple sources for the NA used in this course design are: the company manager, the HR representative, the direct supervisor of the target learners, the senior staff in this division, the target learners, and the documents which the trainees are expected to read and write in their daily work.

With respect to the data collection methods, it is assumed that better quality of the gathered data can be obtained through multiple measures, as evidenced by several recent studies discussed in Long (2005). Hence, the present NA draws on discussions, interviews, analysis of authentic texts, assessments and questionnaires in order to acquire information that may be contributive to 'target situation analysis (TSA)', 'learning situation analysis (LSA)' and 'present situation analysis (PSA)' (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, pp. 123-124).

3.2. Procedures

"Needs analysis should combine the TSA with PSA" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; West, 1994) and be carried out before and during the course. While in this course design, the "pre-course needs analysis" was conducted to establish "the *what* and *how* of this ESBP course" (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p.121), "ongoing needs analysis" was carried out during the course, to ensure its relevance and efficiency for the learners. Likewise, evaluation of the course and the progress of its participants were presented both during and at the end of the course. During the implementation of the NA, authorization from the

managements in the company was granted before the course designer proceeded with the data collection.

3.2.1. Discussion with the company vice-president and the HR representatives

The course designer first received the major concerns about the ESBP course from the company vice-president of Eurasia Trading Company and the representatives from the human resources department who are in charge of on-the-job training programs for the new employees. It would be essential to acquire as much information in regard to the roles and responsibilities of the trainees as well as their most required areas of business English language learning. As the manager and HR representatives stressed, "it is the insufficient English communicative abilities of their general working staff (the target learners) in the international business field that results in miscommunications with their overseas trade partners". Thus, this immediate intensive ESBP course has to be established to equip the employees with sufficient language skills to conduct effective communication with the foreign trade clients.

3.2.2. Structured interviews with the direct supervisors and written introspections by senior staff (domain experts)

It is assumed that the supervisors of the target students may be able to identify what their subordinates lack regarding BE skills in the working environments. It would be more feasible and favorable to talk to them and to ask for relevant authentic documents in international trade operation for NA and teaching materials in person. Therefore, the course designer had managed to reserve time with the supervisor to do the structured interviews. Not surprisingly, they not only pointed out the

weaknesses and deficiency in English language skills of the target learners but also provided a pile of international trade documents as well as their expectations from the trainees. By this phase, information for TSA has been obtained.

Several previous studies have perceived the source of 'domain experts' as informative (Cowling, 2007; Gilabert, 2005). For this reason, more detailed information from the senior staff in Eurasia trading company has been accessed through structured interview to inquire about what types of job items and working situations necessitate BE knowledge. The senior staff has also been requested to prioritize the topics which they have mentioned during the interview. This method was intended for TSA.

According to findings from the interview, most of the senior staffs considered the following five aspects as the most important:

(1) descriptions of product specifications and market trends,

(2) business communication and negotiation,

(3) listening comprehensions of different English accents or clarification skills,

(4) understandings of cross-cultural issues

(5) English presentations.

3.2.3. Business English proficiency test, questionnaire, structured interview and participatory discussion for the target learners

The target trainees were required to take a BE proficiency test in terms of listening, reading and writing before the implementation of this course. The past paper of The Business English Certificates (BEC) (intermediate level) was used in the pretest. The test results were analyzed for PSA to find out their defects when compared with the results of TSA.

After analyzing all the collected data, the course designer drafted a list of the topics and then designed a questionnaire for the students to complete (For details see the appendix I). The questionnaire is believed to be the most popular means of carrying out a needs analysis (Ellis & Johnson, 2002). In addition, some open-ended questions (for details see the appendix I) were constructed in the questionnaire which can provide some indications of the learner's writing ability in English. The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand the students' preferences in their learning process (LSA). The questionnaires were distributed to the prospective learners via e-mail, because they are in-service personnel and are fully occupied on the weekdays. A strictly structured interview with individual learner was conducted respectively in their spare time. A participatory discussion was held by the course designer to assess the learners' current level of English speaking skills in BE communication.

3.2.4. Observation and collection of authentic texts/documents

Williams (1998) claimed a careful observation of the target language situations is far superior to the imagination of the teacher or materials writer (Williams, 1998, cited in Edwards, 2000). The real workplace was visited by the course designer and the target learners' daily routine job, like the communication and negotiation with their foreign clients via telephone or E-mail and the operation of international trade documents, were carefully observed and recorded, so that TSA could be further perfected. As Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) have suggested, two types of authentic documents were collected for the NA and teaching materials during the process of observation. One is for TSA: workshop agendas, meeting minutes, contracts' terms and conditions, market reports, tender specifications, safety specifications, press releases, user's manuals, and advertisements. The other, such as

business correspondences produced by the target trainees, can be used for PSA. All these above activities were carried out only after the permission of the company, and all the information and materials collected were merely accessible for this ESBP course in strict confidentiality

3.2.5. Ongoing needs analysis

Since the ESP course design is a dynamic and interactive rather than linear process (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p.74), another "ongoing needs analysis" (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998) was carried out during the implementation of this course, to ensure that this course was effective and useful for the trainees. The casual conversations (informal interview) with the learners were conducted during the whole process of learning to provide the teacher with means for updating information for the on-going needs analyses concerning needs variation of the participants. In this way, the teacher could assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the undergoing course and correspondingly make necessary modifications on the teaching contents, materials and methodologies to ensure that the course benefits the participants and meets the learning objectives.

4. Course overview

4.1. Aims of this course

Based on the needs analysis conducted before the course and the consideration of the target learners' previous learning experience, current needs and future objectives, this ESBP course was designed with the aim of improving the trainees' skills in business English use so that they would be successful in their career.

4.2. Objectives of this course

The objectives of this course were established on the NA of the target learners. After the completion of this course, the participants are expected to be able to:

- communicate in the real international business world and working environment with a wide range of business vocabulary and communicative skills in English
- read the business correspondence, reports, newspapers and various charts or tables in English successfully
- write the business letters or reports in different genres in English
- listen to and grasp the key information in the business negotiation or meeting
- narrate the information fluently and precisely in English

The course aims and objectives seemed highly appropriate since it has a high degree of "face validity" for both the learners and employers. They also provide a "high surrender value", meaning that the students will be able to immediately use what they have learned to accomplish their jobs more effectively (Edwards, 2000, p.292).

4.3 Type of course

A learning-centered approach is highly recommended for the ESBP course (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This ESBP course is designed as an intensive course in which a mixture of both immediate and delayed needs is targeted. It is noteworthy that this course is a flexible negotiated one which lives with any change resulting from the ongoing needs analysis and course evaluation.

4.4 Target learners

This course was designed for a group (about 16 persons) of newly-recruited front-line international business personnel who are working for Eurasia Trading Co. Ltd. They are generally fresh college graduates aged from 25 to 30 and have learned English for several years since middle school. The English courses they received before were mainly general English involving the basic listening, speaking, writing and reading skills. As BA holders, all the participants have passed the College English Test Band-6 and have an intermediate level of English language proficiency.

4.5. Course duration

The course lasted two months (sixteen 2-hour workshops on weekends). Each session was composed of 1 hour lecture plus a one-hour tutorial. Although the courses were only delivered on the weekends, the on-line communication tools, such as MSN, E-MAIL etc, were used as alternatives to solve the trainees' learning problems on the weekdays.

4.6. Teaching materials

Cotton, Falvey and Kent's (2005) *Market leader* and Xu's (2007) *English for business communication* were selected as the reference books, because the contents of the two books cover all the aspects of English language skills the learners needed. Apart from the teaching materials selected from the two textbooks, these documents collected by the course designer during the process of observation were exploited to make the course more relevant and efficient. These authentic materials were customized to ensure that the English language skills learned were relevant to the trainees' needs and could be applied in practice immediately.

4.7. Teaching methods

The ESBP course design should include a combination of teaching methodologies suitable for the BE proficiency of the learners. In recent years, task-based approach (Zeng, 2003), content-based approach (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989), case study methodology (Boyd, 1991; Estaban & Pérez Cañado, 2004; Jackson, 2004) and discourse and genre analysis method (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002; Pinto dos Santos, 2002) have been put into widespread use and explored thoroughly to improve the teaching outcomes of Business English. The predominant forms of methodology employed in this course were; the case study method, the task-based approach for problem-solving activities; and discourse/genre analysis-based approach for a variety of workplace-based (real-life working situations in Eurasia Trading Company) spoken and written interactions.

The course was designed as a series of 3-hour workshops with a range of case activities to reflect the real working situation of the participants and thus keep them engaged in their learning. Borrowed from the 'case study' approach of professional business courses (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p.192), it is now widely used for Business English teaching since it "sits comfortably within ESP principles… it is activity based, often uses authentic material and involves learners in both individual and group work…it is a multi-skilled approach…"(Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p.193). Based on real-life problematic business situations, the 'case method' requires students to analyze, discuss and make decisions, all of which means they must "use language meaningfully and spontaneously...(and)…participate in role-playing" (Estaban & Pérez Cañado, 2004, p.138). Role-plays or simulations, based on these real-life working situations in Eurasia Trading Company, enabled the ESBP

trainees to engage in a variety of real-life international business activities.

Discourse/genre analysis was used in this ESBP course to analyze the business correspondence, international trade documents, business reports and proposals etc, for the purposes of understanding and producing them. As Paltridge has advocated, through genre analysis, students not only can learn language skills but also acquire the knowledge of the culture, circumstances, purposes, and motives that prevail in particular settings because these factors impact on the language choices made by the writer (2001, p.7). Genre analysis of business documents in this course, which served to identify textual features and create models, was based on the Pinto dos Santos' (2002) "Genre analysis of business letters of negotiation". After mastering the skills to reproduce these authentic model texts in the classroom, the learners were expected to work on their own real examples in the workplace. These real examples were required to bring to a subsequent workshop to assess and correct.

4.8. Contents of this course

The contents of this course include ten major areas (for details see the following table). The course contents were established on the modifications of the two course books and the analysis of the authentic learning materials.

Table 1 The contents of this course

Areas	***Topics***
1. Telephoning/teleconferencing	Answering/transferring phone calls, taking messages, listening

	skills, clarifying skills (numbers and spelling)
2. Introductions	Greetings, introducing people, hosting foreign visitors, small talks, introducing local cultures, arranging itineraries, etc.
3. Product presentations	Describing product specifications, introducing new technologies, suggesting market strategies, describing market trends (presenting facts and figures), etc.
4. Cross-cultural communication	Introducing cultural differences in communication, lifestyles, gestures, taboo topics, etiquettes, table manners etc.
5. Business meetings	Chairing a meeting, turn-taking, showing agreements/disagreements, note-taking skills, summarizing, etc.
6. Business correspondence	Writing to show invitations and confirmations, to inform/advise, to persuade, to report good/bad news, to send out ultimatums, etc.

7. Business report writing	Writing marketing proposals and meeting minutes
8. Business documents reading	Deciphering legal documents (contracts, terms and conditions, etc.), market reports, safety specifications, tender specifications, etc.
9. Business negotiations	Negotiating on the prices, the shipment, the condition of the business deal, etc.
10. International communication	Communicating with foreign business partners successfully.

5. Syllabus type

The contemporary development of the syllabus design has shifted from distinctive approaches to mixed, multi-dimensional approaches with the goal of best adapting to particular learning/teaching situations and aims (Breen, 2001). The syllabus, as a core component in the ESP course, is "an explicit and coherent plan" (Feez & Joyce, 1998, p.2). The design of an ESBP course syllabus is a complex procedure which normally consists of four elements: aims, content, methodology and evaluation (Breen, 2001). There is an obvious change on the design of the syllabus shifting from focusing on the linguistic knowledge and four basic language skills to functional movements (Breen, 2001). Jordan (1997) classified the syllabus into three broad categories: content or

product, skills, and method or process (for details see the following table).

Table 2 Categories of syllabi

Broad Category	Breakdown
content or product	grammatical or structural syllabus, notional-functional syllabus, situational syllabus, topic syllabus, content-based syllabus
Skills	Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing.
method or process	process syllabus procedural or task-based syllabus, learning-centered or negotiated syllabus

"A multi-layered syllabus which is composed of the three complementary, closely interwoven strands of functions, topics and vocabulary" (Edwards, 2000) was designed for this course. The integrated multi-strand syllabus features in the combination of different aspects of language for maximal comprehensiveness and the accordance with specific target situations as well as the needs of the learners. According to the course objectives and the results of need analysis, the situational syllabus and notional-functional syllabus (Brown, 1995) were established. The situational syllabus takes the real-life contexts of language uses as its basis. It was designed to teach the BE skills that occur in situations related to and the communicative skills involved in

the international business setting. The functional syllabus, which developed alongside the notional syllabus, was mainly focusing on teaching students the social functions of BE to deal with the elements such as invitation, apologies, suggestions, etc.

Intrinsically, the ESBP course syllabus is scaffolded by English written and oral skills. So the English grammar and vocabulary knowledge were incorporated into the syllabus. This is inspired by Paltridge's espousal of using whole texts to teach language while looking at how "meanings are expressed at the level of grammar and vocabulary" (2001, p. 92).

6. Course framework

The results of needs analysis were drawn on in specifying the content of the course, the syllabus type, and teaching methodologies, which are displayed in the framework of the course (For details see Table 3).

Table 3 Course framework

Target Events	**Rhetorical Awareness and Skill Areas**	**Language Usage** (cultural issues incorporated)	**Functions**	**Materials**	**Topics**
Telephoning / Telecon-ferencing (2 Sessions)	Getting through the call, exchanging information, leaving message, clarifying skills (numbers and letters)	**VOCABULARY**: dial, transfer to, hold the line, available…. **GRAMMAR**: questions, modals, time clause, **EXPRESSIONS**: This is…/Could I speak to …?/Hold on a moment, please. **CULTURAL ISSUES**: formality, politeness.	Answering the call, making contact, requesting, checking identity, offering/asking for information, confirming, making excuses, stating dissatisfaction	Textbooks; Video clips; Authentic records.	A Successful Sales Call
		VOCABULARY:	Opening the	Textbooks;	How to use

Business conference (2 Sessions)	Arranging business meetings and prepare the agenda.	words related to business meeting. **GRAMMAR:** modal verbs, verb tenses, conditional forms, connectors **EXPRESSIONS:** get down to the business, move on, leave aside, hold on, hang on, how do you feel about…, to sum up **CULTURAL ISSUES**: use of titles and names in different cultures	meeting, arouse reactions and discussion, dealing with interruptions, keeping to the point, speeding up, slowing down, summarizing,	Video clips; Authentic meeting report.	English in business meetings; Press Conference
Business negotiation (4 Sessions)	set up contract draft and bargain, negotiating, problem-solving, decision-making	**VOCABULARY**: words for negotiation and counter-offer **EXPRESSIONS**: Inquiring about products and prices, Negotiating the order **CULTURAL ISSUES**: use of gestures in different cultures, taboo/controversial topics	Negotiating procedure, supporting an argument, agreeing, disagreeing, expressing advantages/disadvantages, making suggestions	Textbooks; Authentic business letter for negotiation; Records	Bargaining in English; Signing a contract
Presenta-tions (2 Sessions)	structure presentations demon-strate a presentation The product launch meeting	**VOCABULARY:** words on product's specification, words attracting attention **EXPRESSIONS:** the structure of the presentation **CULTURAL ISSUES**: Use of humor, body languages and voice/intonation	Focusing on the important points organizing the presentation, delivering intention, introducing new products	Textbooks; Video clips; Product brochure;	Making a Presentation in English; New product launch
Business correspon-dence	Writing business letters in different	**VOCABULARY:** Common abbreviations and terms in the	Making an enquiry, offer, counter-offer, order; giving thanks,	Textbooks; Authentic business letters;	Business communication via E-mail

(4 Sessions)	genres, writing of faxes, e-mails	international trade practice. **EXPRESSIONS:** Business letter format, formal sentence patterns,	apology, expressing dissatisfaction or complaining, promoting action		
Socializing (2 Sessions)	communicative skills Introducing, common interests, leave-taking,	**EXPRESSIONS:** Greeting the visitors; Renewing a relationship; Entertaining visitors **CULTURAL ISSUES**: Cultural awareness, politeness, stress and intonation, formulae	Greeting people, introducing yourself, responding, thanking, complimenting	Textbooks; Handouts; Video clips.	Receiving foreign guests

7. Evaluation and assessment

7.1 Learners' assessment

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) stressed that the assessment of the learners serves two main purposes: measuring the learners' current knowledge about the content and providing a positive feedback to both the learners and the teacher about what the learners still need to learn. It can provide an important input to the teaching content and methods of future work. Three types of assessments - placement tests, achievement tests and proficiency tests, are mainly used in the ESP course (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In this ESBP course, the proficiency test was given at the beginning of this course to diagnose the learners' business English proficiency. The continuous achievement tests were often internal to the whole process of learning in this course and the results were used to inform teachers of the individual learners' achievement of course objectives and what progress the participants have made. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p.210) claimed that the

learners in the ESP course should be assessed on their performance when using English in target situations. Thus, the skills studied intensively at the beginning of the week were required to be applied in the learners' real workplace immediately. The feedback on problems or success was discussed in the following workshop. In order to make the tasks as beneficial as possible to the learners, the assessment tasks designed took the forms of writing two or more international trade documents and completing actual work-based projects. These assessment tasks were assembled into a portfolio which was reviewed in last session of the course.

7.2 Course evaluation

Course evaluation has to be built in as part of the course design. Evaluation of ESP courses focuses on the effectiveness and efficiency of the course in meeting the learner needs and achieving the proposed objectives of the course. Two kinds of evaluations, summative and formative evaluations (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), were used in this course. The former took place at or after the end of an activity while the latter was ongoing and typically undertaken at intervals. The course evaluation analyzed the variables affecting the course design and implementation. The information for evaluation of the present course was gathered by: i) the results of learners' assessment; ii) the learners appraisal on course framework, materials and teaching methods (a questionnaire was distributed to the learners at the end of this course); iii) the trainers' reflective report (it was conducted by the trainer during the teaching process); iv) informal interviews with some randomly selected learners, the manager and HR of the company. Information collected by different means was analyzed. The final formal feedback on the progress of the participants and the evaluation of the course were

submitted to Eurasia Trading Co. Ltd to demonstrate that the ESBP course had fulfilled the business English learning goals of the company's newly recruited employees.

8. Discussion

The trainees and the manager of the company are quite satisfied with this ESBP course according to the course evaluation conducted at the end of this training. However, several trainees have suggested in the course evaluation sheet that more professional international business knowledge should be added into the the ESBP course. This suggestion has made the course designer think deeply. Two puzzles have held his attention and need to be further explored.

Puzzle 1: Should an ESP course be a course of English language learning or a course of specialized knowledge learning?

Both Strevens (1988) and Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) agreed with one of the absolute characteristics of ESP, that is, ESP should be centered on language suitable to those contents in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics and the language skills. On the contrary, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) defined ESP as an approach rather than a product. They claimed that ESP does not only focus on a particular kind of language, teaching materials or methodology, but also emphasizes the function of this course because it must meet the needs of the learners who seek to fulfill their future goals by learning an ESP course. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) again pointed out the goal-directed nature of ESP. Similarly, Robinson (1991) stressed that "the role of English in ESP is just a medium", which indicates that the aim of ESP should help the learners to obtain the specific kind of knowledge under the help of English.

Puzzle 2. Can we really 'learn two in one' in an ESP course?

Optimists and those who contend there is no sense arguing about whether ESP should be a course of English or of specialized knowledge believe that learners can obtain both in one ESP course. The definition of ESP in their mind might be a dual-goal course in which a learner can fulfill the tasks of improving English proficiency and learning specialized knowledge. In theory, this can be a perfect assumption, but in practice it has been proved that a learner with the so-called dual-goal pursuit may end up in achieving neither. According to a survey on 72 English majors in Chongqing University, China (Wu et al, 2004), 66.6% of them felt dissatisfied with the EBP course because the teacher kept switching between conveying specialized information in business and explaining language points in class which greatly interfered with their concentration and focus, and thus resulted in poor outcomes.

9. Conclusions

This paper presents a tailored ESBP training course for international business personnel in a Chinese international trading company with the guidance of the ESP theories in course design. The principles and practices that lie behind ESBP course design in terms of the needs analysis, syllabus, assessment and evaluation are discussed in this paper. ESBP course design aims to meet the learners' particular business English language needs in a specialized field. To achieve the objectives, the course designer has to, based on the needs analysis, make the best use of the syllabus, materials, teaching methodology, and course evaluation. Modification, of course, is also necessary to the whole teaching process. Teaching ESBP is more than just presenting language items or skills or strategies. It is actually the content of what is learnt that is important. This ESBP course, which takes English

language as the carrier and combines it with the core business knowledge, has been proven to be fairly effective because it responds to the learning needs of trainees and helps the learners succeed in their career in the international business field.

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Appendix I

We guarantee that all the information you provide on this questionnaire is used to design this English for Specific Business course only and it will be kept strictly confidential.

Questionnaire for Trainees

Name:	Sex: □male □female	Age:
Educational background:		
The main business scope of the company:		
English proficiency: □CET6 □CET4 □TOEFL □IELTS □Other_____		
Work experience: □3～5 years □1～3 years □one year or less		
The most important business English skill for you : □telephone communication □Taking part in meetings and discussions (such as business negotiation) □Socializing □reading and writing business letters, faxes, e-mails		
You communicate in business English mainly: □face to face □by telephone □by letters including Email		
Your purpose of improving business English skills for:		

□business letters □business negotiation □regular talk □business report
You previous English learning experiences and suggestion for this proposed course:
Self-assessment of English proficiency and the current use of English in your daily life (such as in what situation will you use English? and How often do you use the English etc.).
What do you lack most in business English communication in your workplace?

Expectation of this training course:
Request of learning conditions: (time, learning environment, etc.)
Other needs and request:

Thanks for you patience and time!

Appendix II

Course Evaluation Sheet

Your honest comments on this course are appreciated. Read each statement below, and tick a number that indicate your opinion of the statement:

	1 = quite disappointed	2= not satisfied	3 = just O.K.	4 = satisfied	5= completely satisfied
Your opinion of the final outcome of this course in general	1	2	3	4	5
Achievement of the objectives	1	2	3	4	5
Fulfillment of the learners' needs	1	2	3	4	5
Course contents and framework	1	2	3	4	5
Course arrangement	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching materials	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching methods	1	2	3	4	5

Teaching activities	1	2	3	4	5
Classroom arrangement	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher and tutor	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Learning environment	1	2	3	4	5

Please state your reasons in case of "not satisfied" and "extremely satisfied".

_____

_____

_____

1. Which part of the course do you like best? Why?

_____

_____

2. Which aspect of the course are you not satisfied with? What are your suggestions for improving it?

_____

_____

3. What other contents do you think should be added into this course?

_____

_____

4. What do you benefit form this course? How do you think the course will influence your future life?

_____

_____

5. Any other comments and suggestions.

_____

_____

Thanks for you patience and time!

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THE ASIAN ESP JOURNAL

Title

Teaching Business English in China: Views on the Case-based Teaching in Intercultural Business Communication

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Abstract

This paper reviews Business English teaching in China and especially intercultural business communication teaching. The objective is to explore the case-based method for Chinese students who are non-native speakers of English at a time when the teaching of Business English is not fully developed. The discussions justify case-based teaching by suggesting that it fully integrates what capabilities are expected of Business English students and what teachers do to implement this method.

Key words. Business English, intercultural business communication, case-based method

Introduction

Business English is considered as a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in English teaching (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Hutchinson and Waters (2002) add that ESP should be considered as an

approach instead of a product. No specific teaching materials can be labeled as perfect ESP textbooks and teaching with emphasis on students' need is preferable. Teaching methods should be determined by the needs to motivate students to achieve better outcomes in their studies. Zhang (2007) provides a working definition of Business English, which refers to how to communicate within the context of international business where practitioners employ strategies required to reach their goals by multi-means of communication tools. The characteristics of Business English are proposed by Ellis and Johnson (1994, p. 7) as "a sense of purpose", "social aspects" and "clear communication". They explain that language is used in business meetings and discussions to achieve desired outcomes. The purpose is quite clear towards the business goals. Furthermore, businesspeople have to communicate with others from different cultural backgrounds.

At present, Business English is recognized as one of the most popular disciplines in China. According to Zhu (2009), there are at least 800 higher education institutions where Business English is taught as a major or a course. Despite the booming of Business English in China, theoretical guidance in this subject is falling far behind and the teaching varies enormously among different universities (Zhang, 2007). The traditional "grammar-translation" concept of teaching English for general purpose in China is used in Business English teaching, resulting in the students' failure in communicating effectively in relevant business situations. As a consequence, the transformation of attitudes towards Business English from language or skill improvement to communicative competence has an enormous impact on the teaching of Business English in China (Zhang, 2007). However, what is appropriate teaching material and how to teach is undergoing changes and subjected to modification all the time (Crosling & Ward, 2002).

Meanwhile, it has become a common concern in Business English teaching to raise students' awareness of the importance of the cultural dimension in international business (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). Most recently, the "Curriculum Design for Business English Undergraduate Program in China" has been under heated discussion and it has been stated by Wang (2009) that the learning objectives for students of Business English include "linguistic knowledge and skills, business knowledge, intercultural communication competence, and comprehensive humanistic qualities". Intercultural communication competence has been assuming more importance and has been included into the curriculum in many Chinese universities (Business English Teaching & Research Network, 2010). Almost all universities are stepping up reforms to develop new curricula, adding more communication-related content into the courses they provide. An evaluation of the performance of the teaching of intercultural business communication becomes an important mechanism to promote the learning outcome of Business English students.

The purpose of this study is to look into the intercultural business communication teaching in Chinese universities. A general overview of culture teaching in Business English, with the focus on case-based method, including potential factors affecting application of this teaching technique is presented. Discussions about the perceptions on this course could have valuable implications for teachers to modify both their teaching content and method for more effective and efficient teaching in the future.

Intercultural Business Communication

Rugman and Collinson (2006) define international business as "the study of transactions taking place across national borders for the purpose of satisfying the needs of individuals and organizations."

Communication here encompasses all factors for both home and host cultures. The term "intercultural communication" was initiated by Edward T. Hall in 1959 and terms such as international, multicultural and intercultural are used interchangeably (Chaney & Martin, 2007, p. 2).

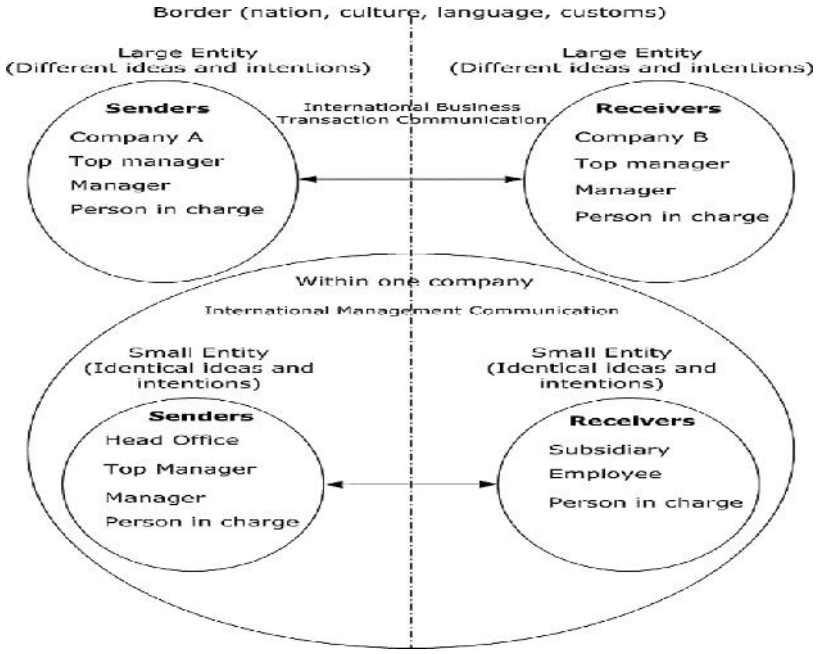

Figure 1. Intercultural Business Communications adapted from Kameda, N (2005)

As seen in Kameda's diagram, there are two layers of meanings for intercultural business communication. In international business communication, one is communication between two independent

businesses and the other is communication that takes place within a multinational corporation that crosses borders (Kameda, 2005). The different value systems of two multinational companies as well as the different subculture of head office with subsidiaries abroad require much flexibility and adaptability for business practitioners in terms of communication capability.

Bogorya (1985) defines Intercultural communication as "the process of exchange of ideas, feelings, symbols and meanings to help people learn how to interact in the intercultural context". Miscommunications resulting from inadequate cultural knowledge about other parties involved can be a serious stumbling block for successful communication in business (Browaeys & Price, 2008, p. 256). Kim (1991, cited by Browarys & Price, 2008) defines intercultural communication competence as:

> The overall internal ability of an individual to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication: namely cultural differences and unfamiliarity, inter-group posture, and the accompanying experience of stress. (p.315)

Despite the burgeoning concept of cultural convergence, sameness of values and attitudes held by people from different parts of the world can never be easily overstated. The hidden presence of misunderstanding, resulting from an inability to communicate successfully, exists. Intercultural awareness, therefore, carries much weight in international business communication practices. And these differences must be appropriately handled by learning communication skills over and above language improvement.

Intercultural Business Communication Teaching

Learning content

Culture can be categorized into knowledge culture and communicative culture as its functions indicate (Zhang, 1983). Knowledge culture refers to the linguistic aspects of verbal and non-verbal knowledge in certain cultural environments while communicative culture is characterized by knowledge affecting the communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. Lack of communicative culture knowledge is most likely to hinder intercultural communication. The communicative aspect of cultural knowledge should be incorporated into the teaching content for successful communication outcome with combination of students' language use and culturally appropriate behavior.

Wu (1989, quoted in Zhao & Jiang, 2003, p. 232) points out that communicative culture comprises three layers: linguistic and pragmatic communicative culture, non-verbal communication culture, and conceptual communicative culture. The first layer is focused on the linguistic level and is manifested in ways such as how to address and apologize, and this aspect of cultural content has been widely taught in cultural teaching classes. Nonverbal communication, mentioned by Ferraro (2010, p. 82), includes meta-communication, paralinguistic, second-order messages, the silent languages, and the hidden dimension of communication, among other terms. The widely found contents of non-verbal communication are facial expressions, hand gestures, proxemics, time, silence, and so on. These non-verbal cues are helpful in interpreting the linguistic messages delivered. As a matter of fact, 65 percent of information in communication is conveyed through non-verbal mode such as body language, while only 35 percent, through verbal means (Zhao & Jiang, 2003, p. 204). It is, therefore, important to remember that the chances of succeeding in communicating and

reaching their business goals will be greater if business people foster a deep understanding of non-verbal knowledge in the international business environment.

Every act we do and every idea or value we hold on to is culturally bound. The deep structure of culture can be seen in many aspects of life for people of different civilizations, such as religion based value systems. Various approaches of classifying cultures are introduced among which, Hall's high context versus low context theory as well as Hofstede's five dimensions of national culture have been gaining great popularity and are widely quoted in cross cultural research. The context theory proposed by Hall (1989) states:

> A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. (p. 91)

Hofstede (2010) develops a multi-dimension model by which countries are classified along five cultural dimensions: Individualism versus collectivism (IDV), High versus Low Power Distance (PDI), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) and Long-term Orientation (LTO). This research provides those working in international business with insights into cultural dimension of people's life and is instrumental in reducing confusion, ambiguity and even avoidance of breakdown when interacting with people from other cultures.

All dimensions of culture mentioned above are influencing business activities and the cultural dimension of international business can be included in topics of great diversity in culture teaching class (e.g. business writing; interviewing and telephoning; business presentation). Notably, much literature over the issues of international business communication research is focused on the cross cultural negotiation communication (Gulbro & Herbig, 1996; Ghauri & Usunier, 2003; Lin & Miller, 2003; Fujio, 2004), and knowledge concerning negotiation process and strategies to succeed in complex intercultural communication scenarios. Meanwhile, some detailed aspects such as silence between US and Japanese negotiators are also well examined. As a consequence, cross-cultural business negotiation has become an important subject in Business English teaching.

Learning objective

One key element for Business English learners is "the awareness of appropriate language and behavior for the cultures and situations in which they will operate" (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 35). The culture teaching is, therefore, to help students communicate effectively in international business situations by fostering their intercultural competence rather than teaching knowledge of international cultures with relevance of doing business.

The intercultural competence is viewed by Chen and Starosta (1996, p. 362) with three dimensional models of intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity and intercultural adroitness. Intercultural awareness is the cognitive dimension which aims at understanding the similarities and differences between cultures. Intercultural sensitivity is the affective dimension that refers to the emotional desire of one's acceptance of cultural differences. And intercultural adroitness

represents the behavioral dimension that improves one's ability to communicate successfully in intercultural interactions

Culture teaching has become one important part in Business English teaching in Chinese universities and similar goals have been made clear in the National Curricula for English teaching (2000), stating that foreign language teaching should cultivate students' "intercultural communication competence", in addition to the accurate use of the language, and also develop their sensitivity, tolerance and flexibility in dealing with cultural differences in order to meet the growing need for international exchanges.

Teaching methodology

National Curricula for English Majors in Chinese universities (2000) states that the teaching method should be student-centered, led by teachers and focused on fostering students' learning ability and research capacity. Students should engage in a variety of task-based activities, which can stimulate their interest to learn and thus improve the learning outcome. As Ellis and Johnson (1994, p. 35) put it, Business English is characterized by its emphasis on performance, and it means "training learners to be operationally effective."

General guidelines for culture teaching have been proposed by Zhao and Jiang (2003, p. 269) and they are: communication principle, cultural background of language, the comparative principle, developmental stages of culture teaching, typical culture and proper contents and quantity. They put forward five teaching methods accordingly and they are integration of language and culture, background introduction, intensive culture teaching, cultural comparison, and communicative culture.

Gui (1988, p. 138) mentions three teaching methods and they are cultural aside, cultural assimilators and cultural capsules. Cultural aside

refers to the integration of cultural factors into the language teaching. Cultural assimilators are used to analyze and seek out solutions to cultural conflicts. Cultural capsules are study of an article concerning foreign cultural knowledge. Hu (1982) also proposes methods of cultural teaching and he points out the importance of using authentic cultural materials and multimedia tools in culture teaching.

Case-based Teaching in Business English Education Rationale

Case-based teaching was introduced into management courses in Harvard University and it involves real life situation analysis and discussion (Robinson, 1991, p. 50). The heart of case-based teaching is the case which is defined as ‘‘a description of an actual situation, commonly involving a decision, a challenge, an opportunity, a problem or an issue faced by a person (or persons) in an organization.’’(Mauffette-Leenders et al., 1997, cited by Jackson, 2004, p. 214). This method of teaching has been widely used in business related courses (Barnes et al., 1994). What is exactly a case method has been documented by a lot of scholars and the key concepts of the definition overlap (Esteban & Canado, 2004, p. 138). It can be summarized as a problem solving task and essential skill improvement in ESP practice. Given a virtual business situation with relevant issues needed in the case, students are asked to analyze, communicate and determine feasible courses of action. Boyd (1991, p. 729) proposes that case-based teaching can be one of the best teaching models for Business English students and should be included in terms of course design and classroom activity .

The benefits of case-based teaching have been discussed widely and one of its prominent advantages, proposed by Grosse (1988), is to increase students’ communication competence, which requires that (Terrell, 1983, cited by Underwood, 1984, p. 20) students should

understand the essence of what is said in a real communicative environment and can respond with appropriate use of the language without errors interfering with communication. Because business students do not receive adequate education in terms of problem solving in real business situations (Lee et al., 2002), case method, thus, can bridge the gap between the theoretical teaching and real world practice (Asbaugh & Kasten, 1995). Cunningsworth (1995, p. 135) considers that the elements of a case task simulating a real life scenario should be included in teaching. Jackson (1998) lists other benefits of case-based methodology. For instance, students can express their views analytically and keep reflective in front of problems.

Materials

Since case-based methodology is an important tool for successful Business English classes, the selection of case materials must be carefully considered. According to Jackson (1998), the first feature is its connection with the course objective. Students should be able to easily identify how the case links with the teaching objective. Secondly, the case should motivate students' interest in getting involved by its clear and compelling content and means of working the case out. Another feature for a good case is its complexity level. A case with complexity in some way reflects the real life situation and requires in-depth analysis from students based on critical thinking rather than one simple answer. Last but not least, the case should include generalized features to help students transfer what he or she learns from the case into their future study or work.

Ellis and Johnson (1994, p. 125) point out that student learners in colleges have different learning objectives from those of experienced business people. Therefore, the relevance of materials to future work, the language proficiency of students, the age and cultural background,

and the method of delivering the case materials should all be taken into consideration. As a means of motivating students, cases chosen should be credible, up-to-date and attractive (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 127).

Implementation

How to implement case method can vary according to different education needs. For instance, Westerfield (1989) suggests that students should be exposed to a problem and come up with solutions after their careful analysis and active participation in discussion. Alternatively, the possible solutions to a case are there already awaiting the assessment from students with their knowledge in mind. As for the case provided, Mascolini and Freeman (1982) propose open cases, where students have to collect information by all means on their own. The alternative is a closed case where the scenario has been predesigned.

In terms of material presentation, Tang and Austin (2009, p. 1243) maintain that teachers do not use just one way such as lecture as a method in class; technologies are facilitating the teaching mainly by means of Projector, PowerPoint, Video, the Internet, and Lecture. Materials can encompass a spectrum of sources such as films, Web sites, newspaper and other printed materials. This multimedia use can motivate students' interest and, meanwhile, provide a more realistic business-like environment. The use of internet especially brings easy access to plentiful culture-based materials needed for the class.

Implementation of this method can take various forms. For instances, reading and discussing authentic materials with culture-loaded information from the native speaking community engages students in authentic cultural experiences. Another more motivational tool is business simulations which Martin (2000) describes as a link between abstract ideas and real life scenarios; a good approach to learning by doing. The simulation can be performed in either in-context (real life)

or out-of-context (unreal) role plays and train the learners' interpersonal skills like cooperation and leadership (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 124).

Evaluation

Evaluating the quality of students' performance can be a daunting task in case-based teaching (Cossom, 1991). Welty (1989, p. 49) holds the view that it is a challenge for teachers to grade the students' performance in case-based studies, and he proposes methods such as rewarding continuous participation and sharing concerns with colleagues. Jackson (1998, p. 159) argues that "whatever assessment schemes are adopted, they should reflect the goals and special features of case-based learning." For instance, self evaluation and peer feedback can be used for students to reflect upon their performance. At the same time, teachers, guiding the whole case study process, can offer advice on students' performance with sound logic and viable solutions. The teacher's helpful feedback on student's performance is essential in identifying whether they have communicated effectively and managed to clarify misunderstandings (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 39).

Challenges

Despite the advantages mentioned above, the case study approach is by no means an easy task to carry out. It is challenging for both teachers and students. Jackson (1998) considers that case-based methodology can be difficult to implement because it will take more time to prepare and evaluate, and the appropriate ESP teaching material is not easily accessible. Meanwhile, students face challenges, such as pre-reading of materials and participation in the communication process (Boyd, 1991). In the meantime, the relation between teacher and students can influence case-based learning also. In China, for instance, respect for teachers and their wisdom is necessary to keep harmony (Liu, 2006, p.

8) and this can make it more difficult for both students and teachers to interact more effectively. Apart from the human related perspective, Piotrowski (1989) believes that the physical environment should be suitable for efficient communication. However, despite so many difficulties that exist in this approach, the result can be positive with teachers' considerate thinking in the preparatory stage and on-going hard work from both teachers and students (Jackson, 1998).

Discussion and Conclusions

Business English has been attracting more awareness and research by scholars from home and abroad. This paper clarifies the concept and importance of culture teaching in Business English education. Apart from the contents for teaching, culture study in the communicative environment is recommended in order to foster learners' cross cultural communication competence. This communicative model of culture teaching justifies the case-based teaching model. And to effectively employ case-based teaching in intercultural business communication classes, the characteristics of the method must be fully understood when applied to Business English teaching. Zhang (2007, p. 407) points out that Business English teaching should be the integration of three fields – business knowledge, business discourse and business practice. But the three aspects are often treated as independent areas of study and not a coherent whole. Case-based study in intercultural business communication serves as a good example of how to integrate the three aspects of capacity training based on the fact that this communicative practice requires knowledge of the subject matter (e.g. business negotiation、marketing), the linguistic proficiency, and the strategies adopted in the process.

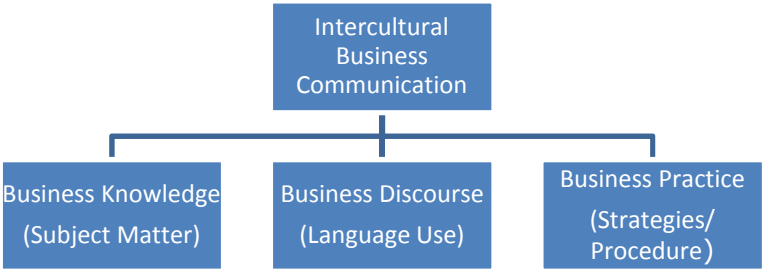

Figure 2. A coherent structure of intercultural business communication

Students cannot be simply silent recipients of knowledge in this process and they have to fully use English in the context of specified business fields to solve problems with appropriate strategies. During this process, of course, teachers are expected to be in control of the situation. In fact, from both advantages and limits of case-based teaching discussed in this paper, it can be concluded that the teacher's role is the determining factor in the entire process of carrying out the case study.

Teachers are supposed to understand well what the students need to do in this course from at least two perspectives: course related needs and future career needs (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 72). For both purposes, the major elements for teachers to determine are activities and tasks, interaction, topic, attitude and tones, mode of interaction and setting. The second concern is the materials used in case teaching. Due to the lack of materials development, Business English teachers, especially those from language teaching background with little hands-on experience in certain business fields, have to use non-authentic

materials with language and skills differing from real business practice (Chan, 2009, p. 126). Teachers, therefore, should fully explore the sources available for suitable case materials and even, as Jackson (1998, p. 160) suggests, develop cases by drawing on personal or others' experiences, to produce "real world" cases that can be practiced in classroom. Writing and teaching one's own case can motivate both teachers and students and result in good learning outcomes. Another important aspect associated with teacher is management style and relation to students in the case study. No matter what personality, background a teacher possesses, he or she should manage the case study in accordance with the needs of the students. The learner's expectation of teachers also varies due to cultural differences (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 187). Some learners may expect teachers to dominate the case tasks while others may wish to contribute to the case study. Some hope that teachers can correct mistakes occurring during the communication process while in other cultures, pointing out mistakes directly may result in a loss of face and should be avoided. In the Chinese learning environment, for example, respect for wisdom and knowledge makes it hard for students to challenge the authority of teachers (Liu, 2006, p. 8). Experiments by Liu (2006, p. 11) shows that "Chinese students are willing to adopt an open and participative approach to learning because it allows them to understand theories and practices from multiple perspectives and relate them to their own experience." Consequently, the communicative approach teaching like case-based method should be employed despite the cultural restraints in Business English teaching in Chinese universities. Last but not least, the teaching can be progressed with the improvement of teachers themselves. Continuous acquisition of current knowledge in business, communication, and foreign language education, especially in Business English research, can equip teachers with more competence to implement the case-based method well.

Business English education will be hampered without research and development. With increasing numbers of both pre-experienced learners in universities and learners working in various business fields, more research and discussions on Business English and methods of teaching should be conducted to identify learner needs and their performance. Case-based methodology, as one of the most effective approaches in business communication courses, should be fully implemented as a matter of urgency. With integration and application of this method into Business English teaching, in particular in cultivating learners' intercultural business communication competence, students will be equipped with greater confidence and competence when communicating in a cross-cultural business context.

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Title

The Effects of Listening Styles on Business English Listening Performances of Non-English Majors in China

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Abstract

The current study classifies listening styles into three types: analytic, global and synthetic (Kirby, 1988). Based on the three models of listening comprehension processes of bottom-up, top-down and interactive (Richards, 1987), this study examines the effects of listening styles of non-English major students in China on Business English (BE) listening performance.

The findings show that the subjects with analytic style account for the largest proportion while the subjects with global style account for the smallest proportion. Advanced learners tend to adopt synthetic listening styles and they perform better than the analytic and global style listeners. The findings also confirm a linear correlation between listening style and language proficiency while both of them significantly influence Business English (BE) listening comprehension performance.

The teaching implications are of two folds. First, since different students have different listening habits and styles, teachers could tailor teaching methodologies to suit listening styles. Second, it is advisable for teachers to help students identify, understand and, if necessary, gradually change their listening style so that they can improve their BE listening comprehension performances.

Key words. Business English listening performance, listening style, Non-English major students, language proficiency, listening comprehension process

Introduction

Listening is important in communication. According to a survey made in the United States, 42 percent of a person's time is spent on listening, 32 percent on speaking, 15 percent on reading while only 11 percent on writing (Copper, 1995). Listening also plays a significant role in language acquisition. One of the key differences between successful and less successful acquirers lies in their ability to use listening as a means of acquisition. Successful acquirers may find it manageable to listen to naturally spoken language even though they don't fully understand it (Vandergrift, 1996).

Given the importance of listening in English acquisition and learning, more attention has been given to the learning and teaching of listening comprehension skills in China in recent years. According to the newly-revised National English Examination Syllabus, the speaking speed in the test has been quickened from 120 words per minute to 150 words per minute. The newly-reformed National Band Four English Test has increased the proportion of listening comprehension from 20 percent to 35 percent out of the total score.

However, to many Chinese university students, the ability in English listening comprehension is among the lowest compared to other skills such as reading and writing. Research done by Zeng Yajun (2009) showed that the top ten obstacles Chinese college students had in English listening are: speech rate, distraction, the inconsistence between the word they hear and the word they read, new words, the inability to catch certain information in the listening materials, nervous emotion, long sentences, background information, anxiety and the tone and pronunciation of the speaker. All the obstacles can be stigmatized as how information should be processed. The results are consistent with the findings of Flowerdew and Miller's research in 1992. Both of the research showed that the top three obstacles for students in listening practice are the vocabulary, the speech rate and the complexity of the sentence. Based on student's problems in listening and prior research it is believed that more research on listening comprehension ability, listening styles and listening strategies is not only necessary but carries theoretical and pedagogical significance in both China and other non-English speaking countries as well.

Key Concepts

Listening style is an important part of listening comprehension ability, which belongs to one category of the learning style. It is decided by many variables such as cognitive, affective and behavioral factors. In this research the focus is on the cognitive element of listening style. According to Weri (1995), the method through which listeners try to get the right answer lies with the way of how listeners think. The way of thinking determines listening styles that listeners will apply. Therefore, to identify and analyze listening styles is a necessary step to finding out how listeners think, i.e. how they process information.

Borrowing from the reading styles of Kirby (1988), in this research the listening styles are operationally divided into three categories: the analytic style, the global style and the synthetic style. Similar to Kirby's classification, in this paper the listening styles are defined based on the way listeners process information in the listening test and the strategies they adopt while listening. Analytic listeners are characterized by the bottom-up approach. They attach more importance to the identification of the words and the details of the text. Global listeners are characterized by the top-down approach. They rely on their prior knowledge. According to Kirby, analytic and global readers were unsuccessful as they did not have appropriate skills to deal with the information in reading tasks. However, this paper defines the synthetic listeners as the ones that can flexibly use appropriate listening strategies and shift between bottom-up and top-down processing to deal with text information. Thus synthetic style is an integration of pre-existing knowledge and language knowledge and is the most efficient listening style.

The information processing model can also be divided into three categories. The bottom-up model denotes that listeners build their understandings from the individual sounds or phonemes. Then they combine these smallest units of the acoustic message into words, which in turn make up larger units like the phrases, clauses and sentences. Schemata are hierarchically formed, from the most specific at the bottom to the most general at the top during the Bottom-up processing (Rubin, 1994). In the current study, the bottom-up processing is the underlying approach used by students of the analytic listening style.

The top-down model features that information at the higher levels may influence processing at the lower levels. Listeners make predictions based on higher level general schemata, and then search the input for information to fit into these practically satisfied, higher order

schemata (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). In the current study, the top-down processing is the underlying approach used by students of global listening style.

The interactive model is the simultaneous processing of background knowledge, contextual information and linguistic knowledge. This is considered the most efficient way of text processing (Rumelhart, 1977). In the current study, the interactive processing is the underlying approach used by students of synthetic listening style.

Research Questions and Methodology

In order to measure the subjects' listening styles, the study per se will make use of Oxford's Style Analysis Survey (SAS) and a questionnaire to determine the subjects' information processing type (See Appendix I). Since learning styles are relatively stable and pervasive, the same assumption is applied to one's listening style. Based on this stable characteristic, the study aims to conduct research on listening styles in the discourse setting of Business English (BE) so as to examine whether the results in the current study are consistent with that in previous relevant studies.

Language Proficiency (LP) is determined by the students' scores in English in the college entrance examination (See Appendix II). In this research, students are divided into three levels according to their performances in the entrance examination: level one: 120 below; level two: between 120 and 130; level three: 130 above[1].

Business English comprehension performance is measured by their scores obtained in a listening test of four listening passages from VOA news (See Appendix III). The first two passages are VOA special English news on Sino-EU relation and the Copenhagen Conference.

[1] The total paper score for China's National Entrance Exam English test is 150.

The other two passages are VOA standard news on investment in Africa and BRICs[2].

The research will analyze the relationship between listening styles of different language proficiency levels and BE passage listening comprehension performances of 141 newly enrolled non-English major students in UIBE[3] and try to find out to what extent the listening styles affect the listening performances in the BE context. It addresses the following two research questions:

(1) What are the listening styles employed by students at different English language proficiency levels?

(2) To what extent do listening styles and language proficiency levels influence BE listening comprehension performances?

First, the frequency analysis is carried out to classify the listening styles of the subjects. Then the description and one-way ANOVA analysis are adopted to analyze the relationship between listening styles and language proficiency levels. Finally the Multi-univariate analysis is conducted to analyze the relationship between listening styles (including language proficiency levels) and overall BE listening comprehension performances in general.

Research Findings and Discussion

QUESTION ONE

Overall description of listening styles

The first research question in this study is what listening styles are employed by students at different English language proficiency levels

[2] BRICs refer to four largest emerging economies in the world: Brazil, Russia, India and China.

[3] 141newly-enrolled undergraduate students are from University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) in Beijing, People's Republic of China.

while listening to BE passages. To answer this research question, the frequency description analysis is conducted. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Description of listening styles

Table 1 shows that students have three types of listening styles: the analytic, global and synthetic listening styles. Among 141 undergraduate students, 54 of them have analytic listening styles which account for 38.3%. They bear the characteristics of the bottom-up processing. 42 students adopt the global listening styles which account for 29.8%. They demonstrate the characteristics of top-down processing approach. The rest, 45 subjects, exhibit the synthetic listening styles accounting for 31.9%. The results show that undergraduate university students in China use three listening styles respectively during their BE listening comprehension. The analytic listening style seems to occupy a bigger share than the other two styles, a ratio of 38 percent to 30 percent to 32 percent, making a total of 100 percent.

This result is consistent with Xu and Li's study in 2009, in which listeners with all three listening styles were found in the General English listening comprehension test. In their study, 33.6 percent compared to our 32 percent of students adopt the synthetic listening

styles. However it contrasts from Kirby's research in 1988, in which he did not find any synthetic reading style readers despite the fact that studies by Rost (1990) proved that the processing strategies underlying effective reading had much in common with the processing strategies in effective listening. The authors attribute this sharp contrast in the research findings to two factors: one is the methodological differences adopted in the division of styles; the second is different age and proficiency levels of the research subjects.

Listening styles at different language proficiency levels

In order to analyze the relationship between listening styles of students and their language proficiency levels, a Multi-univariate analysis was conducted. As it is shown in Table 2, out of 47 students at level one, 28 adopt the analytic listening style, a majority of almost 60 percent; 11 adopt the global style and 8 adopt the synthetic style. As for students at level two, out of 47 students 15 adopt the analytic listening style; 16 adopt the global and synthetic style respectively, a rather even distribution of the three styles. But for students at level three, again out of 47 students, 11 adopt the analytic listening style; 15 adopt the global style and 21 have the synthetic style. Synthetic listeners become the largest proportion of 45 percent. This result shows a tendency of positive correlation between high language proficiency level and synthetic listening style; and between low language proficiency level and analytic and global listening style even though it is not clear whether the language proficiency among other variables can determine the listening (reading) style or vice versa.

To see statistically to what extent language proficiency level influences listening style, Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted. As it is shown in Table 3, the significant level is .004, smaller than .05. We can conclude that students' listening style is significantly correlated

with their language proficiency level. Students at level three (the highest language proficiency level) tend to adopt the synthetic listening style and students at level one (the lowest language proficiency level) tend to adopt the analytic listening style. Therefore, the advanced learners are able to combine the top-down and bottom-up processing in order to deal with listening comprehension problems.

Table 2 Listening style and language proficiency level

Table 3 Chi-Square tests for level and style

Further down the road there are significant differences between and among different listening styles of students at different language proficiency levels. To see which groups have statistically significant

differences, a post hoc test was conducted. According to Table 4, significant difference is observed between level one and level two, level one and level three students with the significant level of .008 and .000 respectively. However the listening style difference between level two and level three students is not statistically significant, as the significant level is .248.

Table 4 Multiple comparison on level and style

The findings per se in the current study are consistent with previous studies. Generally speaking, listening style is affected by the listeners' language proficiency level. English learners at higher language proficiency levels tend to have the synthetic listening style. They have larger vocabulary and more listening experiences. Thus they can flexibly choose the right processing approach to cope with various questions in the listening tests.

As it is asserted by Rumelhart (1977), the interactive process (synthetic style) integrating top-down and bottom-up processing is the most efficient way to process text information. They can constantly shift between bottom-up and top-down processing. Therefore, the synthetic listening style which is characterized by the interactive processing approach should be the most efficient style to deal with listening tests.

QUESTION TWO

Language proficiency level and BE listening performances

As for the relationship between language proficiency level and BE listening comprehension performance and between listening style and BE listening comprehension performance, Table 5 and 6 indicate that the higher the language proficiency (the synthetic style group) the higher the listening comprehension performances.

Table 5 Description of score and level

Variable		N	mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Total Score	Level 1	47	59.8936	11.67910	30.00	85.00
	Level 2	47	67.5532	14.70257	30.00	95.00
	Level 3	47	73.9362	12.55147	40.00	100.00
	Total	141	67.1277	14.17032	30.00	100.00
General Score	Level 1	47	7.8723	4.39178	.00	15.00
	Level 2	47	10.6383	4.73390	5.00	20.00
	Level 3	47	11.7021	5.34430	.00	20.00
	Total	141	10.0709	5.07043	.00	20.00
Detail Score	Level 1	47	52.1277	9.42618	25.00	70.00
	Level 2	47	56.9149	12.31618	25.00	80.00
	Level 3	47	62.0213	10.19695	30.00	80.00
	Total	141	57.0213	11.38575	25.00	80.00

As it is shown in Table 5, level three students have the highest mean of 73.94 out of the total score 100. Level one students have the lowest

mean of 59.89 out of the total score 100. Level two students have a middle mean of 67.55. To find out whether there is a significant difference among the three levels of students in their BE passage listening comprehension performances, a multi-univariate analysis was carried out.

According to Table 6, there are statistically significant differences in their BE listening comprehension performances between level one and two, level one and three, and between level two and three with the significant level of .001, .000 and .008 respectively.

Table 6 Multiple comparison on score and level

Variable	I-level	J-level	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Total score	Level 1	Level 2	-7.65957*	2.3596	.001
		Level 3	-14.0425*	2.3596	.000
	Level 2	Level 1	7.65957*	2.3596	.001
		Level 3	-6.3829*	2.3596	.008
	Level 3	Level 1	14.0426*	2.3596	.000
		Level 2	6.3830*	2.3596	.008
General Questions	Level 1	Level 2	-2.76596(*)	0.95339	.004
		Level 3	-3.82979(*)	0.95339	.000
	Level 2	Level 1	2.76596(*)	0.95339	.004
		Level 3	-1.06383	0.95339	.267
	Level 3	Level 1	3.82979(*)	0.95339	.000
		Level 2	1.06383	0.95339	.267
Detail questions	Level 1	Level 2	-4.78723(*)	1.99263	.018
		Level 3	-9.89362(*)	1.99263	.000
	Level 2	Level 1	4.78723(*)	1.99263	.018
		Level 3	-5.10638(*)	1.99263	.012
	Level 3	Level 1	9.89362(*)	1.99263	.000
		Level 2	5.10638(*)	1.99263	.012

Listening style and BE listening performances

Table 7 shows the relationship between the listening styles and BE listening performances. The analytic listeners have the lowest mean

score in the BE passage listening comprehension performances (57.22) while synthetic listeners have the highest score (75.67). The global listeners have a mean score of 70.71, higher than that of the analytic listeners but lower than that of the synthetic listeners.

Table 7 Descriptions of listening performance of different styles

Style	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Analytic	54	57.2222	11.60134	1.57874	30.00	90.00
Global	42	70.7143	12.95261	1.99863	35.00	100.00
Synthetic	45	75.6667	10.63869	1.58592	50.00	95.00
Total	141	67.1277	14.17032	1.19336	30.00	100.00

Table 8 Multiple comparison on style

As it is shown in Table 8 and consistent with the result in language proficiency levels in Table 6, significant performance differences exist between and among three different listening styles. The significant levels between analytic and global style, analytic and synthetic listening

style are .000 and that between global listening style and synthetic listening style is .046. The statistics show that the synthetic listeners have the best overall performances. Global listeners have much better performances than analytic listeners. However, the performance gap between global and synthetic style is not as big as the one between analytic and global style. Despite all that, the listening performance differences among the three styles are statistically significant.

Conclusions

This empirical research on listening styles has reached the following conclusions based on the statistic research findings above.

First, out of the total number of the research subjects from UIBE undergraduate students in China, the proportion of students using analytic, synthetic and global style has declined gradually. Apart from that, students' listening styles are significantly correlated with their language proficiency levels. Students with the highest language proficiency level tend to adopt the synthetic listening style and students with the lowest language proficiency level tend to adopt the analytic listening style while students at middle level tend to adopt the global listening style. It is found that the advanced learners are better able to combine the top-down and bottom-up information processing procedures in order to deal with listening comprehension problems.

Second, it is shown by the statistics that the synthetic listeners have the best overall listening performances to be followed by the global listeners. But the performance gap between synthetic and global listeners is not as big as the one between global and analytic listeners. Despite that, performance differences between and among three different listening styles are significant.

Third, this empirical research is meaningful and thought-provoking in that UIBE students with only 10-score variation in their national college entrance English exams have demonstrated significant differences in their listening styles and listening performances. This statistically significant performance gap among three groups of listening style students deserves the pedagogical attention of language teachers.

As it is said earlier, the importance of listening in English acquisition and learning should never be under-estimated. Awareness should be given to the way students habitually assess, process, and treat the clusters of information data. The variation in cognitive process and language proficiency level should be taken into consideration and integrated into the overall lesson plan. Specific suggestions are given as follows.

Firstly, teachers can help students understand the concept of the three listening styles and their unique features. Then students should be surveyed to identify their individual listening styles. Then the teacher can help students make plans to gradually move from an analytic listener to global and finally to synthetic listener. To achieve this goal, students have to do a large amount of guided reading as well as listening and keep a listening diary to monitor the progress.

Secondly, in the pre - and post-listening activities, listening support must be given to assist students to improve listening comprehension ability. Meanwhile, style training must be integrated into the lesson plan so as to help students use listening strategies in task performances. For example, before the listening exercises, teachers can introduce several strategies to deal with the listening exercises. Teachers can encourage students to exchange their ideas and practices with regard to the strategies they use during the listening process.

This research has examined the listening styles of undergraduate students in UIBE in China and the inter-relationship between effects of listening styles and their corresponding listening performances for BE passage listening. It is hoped that the study can add to prior research in the same area and improve understanding of the listening process in second language learning, in particular the effect of listening styles on listening performances.

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Appendix I Style Analysis Survey (SAS)

Rebecca Oxford (1993)
If you wish to use this survey, contact Rebecca Oxford at ro127@columbia.edu

Purpose: The SAS is designed to assess your general approach to learning and working. It does not predict your behavior in every instance, but it is a clear indication of your overall style preference.

Instructions: For each item, click the response that represents your approach. Complete all items. There are five major activities representing five different aspects of your learning and working style. At the end you will submit your results to your teacher, who will give you a handout, so that you can interpret your results.

Timing: It generally takes about 30 minutes to complete the SAS. Don't spend too much time on any one item. Indicate your immediate response and move on to the next item.

For each item, click on your immediate response: 0 = Never, 1 = Sometimes, 2 = Very Often, 3 = Always

ACTIVITY 5: HOW I DEAL WITH IDEAS

1. I prefer simple answers rather than a lot of explanations.	0 1 2 3
2. Too many details tend to confuse me.	0 1 2 3
3. I ignore details that don't seem relevant.	0 1 2 3
4. It is easy for me to see the overall plan or big picture.	0 1 2 3
5. I can summarize information rather easily.	0 1 2 3

6. It is easy for me to paraphrase what other people say. 0 1 2 3
7. I see the main point very quickly. 0 1 2 3
8. I am satisfied with knowing the major ideas without the details. 0 1 2 3
9. I can pull together (synthesize) things easily. 0 1 2 3
10. When I make an outline, I write down only the key points. 0 1 2 3
11. I prefer detailed answers instead of short answers. 0 1 2 3
12. It is difficult for me to summarize detailed information. 0 1 2 3
13. I focus on specific facts or information. 0 1 2 3
14. I enjoy breaking general ideas down into smaller pieces. 0 1 2 3
15. I prefer looking for differences rather than similarities. 0 1 2 3
16. I use my logical analysis to solve problems. 0 1 2 3
17. I become nervous when only the main ideas are presented. 0 1 2 3
18. I focus on the details rather than the big picture. 0 1 2 3
19. My written outlines contain many details. 0 1 2 3
20. When I tell a story or explain something, it takes a long time. 0 1 2 3

Questionnaire

This is to certify that the questionnaire is conducted purely for the empirical research of listening styles and listening strategies with the ultimate purpose of improving our teaching in Business English Listening class.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

Personal information：

1. Name：____ Gender：
2. Major：_____ Student ID：

3. English Band 6 Score：_____ English Band 4 Score：

4. Entrance English Exam Score：

Items to tick	0	1	2	3
1） Too many details makes you puzzled				
2） You ignore the test irrelevant information				
3） Feel easy to grasp the topic sentence in each part				
4） Feel easy to summarize the main idea				
5） Feel easy to understand the language and recite				
6) It's enough to grasp the key idea in listening				
7） You can integrate the ideas quickly in listening				
8） You like to answer detailed questions				
9） You put emphasis on detailed information				
10） You can make judges based on listening materials				
11） You are nervous whenever detailed information appears				
12） Detail information is more important than the theme				
13） It takes you a long time to understand listening test				
14) I try to understand every word in listening				

Interpretation：Never= 0；Rare=1；Sometimes=2；Often=3；

1-8 ： ___ （global）

9-16: ____ (analytic)

In each pair of statements (1-2, 3-4, 5-6…), if the score gap between each pair is smaller than 2, it belongs to synthetic style.

Appendix II

Three Language Proficiency Levels

	Level one	Level two	Level three
Number of subjects	47	47	47
Score range	Lower than 120	120-130	Higher than 130
Note: The scores are based on student's national English entrance exam.			

Appendix III

LISTENING TEST

Name_____ Class _____
No. _____ Score_____

Part One
Directions: You are going to listen to two passages. The passages will be read only *ONCE*. Please fill in the blanks according to what you hear.

Passage One
Top European policy makers say that a slow ___ in the value of the Chinese money, the Yuan, is in the __ of China and the world economy. Chinese and European economic officials met in the eastern city of

Nanjing after the head of the European Central Bank told reporters that officials advised China to take a more ___ policy on its money. China says it needs a (an) ____exchange rate against the American dollar to its economic recovery. Europe says that gives China an ___lead in world markets.

Passage Two

Group of ____nations has met to discuss a common position for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen next month. ___ ___Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Sudan met Friday and Saturday in Beijing. Officials say the delegates agreed that need to provide money and technology to help poorer nations fight the of earth. Officials say the delegates also agreed on other major issues. The UN conference opens December 7th and ends December 18th.

Part Two

Directions: You are going to listen to two passages. The passages will be read *TWICE*. Choose the best answer among the four choices.

Passage Three

13. Which countries did President Obama visit this year?

A. Mali and Senegal B Egypt and Mauritius

C Gana and Egypt D Tanzania and Gana

14. Why has China dropped deal after deal to build infrastructure in Africa?

A win over African governments B compete with US

C in exchange for natural resources D prompt up dictatorships

15. How much was the trade between China and Africa a decade ago?

A 107 billion dollars B 10.7 billion dollars

C 1.07 billion dollars D 80% of that of this year
16. What's the main idea of the passage?
A China has taken part in the game.
B The US is already on the back foot in Africa.
C China pledged to ten billion dollars loans to Africa.
D China has won over the African governments.

Passage Four
17. In terms of population, how much does the "bric" account for the whole world?
A. 30% B. 40% C. 50% D. 60%
18. In terms of GDP, how much approximately does the "bric" account for the US?
A. 46% B. 56% C. 67% D. 77%
19. Where was the Bric Summit held last June?
A. Brazil B. Holland C. China D. Russia
20. Which of the following sentences describes the "bric" most properly?
A. By 2050, India's economy will definitely surpass the US.
B. With its large amount of oil resources, China has become the biggest creditor of the US.
C. The term "bric" was originally created by Goldman Sachs, and includes the four countries Brazil, Russia, India and China.
D. Russia, as the world's manufacturing center, is making great contributions in driving the world's economy out of recession.

Answer to the listening test:

Part One:
rise, eastern, open, secure, support, unfair,

developing, representatives, wealthy, technology, warming , 7th

Part Two:
CCBD BCDC

LISTENING MATERIALS

Passage One

Top European policy makers say that a slow rise in the value of the Chinese money, the Yuan, is in the interest of China and the world economy. Chinese and European economic officials met in the eastern city of Nanjing after the head of the European Central Bank told reporters that officials advised China to take a more open policy on its money. China says it needs a secure exchange rate against the American dollar to support its economic recovery. Europe says that gives China an unfair lead in world markets.

Passage Two

Group of developing nations has met to discuss a common position for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen next month. Representatives from Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Sudan met Friday and Saturday in Beijing. Officials say the delegates agreed that wealthy nations need to provide money and technology to help poorer nations fight the warming of earth. Officials say the delegates also agreed on other major issues. The UN conference opens December 7th and ends December 18th.

Passage Three China, U.S. eye Africa

It's a hot frontier for global investment, and both China and US want a stake. So far this year President Obama has visited Gana and Egypt, Secretary of State Cinton dropped a seven nation African tour. President Hu stopped in Moli, Senagolf Tanzania and Mauritius, Premier Wen just attended the China-Africa forum in Egypt. As the son of a Kenyan, President Obama may have one African heart, but China's deep pockets have been winning over African governments.

The US is already on the back foot in Africa. The American public may not be terribly aware. But basically, most of Africa thinks that it's a great thing that China has come into the game.

In the last year, China has dropped deal after deal to build infrastructure in Africa in exchange for natural resources. Critics say China's actions have propped up dictatorships in Sudan and Zimbabwe, but leaders indicate Africa will take money from anyone who's giving.

Foreign direct investment has no fixed allegiance or nationality. It goes where it is most welcome. China recently pledged up to ten billion dollars loans to Africa, China's foreign direct investment in Africa is up almost to 80% this year, and trade has multiplied ten times this decade to 107 billion dollars.

Passage Four

Teaming with people on the brink of leading the world's economy in terms of growth are the countries known as bric: Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Together, 40 percent of the world's population; a quarter of land mass; together their GDP is two-thirds that of the United States.

"This is the fastest growing group of countries among the emerging markets. They have wits to deal with the financial crisis very well, and they are contributing a great deal to world growth."

Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Russia's Dmitry Medvedev, India's Manmohan Singh and China's Hu Jintao met at a Bric Summit last June in Yekaterinburg, Russia. According to the Wall Street's firm Goldman Sachs which coined the term "bric", these would be the fastest-growing emerging markets. China already is the world's manufacturing center, and holds some 800b dollars in US debt. India's economy is expected to surpass the US by 2050 as its population growth by an estimated 700m people. Russia and Brazil have important commodities such as oil.

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THE ASIAN ESP JOURNAL

Title

Exploring Professional Attributes of Being a Qualified Chinese Interpreter in the Field of Exhibition and Convention

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Abstract

There is an assumption that everyone with foreign language competence can interpret, yet some of the existing training programs result in professional interpreting services that are not satisfactory. The current study aims to explore the professional attributes of a qualified interpreter by analyzing five experienced Chinese interpreters' interview transcripts which were published online. Thirteen important attributes of an intepreter have been identified from these data. To examine these attributes, another three semi-structured interviews were carried out with three professors at higher education institutions. It was found that such professional attributes as good psychological quality, productive listening comprehension, culture-awareness, and effective transfer of non-verbal communication were more important and they were discussed in detail in the paper. The implications of the research have also been expounded.

Key words. professional attributes, interpreter, exhibition and convention

Introduction

In this globalized era more travelers and business people speak various languages than ever. People of different backgrounds and cultures confer to discuss issues of all kinds: economy, politics, legality, culture and technology. However, the perpetual stumbling block of language is a barrier which hampers smooth communication and clear understanding. Under these circumstances, a large number of interpreters are needed to help people overcome cultural and language obstacles. In response, many institutions have been established to train and develop the potential interpreters. However, the curriculum design sometimes may not match well with the interpreters' professional practice, so the present study aims to discover the attributes of a qualified interpreter, the qualities a competent interpreter should be equipped with, the knowledge they must learn and acquire as the part of their competency, and eventually getting to the root of the problem, what radical changes should be made in the present educational system in China.

Review of Literature

As the current study is mainly concerned with the professional development of Chinese interpreters in the field of exhibition and convention, literature relevant to interpreters in the Chinese exhibition and convention industry is reviewed in this section.

Development of the exhibition and convention industry in China

The exhibition and convention industry is both a powerful force and a product of modern economic development. As an information exchange and communication center, it integrates materials, people and information as a whole (Zhen & Zhen, 2005). According to the statistics from ICCA (International Congress & Convention Association), headquartered in Amsterdam, the conference industry generated a total revenue of up to 280 billion dollars annually. The sophisticated and mature conference markets such as Hong Kong and Germany have remarkably stimulated the local regional and national economy (Liu & Jin, 2001).

Although, from an international perspective, the Chinese exhibition and convention industry has already stepped onto the road of a mature market-oriented system, the start of real growth in the Chinese conference market came from China's "reform and opening up to the outside world" in 1980s. The exhibition and convention industry is an emerging industry and is in its introductory phase (Huang, 2007). The development of the exhibition and convention industry in China experienced turns and twists. Before 1990s, when the exhibition and convention industry was a brand-new name, never heard ever before, conventions tended to be government-organized, and topics were more macro than micro, more policy-oriented than operational, and more general than technical. The interpreters were either free labor supplied in-house or paid only nominal fees if borrowed from other institutions. Conference interpreting, with the need for high-quality professionals, was a new concept to many conference organizers, let alone the general public (Dawrant & Jiang, 2004; Pan, 2008).

With its growing economic status, China has witnessed rapid development of its convention industry, especially in some major large cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. The national

exhibition and convention industry has evolved from the pattern of pure non-profitable state-run official exchanges in the early years to a more open, more professional and more mature commercial pattern with worldwide talents and countries involved. It is reported that currently China has about 147 exhibition venues around the nation. The number of annual exhibition and conventions held in China has leaped from 1063 in 1997 to 2400 in 2001, with an annual increase rate of 19.47% (Zhen & Zhen, 2005).

The interpreters' status quo in China

With the development of the exhibition and convention industry in China, more and more professional conference interpreters are becoming valued for their critical roles in ensuring effective and successful communication across the linguistic and cultural divisions. However, China suffers severely from the shortage of qualified exhibition and convention interpreters (Dawrant & Jiang, 2004). Lin Wusun, a former director of the China International Publishing Group (CIPG), said that while the number of translators (interpreters) has grown dramatically, the quality varies. Besides 60,000 certified translators, there are some 500,000 practitioners, whose qualifications are hard to be defined (Zhang, 1999).

It is always assumed that anyone with foreign language competence should be able to interpret, but this is not really true. Now, after much frustration with poor interpretation, more conference organizers have learnt that the professional service was indispensable, and the conference interpreting was increasingly regarded as a highly demanding and intellectually challenging job (Dawrant & Jiang, 2004). Thus, many institutions including Xiamen University, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University, and Shanghai International Studies University come up to offer interpreting

programs. Can their academic programs meet the needs in the market? In the following section, some previous studies with regard to the professional attributes of an interpreter are to be discussed.

Previous studies concerning interpreters' professional development

Few studies were conducted to look into the professional attributes of being a qualified interpreter in the field of exhibition and convention (Wang, 2009). According to Robin Hazlehurst (2007), professional interpreting has three skill areas: the perfect handling of the required field of knowledge, the methods of working in the particular sphere, and the ability to adjust quickly. Yudina and Sigareva (2007, p. 88) pointed out, firstly, an interpreter must have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of at least two languages: a foreign language and a mother tongue. Secondly, interpreting is a skill. The interpreter must be able to write well and have an excellent command of both the target language and the mother tongue. Thirdly, language is not free of cultural influences. If the culture behind the language which is being translated is not appreciated, an accurate translation is extremely difficult. Zhong and Mu (2008) argued that a professional interpreter must be aware of his or her role as an information transmitter, and a member of teamwork in addition to hard-working. S/he should obey the ethic requirements and have a cool mind. Some researchers (Song, 2009; Zhu, 2009) mentioned political correctness, language foundation, knowledge diversity, and scientific attitude. Above all, these researchers have emphasized the abilities a professional interpreter should acquire such as mastering languages, interpreting skills, and culture awareness. Usually, the interpreting training programs are guided by these rules. However, it has been revealed that some of the existing training programs are not efficient enough (Li & Hu, 2009; Pan, 2008). Hence, the professional services available at present in the interpreting market

in general are not satisfactory. To conduct an in-depth exploration of the interpreters' professional attributes, the following research questions are proposed to be investigated in this study:

i). What qualifications are more important for an interpreter?
ii). Why are these qualifications more important?
iii). How does an interpreter acquire these qualifications?

Methods

The data used in this study were adopted from the internet where five interview transcripts were published on the basis of the interviews with five experienced Chinese interpreters. In what follows a brief introduction of these interpreters will be presented. The pseudonyms will be used in the study to protect the subjects' privacy.

Mr. Zhen was the co-founder of a College, one of China's most prominent foreign language institutes that had taken the lion's share of the local market. Having taught interpreting courses for more than 8 years, Mr. Zhen, together with his colleagues, witnessed the rise and boom of the domestic interpreter market and had gained great reputation for rich experience in teaching interpreting courses. Now, besides teaching at the College, Mr. Zhen also worked for Shanghai Media Group, being an interpreter for financial programs like "Brainstorm". (See the interview transcript online at http://www.hjenglish.com/page/14632/)

Miss Jiang had earned a Masters degree in telecommunication technology at Shanghai Jiaotong University, a purely scientific background which seemed to have no relationship with language at all. But it was the perseverance and a passion for interpretation that had led her onto the tedious and painstaking journey of interpretation. Meanwhile, as an experienced interpreter, she also took the job of

teaching interpreting courses at Shanghai Oriental School, where she received good feedback from her students and gained ever-increasing popularity with her unique and productive interpretation expertise. (See the interview transcript online at http://tr.hjenglish.com/page/13771/)

Mr. Jia was fortunate enough to take part in a five-month interpretation training program held in Brussels, where the headquarters of the European Union is located and interpretation institutes are most concentrated. During the course of the training, intensive interpretation training was designed to cultivate the students' comprehensive abilities and skills. Mr. Jia had shared some of his new perceptions gained through the intensive training program. (See the interview transcript online at http://tr.hjenglish.com/page/22822/)

Miss Lin was an experienced professional interpreter who had worked for the United Nations as a simultaneous interpreter for more than two decades. She recalled and described how she stepped into the field of interpretaiong for the first time and how she coped with some difficulties during the interpretation. (See the interview transcript online at http://www.hjenglish.com/page/7173/)

Mr. Feng began his interpreting career in 1985 and became the first batch of students who received formal interpretation training at Beijing Foreign Studies University, in which both written and oral tests and training were offered at that time. From then on, Mr. Feng has been actively engaging in various kinds of foreign exchanges and had accumulated rich experience in interpretation. (See the interview transcript online at http://blog.hjenglish.com/zhuoyitongchuan/articles/1574067.html)

The above-mentioned transcripts were read again and again for the purpose of identifying the important information to answer the research questions proposed in the second section of this paper. The limitation of the research method was that the data were collected indirectly. When

the queries occurred in the data analysis, the researchers could not get to confirm with the interviewees. To make up the deficiency, we carried out three semi-structured interviews with three experts in interpreting teaching. They were Professor Zhe, Associate Professors Guo and Ming (these were anonymities). They all had more than twenty years' experience in teaching and practicing interpretation, so they were regarded as qualified bilingual interpreting experts. They were asked three questions with the presence of the taxonomy of the thirteen qualifications of an interpreter which was identified from the analysis of the five experienced interpreters' interview transcripts (See the Table in the next section). The first question was whether they agreed with the qualifications mentioned by the five interviewers as the professional attributes of an interpreter. The second question was whether they thought some more important qualifications were missing in the Table. The third question was how they would arrange the order of those qualifications in the Table according to their importance. The three interviewers were required to explain the reason when answering each question. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Although the additional three interviews were taken to confirm the findings of the five on-line interview transcripts analysis, the data collected were not enough to generalize the findings of the study. However, this qualitative study may be still meaningful for further research into the same questions.

Results and Discussion

What qualifications are more important for an interpreter?

After the analysis of the five on-line interview transcripts, a total of thirteen professional attributes were identified. They were: psychological quality, listening comprehension, non-verbal

communication, culture-awareness, scope of knowledge, fluency, quick response, note-taking, accuracy, conciseness, loyalty to the source language, sense of responsibility and physical state (see the following table).

Table 1. The qualifications of an interpreter mentioned by the five experienced interpreters

Qualifications	Zhen	Jiang	Jia	Lin	Feng	Total
Psychological quality	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Listening comprehension	Y		Y	Y	Y	4
non-verbal communication	Y	Y	Y	Y		4
Culture-awareness	Y			Y	Y	3
Scope of knowledge	Y	Y			Y	3
Fluency		Y			Y	2
Quick response	Y	Y				2
Note-taking	Y				Y	2
Accuracy			Y			1
Conciseness				Y		1
Loyalty to the source language					Y	1
Sense of responsibility			Y			1
Physical state	Y					1

As the Table indicates, it could be concluded from the analysis that good psychological quality, productive listening comprehension, culture-awareness, and effective transfer of non-verbal communication were the more significant interpreter attributes. In contrast, loyalty, conciseness and sense of responsibility that show less frequency were regarded as qualifications of less importance. The three professors also confirmed that the thirteen qualifications in the Table were indeed the fundamental attributes of interpreters in general. However, Professor Zhe perceived that an interpreter should have a large amount of

vocabulary which could be selected spontaneously in interpreting. He suggested that the qualifications such as conciseness, loyalty to the source language and sense of responsibility were not highly related to the interpreter's professional attributes. Associate Professor Guo advised that sufficient preparation should be added as one of the qualifications because no interpreter could do a good job without delicate preparation in his opinion. He pointed out that listening comprehension, scope of knowledge, loyalty to the source language, note-taking, and accuracy were the most important interpreter attributes. Associate Professor Ming supported the qualifications listed in the Table and the order of their importance. It seemed that Professor Zhe disagreed with Associate Professor Guo in regard to the importance of loyalty to the source language. However, these three professors did not deny the importance of the first four qualifications listed in the Table though they had some different opinions of the other qualifications. At least the first four qualifications of psychological quality, listening comprehension, non-verbal communication, and cultural awareness were regarded by these three professors as the most critical qualities of an interpreter. Therefore, these four qualifications are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Why are these qualifications more important?

In this section, the researchers presented why the qualifications mentioned by the five experienced interpreters were more important from the interpreters' perspectives, focusing on psychological quality, listening comprehension, non-verbal communication and culture-awareness. Only four qualifications were selected to be discussed here because of their higher frequency in the interview transcripts which were confirmed by the three professors though the other nine qualifications were also important for a qualified interpreter.

Psychological quality

Mr Zhen argued that in terms of conference interpretation, the most important quality was confidence, which meant calmness and flexibility in the face of emergency or difficulty (from Mr. Zhen's interview transcript). A good psychological quality meant as soon as the interpretation started, the interpreter had the ability to become immediately intellectually excited and showed no signs of stage fright at all in front of all the attendees (Clark & Clark, 1977). Mr. Feng also contended that competent interpreters were required to possess sound self-control so that he or she could cope with any unexpected situation or case of emergency. During the course of interpretation, an interpreter needed to keep completely composed, no matter what problem arose. Even when the interpreter has made some unavoidable mistakes in the middle of the process, she or he should remain calm and quickly find some flexible solutions, to minimize negative impact and prevent further losses (from Mr. Feng's interview transcript).

As to the stressful working environment, Miss Lin still remembered the first time she did interpretation for a Chinese representative who attended a conference held by the United Nations. Since it was the first time for her to do the interpretation in such an international-scale conference, she was very nervous and cared much about what other people thought about her. Stuck by a word, she felt at a loss for words and her mind suddenly went blank. But fortunately, she quickly recovered from the embarrassment and went smoothly with the following work. This example demonstrated the importance of a healthy resilient psychology for an interpreter.

Mr. Jia saw eye to eye with Miss Lin on the issue of tense working environment. He maintained that in some real business negotiations and cross-national conferences, interpreters were overburdened with

mounting pressure from outside as well as self-generated. It is unavoidable that as an average human being, interpreters were easily distracted from the disturbance and meanwhile they were inclined to be influenced by such personal causes as poor physical state and inadequte preparation which impacted negatively on their performance.

Listening comprehension

Listening plays a crucial role in people's communication. However, listening has long been a main problem for ESL (English as a Second Language) students, and has been a great concern and the biggest obstacle in the improvement of their English (Wang, 2007). Because it was generally believed that listening comprehension accounted for a huge percentage of communication, if the input of information failed, the continuity of communication would be brought to a halt (Roderick, 1998).

It is probably one of the biggest challenges for the majority of Chinese interpreters to be acquainted with different kinds of regional dialects, especially those spoken by non-native English speakers. Mr. Zhen had frequent business contacts with Japanese people. He has observed their pronunciation: Japanese usually had the habits of pronouncing every word followed by a vowel, for example, they pronounced "land" like "lando". As an experienced interpreter for more than two decades, Mr. Feng was also troubled by this problem, which was rather prominent in the early phase of his career. He still remembered that when he was interpreting for UNESCO, there was a member of the organizing committee named Telejani, who was from Ghana. Teljani was always very talkative and contributed a lot of ideas to the conference. His English pronunciation blended with strong African language influences making his accent quite hard for Mr. Feng to understand.

Miss Jiang explained that interpretation was a highly demanding task which required interpreters to accomplish the process by receiving and understanding and then to translating to smooth speech. It was an instant mode of thinking. The interpreters were required to realize and hold the content in their mind as soon as they caught it, then reorganized it into another language, and finally spoke it out (Gile, 1995). It troubled Miss Jiang a lot that if she concentrated on one pronunciation or one word, then she could easily miss the following information; or once she tried to translate a certain phrase into the Chinese equivalent, she could miss the following important words. Therefore, interpreters needed good listening, speaking together with inter-personal skills. In oral interpreting, understanding a speaker is not just a matter of understanding his or her words but of identifying his communicative intention (Bassnett-McGuire, 1988; Roderick, 1998).

Non-verbal communication

As far as the important role that non-verbal communication played in the process of interpretation was concerned, Mr. Zhen had much to tell. He shared his experience of interpreting a nationally televised program called "Brainstorm", during which he and his colleagues were confined in an isolated small booth, so they were kept in the dark about what was happening on the spot. They were restricted to making speculations according to the words of the speakers. Mr. Zhen said that interpreters should attach great importance to the facial expression, body gestures of the speaker and take some other non-verbal communication into consideration, so that it could help them predict more accurately what the speaker was going to say next.

Mr. Jia expressed his views on the significance of non-verbal communication. He explained that except for the mission of transferring the main content of the speech, interpreting also placed a higher

demand on every interpreter to transfer the emotion and tone of the voices. Mr. Jia took an example of a political speech, in which the addresser tended to make some announcement of great importance or made some significant decisions. In this case, a qualified interpreter should not only have the major content conveyed to the audience but also transfer the inspiring and powerful emotions to the audience.

Culture-awareness

Interpretation is no doubt a long-standing tradition dating back to the ancient world. From time immemorial, human beings felt the need to communicate with others across languages and cultural boundaries. Once exposed to different cultural and social contexts, they were naturally and unconsciously engaged in intercultural communication (Guo, 2000). Since interpretation is a peculiar type of intercultural communication, involving two linguistically different cultures, what is of concern here is cross—cultural awareness, which refers to the translator's perception of the cultural elements of the languages involved in the process of interpretation and the capacity to imagine oneself in another role within the context of one's own culture (Mei, 2001). How and whether cultural influences will impact on the interpretation depends on the translator's cultural awareness and understanding of the actual operation of cultural elements (Bassnett-McGuire, 1988). Whether the cultural elements of the SL (source language) are transferred or not in the TL (target language) are all up to the interpreter's cultural orientation.

Miss Lin related how she succeeded when interpreting for a professor who always quoted famous proverbs from the ancient literary classics. For example, she interpreted "飞鸟尽良弓藏" (*Fei Niao Jin, Liang Gong Cang*) into "put away the good bow when the birds are all killed" and "母以子贵" (*Mu Yi Zi Gui*) into "If a son is worthy, his mother is

worthy too". When mentioning the roles of the leaders, the professor also put forward his opinion by borrowing a sentence “修己以安百姓” (*Xiu Ji Yi An Bai Xing*), Miss Lin interpreted it into “Social leaders should cultivate and perfect themselves for the grassroots”. From the above examples it could be seen that only when interpreters had a solid foundation of both languages could they be fully aware of the two cultures concerned, and apply their cultural awareness and creativity to the entire interpreting process.

How does an interpreter acquire these qualifications?

In this section, the five interpreters’ experiences were invoked to illustrate how an interpreter could acquire the proposed qualifications (psychological quality, listening comprehension, non-verbal communication, and cultural awareness in particular).

How to improve one’s psychological quality?

The reasons that trigger or arouse interpreters’ stage fright may vary according to different occasions. Introverted personality, timidity, inadequate preparation, temporarily poor physical condition, or low mood constitute the internal ones, while external ones may consist of grandness of scene, great noise, or dazzling lighting (Clark & Clark, 1977; Roderick, 1998). The five interpreters had the following suggestions for overcoming the anxiety. Firstly, since every person could only concentrate his or her attention for a short period, interpreters had to immediately turn their attention away from a completed task and refocus on the next; otherwise their brains would suffer from information overload and working efficiency would be lost. Secondly, in order to relieve stress and burden, interpreters should make full preparation in advance, get acquainted with the topics to be

interpreted, gather as many commonly used glossaries, expressions, and background materials as possible to minimize uncertainty.

Thirdly, it was scientifically acknowledged that positive self-suggestion was proved to be effective to eliminate tense emotions and functions as a strong force that motivated one's potential. Interpreters could encourage themselves by saying some inspiring slogans to themselves. Fourthly, "Practice makes perfect." It was widely acknowledged that the most effective way to make oneself mentally and physically prepared for a harsh working environment in which any emergent things would arise was to experience it in the real situation and gain on-the-job training in the process. Only if one had been rigidly trained in the harsh working environment could he or she perform with well-adjusted mindset in the real situation. Mr. Jia said during the training in Brussels, a large percentage of useful experience was gained through numerous simulated simultaneous interpretations in Dummy Booth, where the entire instrument as well as the layout of the booth all reached strict international standards. He argued that compared with some profound interpretation theories which only imparted knowledge from a theoretical angle, simulated simultaneous interpretation had the advantage of cultivating and maturing an interpreter's ability to deal with an emergency and could strengthen his or her psychological quality.

How to train listening comprehension?

Having taught listening for several decades, Mr. Zhen has accumulated a great amount of experience in overcoming listening obstacles. As for background knowledge and rate of speech, he strongly recommended news broadcasting of BBC and VOA in favor of their standard pronunciation and wide range of topics covering all aspects of life such as politics, economy, culture, technology, and geography. He

said intensive listening training could help students establish a comprehensive knowledge structure needed to improve listening comprehension. Quantities of other materials, such as *In the News, Science Report, Making of a Nation, American Mosaic, Business Report, and Crazy English* were also recommended for extracurricular listening from easier levels to more difficult ones in a specified period.

Mr. Feng recommended that the best way to overcome the obstacle of accent was none but to listen more and practice more. Mr. Feng made a very vivid comparison between listening and piloting. Only if pilots had traveled the required amount of time, could their skills be improved and their experience accumulated. This was also true for listening skills training. "Surrounded yourself with various kinds of accents and try to imitate them, then you will find it no longer so hard to conquer as you have imagined. However, if you choose to resist and avoid this problem, it will still persist and stand in the way of interpretation," Mr. Feng suggested. In order to remove listening obstacle, he underwent intensive listening training during the interpretation training at Beijing Foreign Studies University. Everyday he kept his eyes open for English spoken by Japanese, Indians, Germans, and Koreans to improve his listening and comprehension skills. The amount of time he spent on listening amounted to more than 1,000 hours. Instead of merely listening, he also compared the subtle differences in the hope of improving his sensitivity to different accents. Finally his efforts paid off and he is now in good command of all the rules of the distinctive pronunciation.

How to transfer non-verbal information?

Mr. Zhen advised that the most efficient and quickest way to get clues from some non-verbal communication was through observation. Being an observant and careful person was the prerequisite of becoming a competent interpreter. Mr. Zhen continued to explain that there was

only a very limited amount of time to get in touch with the speaker. He advised that before each conference, interpreters should seize the rare opportunity and make the most from each contact with the speakers. He said that the most important thing before and during the conference was to observe the speakers' behavior and be familiar with their habits of speaking such as their intonation and tone of voice.

How to cultivate one's culture-awareness?

Language is a tool for communication as well as a carrier of culture, which reflects the particular history, geography, customary, and social life of a certain nation (Kramsch, 1998). Although language and culture are apparently two different matters, they are inseparable from each other. Just like two sides of a coin, language and culture are closely connected. When people are communicating with others, cultural consciousness in their brain interplays with language. So learning a language is not merely learning the language itself; instead much emphasis should be placed on learning culture. The key element for language learning is learning cultural background (Hu & Tao, 2009).

But how to integrate the language teaching with the cultural teaching is still at an early stage of exploration. The introduction of a cultural component into language classes could promote students' curiosity about a target culture and raise awareness of their own culture. This does not impede the students' language acquisition; on the contrary, it can provide a meaningful context for language learning, thus enhancing motivation (Lotman & Uspensky, 1978).

Concluding Remarks

This study has identified and explored the important professional attributes of a qualified interpreter. Thirteen attributes of an interpreter have been identified as very important. The findings were based on the

five experienced interpreters' explanations, but the most important four attributes were discussed in this paper. Although this paper only discussed four attributes, it does not mean that the others are unimportant for interpreters. Perhaps all the attributes should be included for potential interpreters in training programs. However, the data analysis suggests that the first four attributes need more attention. It is usually assumed that one who is proficient in another language could work as an interpreter. Therefore, language competence has always been emphsized in curriculum design for interpreter training programs. However, the five experienced interpreters and the three professors in this study tend to stress practical skills besides language foundation. In other words, in the interpreting traning program more simulated practice should be provided so that the students could have more opportunities to enhance their performance. In teaching oral interpreting, the teachers should help the students develop not only linguistic knowledge but also extra-linguistic knowledge, and develop not only good listening skills but also good competence in short term memory. They should help the students to develop interpretation techniques such as taking notes, syntactical transformation of long sentences, interpreting numbers and idioms, and how to develop the sensibility of cultural differences in oral interpretation.

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THE ASIAN ESP JOURNAL

Title

Incorporating Information Literacy in Business Information Edition and Translation Class

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Abstract

This paper discusses the importance and procedure to incorporate teaching information literacy in "Business Information Edition and Translation (BIET)", a course designed for University English majors. This paper adopts the traditional definition of information literacy, contending that an information literate student should be able to: 1) recognize when to need information; 2) know where and how to find the needed information; 3) use a variety of tools to find, modify and assimilate the information; and 4) critically evaluate and synthesize the information. Information literacy is a prerequisite and an important objective of BIET. Different skills are needed at two phases of the class, namely, edition and translation, hence different ways and procedures should be adopted to train the needed skills. This paper discusses in detail the procedures and measures that I adopted in teaching students how to search and use online references and other resources to fulfill information edition and translation tasks. Finally, the paper concludes that skillful handling and application of online resources can dramatically improve the efficiency and quality of information edition

and translation. Students also will realize that online information and online translation tools cannot be overly trusted. The use of information involves many social and ethical issues. Information literacy, which represents a change of thinking in learning and teaching, should be an important part of the curriculum because it is of vital importance for survival in the information age, lifelong learning, academic achievement, workforce productivity, competitive advantage, and national security.

Key words. information literacy, edition, translation, online resources, lifelong learning

Introduction

In this information era, everyone is exposed to large volumes of information. Thanks to the easy and rapid ways of transferring information in today's world, people, especially university students, rely more and more on computers and Internet to seek and transfer information. However, the openness of the Internet itself and complexity of online information make it very difficult for the students to distinguish the authentic and useful information from the massive pool of information. The quality and reliability of online information from various sources have aroused much debate among experts and the general public alike. More and more educators and scholars have realized that information literacy has become the most fundamental quality of a literate citizen in the twenty-first century. As Limberg and Sundin (2006) suggested, "The ability to critically seek, evaluate and use information and tools for information seeking within different

communities is a competence that has given increasing importance in contemporary western society."

However, information seeking and learning in educational settings has not been explored to a great extent, despite the size of the educational sector and the development of student-centered problem-based teaching methods. Instead, these questions have been discussed in the field of information literacy, a field that has been developed primarily within academic librarianship, outside of the information seeking research community (e.g., Bruce 2000). The research interest in exploring a teaching perspective on information seeking emerged out of earlier research findings on students' information seeking and learning, resulting in conclusions that there is a close interaction between the quality of students' information seeking and the quality of their learning outcomes (Alexandersson & Limberg 2003, 2005; Limberg 1999). "The research fields of information seeking and information literacy have not influenced each other in the way that they have potential to do so. An understanding of information literacy would benefit from being based on an understanding of information seeking: information seeking and information literacy are two sides of the same coin" (Limberg & Sundin 2006). Information seeking research has the potential to provide information literacy with a theoretical grounding and its empirical field gives information seeking research an institutional context where the objectives for information seeking practices are formed. Information literacy should be compulsory for each university student. A university student equipped with sound knowledge in one profession, plus information literacy, will have the skills for life-long learning. Information literacy will enable him or her to effectively gain access to and transmit information in this age of knowledge explosion in this ever-changing world, expanding and improving his or her own knowledge and skills, fulfilling life-long self-education.

Definition of information literacy

The Western Michigan University Libraries Information Literacy Site defines Information Literacy as "the ability to identify, retrieve, evaluate, and use information that is appropriate to a need." The Final Report of Information Literacy Initiative Committee of State University of New York Council of Library Directors (September 30, 1997) further explains that "Information literacy constitutes the abilities to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, effectively use, and communicate information in its various formats." The Prague Declaration (2003) puts information literacy within lifelong learning and adds that information literacy "is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society, and is part of the basic human right of life long learning." According to the Final Report of ACRL Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (1989), "Information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand." According to Council of Australian University Librarians, an information literate person is able to:

- recognize a need for information
- determine the extent of information needed
- access the needed information efficiently
- evaluate the information and its sources
- incorporate selected information into their knowledge base
- use information effectively to accomplish a purpose
- understand economic, legal, social and cultural issues in the use of information

- access and use information ethically and legally
- classify, store, manipulate and redraft information collected or generated
- recognize information literacy as a prerequisite for lifelong learning

(Council of Australian University Librarians, 2001)

Sun Ping (2004) argues that information literacy is far more than the mere ability to use the computer. Information literacy can be subdivided into general information literacy, instrumental information literacy, and professional information literacy. In this paper, I will discuss how to cultivate English majors' instrumental information literacy and professional information literacy.

The objective of the Business Information Edition and Translation course

Business Information Edition and Translation (BIET) is a course designed for the junior English majors. The objective of the course is to train the students' ability to edit business texts based on the given theme and translate the edited texts into Chinese. Considering the fact that the students will do edition and translation largely on computers in real work conditions after graduation, this course is taught in the lab equipped with computers with access to the Internet. Most of the teaching materials are from the Internet. The teacher encourages the students to adopt inquiry-based learning, research-based learning and resource-based learning methods. The teaching method is mainly task-based. The teacher requires and encourages the students to use Internet resources to finish the information edition based on the given theme and translation tasks. As the teacher of this course, I have found that information literacy, especially instrumental information literacy and

professional information literacy, is extremely important for the students' success in the course.

Process of information edition and translation and its association with information literacy

The whole process of BIET consists of two relatively independent stages, edition and translation. Each stage has different requirements for information literacy. The edition stage emphasizes the students' abilities to identify and use the given information. At this stage, students are required to rewrite one, two, or three articles of the relevant theme. The rewriting must be concise, coherent, and relevant to the theme given by the teacher. The articles are either prepared by the teacher or accessed online. In the latter case, students are informed of the URLs of the articles. During the rewriting, students must learn to discern the most relevant information, and put it together in a well-structured fashion so that the rewritten version stands as a coherent text of its own.

The stage of translation involves more of seeking the information source in addition to selecting and using the information. At this stage, students have two tasks. First, they need to look up the meanings of some unfamiliar words or uncertain terms to figure out the proper translation of these words and terms. Second, they need to accurately translate the rewritten text into Chinese. While figuring out the appropriate translation of some words and business terms, students tend to rely on general or professional English-Chinese dictionaries for help. Chances are that they cannot get the satisfactory translations, because many new words, especially new business terms have not yet been entered into many dictionaries. Therefore, students need to turn to other sources for help, for example, new English-English dictionaries to get the definition of a new word or a new term, or sometimes students need

to refer to professional glossaries or even encyclopedias to understand the true meaning of a term.

The Internet resources available for translation references

Thanks to technology development, many heavy and bulky printed dictionaries have been turned into online versions which only need a click. In the computer lab, the students can click their mouse and look up many reliable and professional dictionaries, such as Kingsoft online dictionaries from http://fy.iciba.com/, Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary from http://www.merriam-webster.com/, Oxford English Dictionary from http://www.oed.com/, Collins Cobuild Dictionary from http://dictionary.reverso.net/english-cobuild/, Cambridge Dictionaries Online from http://dictionary.cambridge.org/, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English http://www.ldoceonline.com/. Students can also get information from some encyclopedias such as wikipedia from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page, Encyclopedia Britannica Online from http://www.britannica.com/, Microsoft Encarta from http://encarta.msn.com/artcenter_/browse.html. Some web-based Chinese-English glossaries also provide useful information, for example, Chinese-English Advertisement Glossary by Zhiku Baike from http://wiki.mbalib.com/wiki/%E5%B9%BF%E5%91%8A%E6%9C%AF%E8%AF%AD%E8%BE%9E%E5%85%B8%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E5%AF%B9%E7%85%A7, Chinese-English Abbreviation Glossary of Business Management from http://wiki.mbalib.com/wiki/%E4%BC%81%E4%B8%9A%E7%AE%A1%E7%90%86%E5%B8%B8%E7%94%A8%E7%BC%A9%E5%86%99%E6%9C%AF%E8%AF%AD%E4%B8%AD%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E5%AF%B9%E7%85%A7), and Baidu Baike Data Base from http://baike.baidu.com/view/975141.htm. All these websites

provide abundant and reliable information to help the students figure out the exact meaning of some words and terms.

In the process of translation, deciding the translation of some proper nouns could be very time consuming. For example, students are required to edit and translate an article introducing new watches of different brands. They need to get the Chinese translation of many brands, such as Omega, Longines, Chopard, Tissot, and Pronto. It is hard to get the Chinese translations of all the brand names in one single Chinese-English dictionary, not to mention that most dictionaries usually do not include brand names. The Internet can be a great help with this. Students can use the search engines like Google, Sohu, Baidu, Yahoo, etc; type in the search line the key word "watch", and they can find many Chinese web sites containing the word "watch", some of which are the websites of major watch dealers. At these websites, students can read much information introducing the products they are dealing with. If the products are imported from foreign countries, the websites usually offer both the English and Chinese translation of the products. Sometimes, they offer the background and history of the brands. For example, all the Chinese names of the above mentioned watches can be found at the World Watch Web from http://www.replicadoor.com/. The Chinese name for "Omega" is "欧米茄 (Ou Mi Ga)", "浪琴 (Lang Qin)" for "Longines" , "萧邦 (Xiao Bang)" for "Chopard", "天梭 (Tian Suo)" for "Tissot" , and "百浪多 (Bai Lang Duo)" for "Pronto".

Finding the appropriate translation of some proper nouns and terms is just the first step of the whole translation process. Students face a bigger challenge to express the edited text into appropriate, fluent, and readable Chinese. Students have to consider the issues like collocation, syntax, and the sequence of information appearing in the translation version. While translating, students often need to refer to some Chinese

articles of similar genres to learn the specific ways of presenting messages in that particular field so that their translations read idiomatic and professional. The Internet can also help in this respect. Take collocation for example. Students who are skillful in using the "key words" and "language" search function, can turn the search engine into a powerful collocation data base. For example, students can type the key word in Google or Baidu search line, and then press enter. They can immediately get much information containing the key word. Students will not only get some knowledge by reading the information, but also be inspired by the way the words are put together to convey the message. And it can help them choose appropriate Chinese words and sentences patterns in translation.

Steps to train information literacy

I use the following five steps to train the students' information literacy in this class.

1. Decide the nature and range of the information.

Ask the students to articulate their academic problems, using their knowledge and resources to predict where they can have access to the information sources that provide possible answers. If their knowledge about a certain topic is inadequate, I will provide more information to make sure they have enough knowledge to proceed. They need to report in oral form and demonstrate that they know where to get the information. When they get the information needed, they need to reevaluate it against the specific requirements of tasks they are to fulfill. At this stage, I try to help the students define their problems, teach some techniques to effectively identify the relevant information and explain how the information is organized and obtained.

2. Get the necessary information.

Require the students to explain the strategies they have used to investigate the information and explain how they change and improve their searching strategies and manage the information. At this stage, I teach the students how to discern the available resources and search for needed information while providing whatever support necessary. For example, I provide them with some authoritative business websites in English and Chinese, URLs of some professional business dictionaries, business glossaries and encyclopedias, and help them to organize and manage the information sources.

3. Critically evaluate the information and its source, and use the chosen information in solving problems.

In the business information edition and translation class, I often ask students to summarize the opinions from two or three articles and evaluate them and then give their own thoughts on the topic. This requires the students to critically evaluate the information they are reading to form their own opinions. They often need to compare the new information with what they have already known or believed to be true and need to make sure the information they choose can best help them to fulfill the task of edition. At this stage, I may suggest new or different information sources or search strategies, facilitate class discussions or other activities to develop students' critical thinking and the ability to organize their thoughts. I also recommend some standards for evaluating references, especially online references. If necessary, I help the students to adjust the information source.

4. Effectively use the searching and translation tools to fulfill the tasks.

Once they finish collecting information, students begin to reflect on, adjust and organize their own edited text. At this stage, I carefully

observe the whole process when the students are adjusting and organizing the chosen information to produce their own edited text. When it comes to translation, I encourage the students to make use of translation software and translation memory software, e-dictionaries, etc. After trying this software, I spend much time discussing the problems with machine translation so that the students develop the idea that translation software, though helpful in saving time for looking up the meaning of each single word and the time for typing, cannot be relied on all the time and can never substitute human translation.

5. Help the students understand the ethical issues of information.

Using information involves many economic, legislative, and social issues. Students need to know that information and information technology can only be used within the framework of a legal system. They are obliged to observe the laws and rules about information usage. Most importantly, they must learn to cite the information properly. In order to enhance the students' legal awareness, I collaborate with the university librarians, asking the librarians to give lectures on the relevant laws and rules of information. University librarians also teach the students strategies for searching some relevant electronic databases at the university library's website.

Conclusions

This paper mainly discusses the importance of information literacy for the success of students in the Business Information Edition and Translation class. I discuss some steps to help students improve their information literacy, especially the ability to use the online information and sources.

My teaching practice shows that after one semester, students have a better understanding of the changing nature of the Internet and they

realize that they frequently need to learn strategies to effectively navigate each website they encounter. They also learn the need to develop and use specific search strategies when using the Internet. The opportunities to critically evaluate Internet resources help them gain a greater awareness and understanding of the unrestrained accesses of the Internet. In the process of evaluating different websites and some online machine translation tools, students become increasingly aware of the limitations of the Internet as a research tool and they develop more realistic expectations of machine translation software.

Through the evaluation and assessment process, students learn to discriminate and make judgments on web pages. One student wrote, "I find that the Internet can be useful to get information, but only if you know what you are looking for, and what you are looking at."

At America's National Information Literacy Forum web site, information literacy is seen as "a critical skill set needed for any learner and/or worker to thrive and compete effectively in today's global digital economy." China, as a developing economy in the world, should put more stress on incorporating information literacy in our teaching curriculum because "… as we move further into the 21st century … information literacy will become the standard-bearer for academic achievement, workforce productivity, competitive advantage, and national security" (National Forum on Information Literacy).

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Title

A View of Chinese Enterprises' Coping Strategies for Multinational Horizontal Mergers and Acquisitions from the Comparison of Two Cases: Coca-Cola's Acquisition of Huiyuan and Geely's Acquisition of Volvo

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Abstract

Horizontal merger, a merger occurring between companies producing similar goods or offering similar services, is an indispensable form of multinational M &A. As China successfully launched its accession into WTO, its economy is getting more and more involved into the world economy. As a result, many global M & A cases including horizontal mergers concerning China have appeared, among which are two recent examples - Coca-Cola's proposed acquisition of Huiyuan and Geely's successful acquisition of Volvo. This article tries to explore the current status of multinational M & A in China, its pros and cons, the factors which affect M & A and a remedy to the problems arising in multinational M & A in China.

Key words. Chinese enterprises, multinational, merger and acquisition

I. Introduction

Multinational mergers and acquisitions (M & A), as part of transnational investment, is becoming a trend in the world economy. According to the data collected, since the 1990s, global M & A cases have been increasing at a rate of 42% per year, which is equal to 11% of the World GDP. In 2004, the multinational M & A cases grew by 28%, and in total were worth 381 billion US dollars (Jin, 2009). Horizontal merger – a merger occurring between companies producing similar goods or offering similar services – is an indispensable form of multinational M & As. These cases are the most common, accounting for more than 50% of the total number of multinational M & As. As China successfully launched its accession into WTO, the Chinese economy is increasingly involved into the world economy. As a result, many global M & A cases concern China, including horizontal merger cases. Two recent examples of these – Coca-Cola's proposed acquisition of Huiyuan and Geely's successful acquisition of Volvo – are worth our attention.

II. A review of the two cases

On March 18th 2009, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOC), the authority responsible for merger control under the Anti-monopoly Law, published its decision to block Coca-Cola's proposed $2.4 billion acquisition of Chinese fruit juice producer Huiyuan as according to the official declaration, allowing the takeover "would have an unfavorable impact on competition" and the US company "may have been able to use its dominant status in the carbonated soft drinks market to use bundling and tie-ins of juice beverage sales ... leading to consumers being forced to accept higher prices and fewer choices of products." Further, "The concentration would have narrowed the room for survival

of medium and small-sized domestic juice firms, creating an unhealthy impact on the competitive structure of China's juice beverage market." If successful, this acquisition would be the largest buyout of a Chinese company by a foreign investor so far.

Approximately one year later, on August 2nd 2010, Zhejiang Geely Holding Group said that it had completed the acquisition of the Volvo car brand from Ford Motor Company, which has been the biggest overseas acquisition by a Chinese automaker. Ford had in March this year agreed to sell the Volvo brand to Geely for $1.8 billion.

Geely on that same day said it had paid $1.3 billion in cash and issued a $200 million note in London to complete the sale. Though the deal closing size is still lower than the figure arrived at by the two companies, Ford said Geely would pay the balance purchase price when the final adjustments on Volvo's value are made later this year. Headed by Geely Chairman Li Shufu and several new directors including Volvo's former president and chief executive Hans-Olov Olsson as vice-chairman, the new name list for the Volvo board was also decided. Geely also announced that Stefan Jacoby, the former chief executive of Volkswagen Group in America, would become the new chief executive of Volvo starting Aug 16th.

III. A comparison of the two cases

1. Public attitudes and media comments

While MOC's ban on Coca-Cola's acquisition of Huiyuan was received with cheers in China, many western media were still suspicious of the result. Some denounced the move as a protectionist measure that would also have negative implications for Chinese investment abroad, notably as Chinalco had proposed a $19.5 billion tie-up with Rio Tinto, the Anglo-Australian miner. Some thought that

this was an entirely political decision, as antitrust laws had been stretched in order to appease the sentiment of populist Chinese websites.

The case of Geely's acquisition of Volvo was quite to the contrary. According to the poll conducted by the authoritative online service provider Sohu.com Inc., the percentage of Chinese netizens who supported the acquisition was 92%, while in USA more than 50% voted in support of the acquisition. Many Chinese newspapers and magazines had reported this case with a proud tone, as can be manifested by the following report released via China's leading News Agency-Xinhua, "...as the first case for a Chinese automobile enterprise to purchase a luxurious foreign car brand, is of great significance to China" (Zhang Y., 2010) .

2. Laws applied

The rejection of Coca-Cola's acquisition of Huiyuan by MOC was due to its violation of China's Anti-monopoly Law, which has been implemented since August 1st 2008. To be specific, it countered Article 28, stating that "If a concentration has or may have effect of eliminating or restricting competition, the antimonopoly execution authorities shall take decision of prohibition." "The determination by MOC is in accordance with what is required by the checkup procedure of the law, so it is legitimate", said Mr. Shi Jianzhong, director of the Research Center for Laws Concerning Competitions from China University of Political Science and Law.

In the reverse situation, Geely's purchase of Volvo had been approved by all related countries and organizations, including the EU, USA and China. So Geely had benefitted from the legality of the purchase.

3. Brands related and their potential values

The brand is one of the most important aspects of all businesses, large ones or small ones. So, in short, a well-known brand gives an enterprise a major edge in the increasingly competitive market – "Huiyuan" has this brand-name recognition. Though the preserving of a country's brand seemingly belongs to a kind of protectionism, one can't deny the fact that China is at the lower-end of international specialization, which is why the development of China's economy is at the cost of its natural resources and environmental pollution.

China will lose a national brand because of the acquisition. And moreover, China will be deprived of the discourse power in the domestic and even international beverage industry. In addition, provided that Coke had successfully acquired Huiyuan's major brand "HuiYuan," this famous home-grown Chinese brand would be diluted by Coke's strong branding and could disappear in the market quickly just as Phoenix, the early brand leader for household television sets, has now faded from the Chinese market. Its successors included Jieyin (the toothpaste company), Yanwu (the leading brand of speakers) and so on. Who can ensure Huiyuan won't become the next sacrificial lamb?

Influenced by the recent financial turmoil, the assets of a great number of foreign corporations had been undervalued. This offers Chinese firms an opportunity to make acquisitions, of which Geely was an example. China has the world's largest auto market and, through Geely’s acquisition of Volvo, now owns one of the world's best known premium car brands. Geely, known for its cheap small cars, is developing a line of new mid-sized cars. What it lacks is a premium brand, strong in all the areas where Chinese carmakers still trail: technology, research and development, service and quality. Geely has emphasized repeatedly that the two firms will be run separately and Volvo will be maintained as an European brand, but it is beyond all

doubt that Geely's own brand will be polished in the process and enjoy a raise in its brand value.

4. A lead to monopoly?

Coca-Cola's acquisition of Huiyuan will probably result in a serious monopoly in China's soft drink market. Beyond what has been mentioned in the declaration of MOC, Coca-Cola may also exercise its dominant market position by taking advantage of bundling fruit juice drinks with carbonated drinks. When it came to the market portion in mainland China, Huiyuan was leading absolutely: its pure fruit juice took up 43.8% of the market; its mixed juice (fruit and vegetable juice) accounted for 42.4%. Coca-Cola, with its fruit and grain juice, was also a significant presence, occupying 9.7% of the market. Once combined, the juice products of the giant will definitely exceed 50% of the market share in mainland China (Zhang J., 2009). A monopoly can reasonably be foreseen, squeezing the living space of small and medium-sized enterprises, and hindering them from innovating or even entering into the market.

In the case of Geely, a monopoly will not possibly be generated, even in a relatively long period of time. Based on statistics released by China's auto industry, the market of mainland China was dominated by the following eight enterprises and groups: China FAW Group Corporation, Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation (Group), Dongfeng Motor Corporation, Chana International Corporation, Beijing Automobile Works. Co., Ltd, Guangzhou Automobile Industry Group Co., Ltd, Chery Automobile Co., Ltd and China National Heavy Duty Truck Group Co., Ltd. Besides, there were more than 160 automobile manufacturers in China. According to the data provided by Guoyan Wang Data Center, Geely ranked number 10 in the sales volume list of July, 2010 (see Table 1), accounting for 6% of the total sales of the

month. In terms of annual output, Geely achieved a production of 560,000 vehicles, making up 4% of China's total output (13.79 million), according to the analysis made by China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. Adding Volvo's turnout of 600,000 vehicles, a combination of the annual yield of the two companies still constitutes less than 9% of the total number, far below their rivals.

Table 1 – Chinese Automobile Sales Rankings, July 2010
(Unit: thousand)

Rank	Manufacturer	Sales	Rank	Manufacturer	Sales
1	Shanghai General Motors	73.2	6	BYD Autuo	33
2	Shanghai Volkswagen	72.8	7	Guangqi Honda	30.5
3	FAW-Volkswagen	62.4	8	FAW Toyota	27.2
4	Dongfeng Nissan	45.5	9	Chery	26.8
5	Beijing Hyundai	37.6	10	Geely	26.2

Data Source: Guoyan Wang Data Center

5. Significance of the comparison

Just as the report went, "(Geely's acquistion of Volvo is) the first case for a Chinese automobile enterprise to purchase a luxurious foreign car brand" (Zhang, 2010). So the Zhejiang based automaker still has a lot of challenges ahead, such as the integration of Volvo operations, the continuing promotion of Volvo in Europe and in emerging markets like China, as well as the preservation of capital after the case. Still, the acquisition was a good deal for Geely, as it had successfully acquired Volvo's total stocks, core technology and equipment, together with its marketing channels and advanced management experience.

Then what is the present situation for Huiyuan? As facts speak louder than words, a close look at the case is necessary.

Zhu Xinli, director of Huiyuan Group, had attempted to quit the terminal market and head upstream in the industry (Liu L.J., 2010). It was this proposal that led to the financing and combination with Coca-Cola. But the result was not satisfactory. Huiyuan shares, which were listed in Hong Kong, dropped 19.4% to HK $8.30 six months after MOC's rejection – although they remained nearly double their value immediately before Coca-Cola announced its intention. In addition to that, its profit margin decreased by 20% from the second half of 2008 to the first half of 2009, accompanied by a drop in its reputation (ibid).

To sum up, the evaluation of an international M & A does not depend on the nationality of the acquirer but on the fact of whether an M & A has reached its expectations.

IV. Chinese enterprises' coping strategies toward multinational horizontal mergers

In order to find out a series of proper coping strategies for Chinese companies, both a thorough research and a systematic analysis of the status of multinational M & A in China is needed.

1. Status for multinational M & A in China

1) Five-phase development of M & A in China

Many scholars agree with Mr. Shao Jianyun's point of view that the development of horizontal M & A in China can be generally divided into five phases (Shao, J. Y. et al, 1997).

i. Trials and starting (1984-1987)

Chinese enterprises began their trials of M & A from the late 1980s with the first case in Baoding City, Hebei Province. Within this period,

nine cases could be found in Baoding alone and fewer in other provinces. Small in both quantity and scale, almost all of these early horizontal mergers aimed to reduce the number of enterprises in deficit. Government's arrangements also characterized M & A in this period of time.

ii. Initial development (1988-1989)

M & A cases started to emerge in quantities from the end of 1986 in Beijing, Nanjing, Shenyang, Wuxi, Chengdu, and Shenzhen. China's first administrative law on M & A was enacted on February 19th 1989, leading to an avalanche of cases. The total number of cases exceeded 1,500 within 1988 and reached 2,559 in 1989. Features of this phase were the spread of M & A cases from several cities to all over China, and the emergence of other forms of M & A, including the vertical and mixed mergers. These M & As aimed to optimize the economical structure rather than merely reduce the number of corporations in the red. This two-year period also witnessed the presence of spontaneous M & As, besides the M & As organized by governments.

iii. Recession of M & A (1989-1991)

Starting from the late half of 1989, the economy of China started to move toward a stage of adjustment because of the contraction of its economy. Due to the shortage of funds, the quantity of M & A cases also decreased sharply. The trait of this period was the emergence of voluntary M & A led by governments for the purpose of upgrading the local industrial structure.

iv. Rapid growing period (1992-1996)

During this epoch, more and more M & A cases appeared shortly after China's market economy system was established in 1992. In 1992,

Beijing alone observed a total of 66 M & A cases. At the end of 1994, the number of property-exchanging markets across the country reached 20, leading to a breakthrough of both scales and forms for M & A in China. The opening of the Shanghai Stock Exchange in December, 1990 and the Shenzhen Stock Exchange in July, 1991 enabled a quick increase in the number of listed and stock companies as well as the financial recognition of M & A by stock markets. Features of this era included an enlarged scale and increased number of M & A cases; preferential policies for M & A of local or central government; new motivations for M & A, including purchasing the stocks of listed companies and the wish to expand; and the appearance of multinational M & A cases.

v. Standardizing period (1997-now)

Responding to strategic guidance, M & As in China is attaining maturity. A new policy aiming at "forming competitive trans-regional, multinational and transownership enterprise groups by employing fund as well as advocating mergers and acquisitions via market forces" was put forward in the 15th National Congress. Along with the extensive restructuring of state-owned enterprises as well as mergers and reconstructions of listed companies, China accelerated the enactment of more laws concerning M & As, so as to provide a stable environment for these transactions. Chinese enterprises also became involved in merging overseas companies. According to the statistics, from 1988-1996 China's annual transnational M & As amounted to 0.26 billion US dollars, accounting for 13.1% of China's total international investment. Compare this M & A figure to that of 1997, when the number grew to 0.799 billion US dollars, accounting for 31.2% of the total international investment that year. Furthermore, the number increased every subsequent year, with the figure as high as 1.647 billion US dollars in

2003 which was equal to 91.5% of the total transnational investment that year (ibid). In summary, the new traits of this time period include a significant increase in quantities and expansion of scales for M & A cases; the emergence of transnational M & As and foreign investment (also regarded as hot spot issues); and a shift in purpose for M & As, from obtaining the preferential policies towards more strategic and innovative aims.

2) The impact of joining in the WTO

Since China's entry into the WTO in November, 2001, rules and procedures for M & A of the WTO should also be taken into consideration. As some of the items in Chinese laws are not in accordance with those of the WTO, a careful verification in advance is needed in order to avoid the violation of WTO rules and even trade sanctions.

Beyond a complete understanding of the current trade rules implemented by the WTO**,** one should also recognize that there are pros and cons for China to advance M & As even within the frame of it.

2. Pros and cons for multinational horizontal M & A

1) Pros

Compared with other kinds of mergers such as vertical and mixed mergers, a horizontal merger takes place within one industry and between two companies that have a deepened understanding of the property as well as the production and capital factors. As a result, through a sensible and effective horizontal merger, the factors of production flow rationally which will lead to the sharing of the benefits of a scale economy, key competitive power and eventually a fast development of the enterprises (See Table 2).

Table 2-Chinese listed companies' profitability after horizontal mergers		
Industry	Average growth rate of annual revenue	Average growth rate of net profit
Garment and Textile	22.30%	81.40%
Automobile	64.50%	66.60%
Internet	28.30%	63.60%
Sanitation Technology	11.40%	46.20%
Telecommunication and its value-added services	48.70%	37.90%
Food and Beverage	19.20%	37.80%
Real estate	31.30%	32%
Construction	42.10%	29.10%
Transportation	29.10%	28.40%
IT	40.40%	21.40%
Data source: Qingke Research Center 2010.3		

Since the horizontal merger is such an effective method to realize the rapid concentration of capital and a larger scale of production, it is imperative for the enterprises of China to advance mergers between them.

2) Cons

However, uncertainties during the process also exist. Sometimes the loss of a national brand may probably be one of the unfortunate outcomes. Some even worry that China will be deprived of the discourse power in the internal or even international industry. Such

anxieties are not groundless. Besides the disappearance of brands, risks also involve the industrial structure adjustment, allocation of resources, conflict between different cultures and operation of the enlarged company. Clearly, it is important to launch the research of horizontal mergers thoroughly and to take the necessary precautionary measures as opportunities and challenges always co-exist.

3. Chinese enterprises' appropriate coping strategies

Blindness in business is dangerous, and it is extremely so for M & A cases. China's goal is to transform from a leading market to an engine of the world economy; proper coping strategies toward multinational M & As will serve as the nation’s cornerstone. As a result, it is necessary for two parties to carry out a series of profound risk assessments before a merger begins.

1) Sufficient information of the industry

Firstly, be sure to investigate the external environment as well as the economic circumstances and the soil for competition. The development and the status quo of a country's economy, supply and demand of the market concerned, and opponents' producing capabilities, distribution channels, promoting strategies, and competing products including their qualities, quantities, market shares, etc. shall all be made clear.

Secondly, get a correct and across-the-board assessment of the internal environment of the corporation concerned. The evaluation should consist of the following aspects: 1) The underlying trend of the enterprise and the industry, including the enterprise's competence, fame and the scale of the industry; 2) The plan of the firm, including its potential and future perspective; 3) The favorable and unfavorable conditions for the corporation compared with their rivals as well as the challenges and opportunities it faces; 4) Whether it is suitable to expand

the company and to what extent will the expansion be; 5) The basic information of the company such as its staff, capital, and equipment.

2) Research on related policies and regulations

The study has to consist of the trade policies and laws of the WTO, the governments and regions concerned. Though laws in China are becoming more flexible, the forms of M & A transactions and accompanying procedures authorized under Chinese law still differ in important respects from those in other countries, regions, or organizations. The available options generally depend on the result intended (acquisition, divestiture, or merger); whether the transaction involves other foreign-invested enterprises (FIEs) or domestic Chinese companies; and the extent to which the transaction takes place within Chinese regulatory jurisdiction. Transactions involving mergers or acquisitions with wholly domestic Chinese companies are undertaken by applying other series of laws, and are worth separate discussion.

People who want to get a deep understanding of the whole framework for M & As in China must be prepared: a handy web awaits them with laws, restrictions and governmental approval requirements embedded that applies to FIEs from establishment through dissolution. As one can observe, many of the strict restrictions on FIEs, such as minimum export requirements and the demand for utilizing advanced technology were lifted right after China's entry into the WTO. In the long run, China's business and legal environments will no longer pose obstacles to M & A transactions, and more rules consistent with the WTO can be expected.

3) Risk assessment

Only by carrying out an analysis combining the two previous aspects can one determine whether it is appropriate to expand a corporation by

means of a horizontal merger. The feasibility of the merger as well as the reliability and validity of the assessment is especially important for a fast-growing company.

Preventing a hostile takeover should also be included in the risk assessment as China has suffered from the loss of many once-famous brands and companies. As a result, it is necessary to take some measures such as a detailed future planning for the proper assets (including brand) and a valid agreement on the plan, preventing interference by the new management.

Let us take Geely again as an example. Before this horizontal merger, Geely had consulted with Hummer but had little interest in purchasing the brand due to its insufficient market potential and inconsistent market positioning with Geely. After careful judgment, Geely acquired the Australian transmission maker DSI – one of the two biggest independent automotive transmission manufacturers in the world. Consequently, Geely could take advantage of DSI's rich engineering resources in the gearbox sector to improve its own gearbox development. This acquisition also provided a technical platform for the improvement of Volvo, as DSI is also a major supplier to many famous auto manufacturers such as Ford and GM.

4) Sensible financing strategies

After a sufficient assessment of risks involved in a horizontal merger, one should mainly consider two things in the preparation step. As a great deal of funding is needed for a horizontal merger, financing – whether a company can raise enough money within the time required – becomes a critical factor in acquiring another firm. Financing decisions play crucial roles in determining the capital amount and structure of the enlarged company. Based on the above principles, an acquirer should ratify a series of steps, arrange the term for the pay-off of debt,

determine the funds necessary for maintaining a well-balanced operation, and different payback periods with diverse loans. The aim is to secure a reasonable capital structure and to ensure a low cost without leading to a funding crisis.

5) Rational organizational systems

The structures of multinational M & A deals in China are closely related to those of the corporate groups permitted by Chinese laws. With a proper uniting or modifying of the existent organizational systems as well as a methodical plan, companies can efficiently perform the functions such as procurement, marketing, sales, invoicing, and after-sales servicing.

Weber (1968) developed a theory of authority structures, describing organizational activity on the basis of authority relations. Under his theory, authorities would be clearly defined by building a structure of tasks, responsibilities, and decision-making entities. His ideal bureaucracy principles include: 1) Division of labor, through which jobs are broken down into simple, routine, and well-defined tasks; 2) Authority hierarchy, whereby positions are organized in a hierarchy, and each lower position is controlled and supervised by a higher one; 3) Formal selection, through which members are selected on the basis of technical qualifications (training, education, or formal examination); 4) Official rules and regulations, whereby managers must depend on official rules to ensure uniformity; 5) Impersonality, with no personal preference of employees; 6) Career orientation, whereby managers do not own the units they manage but work for salaries and pursue their careers.

By putting these theories into practice, one can efficiently establish or verify the system of a modern and united enterprise.

6) Corporate culture uniting

A good conformity of corporate cultures is also essential to the success of a merger. According to Wikipedia, corporate culture is the total sum of the values, customs, traditions, and meanings that make a company unique. The values of a corporate culture influence the ethical standards within a corporation as well as managerial behavior. Those who pay insufficient attention to the cultural compatibility of a post-merger environment will run the risk of losing staff and business momentum.

The horizontal merger between Daimler AG (the German auto maker) and Chrysler (the famous US car producer) provides a best example to illustrate this point. With the firm's new headquarters situated in Germany and English as the official firm language, certain difficulties of communication were encountered almost daily. Even more challenging were the different styles of work: Germans are famous for their precise work and serious attitude. They also attach great importance to quality products. However, Americans advocate a free running of enterprises and are fond of the quick promotions of new and lower price commodities, sometimes with certain losses in quality. As the original firms differed on several basic management philosophies (such as how to make money), it is no wonder that the merger ended in separation.

At the same time, Chinese companies are more willing to learn sophisticated, strategic practices from foreign partners and take a positive attitude toward the adoption of a new culture. But intention is not everything. Only successful programs can motivate the productive and talented staff to have a shared vision and value, a clear understanding of short-and long-term goals, the opportunity to put new ideals into practice and to be rewarded for their contributions. What's

more, in an era suffering from market saturation, the quality of the staff of an organization has become the only sustainable competitive power.

Then what should a manager and his or her employees do in order to achieve a smooth combination of the firms? For an executive, many traits are required: awareness of the corporate culture, previous merger experience, communication and organization skills, personal charisma and a quick establishment of the new leading group. For employees, as they take part in the creation and maintenance of a specific corporate culture, it is vital for them to keep high expectations for the new firm and to provide feedbacks to the manager. So, in short, the correct tactics will be the establishment of a pertinent corporate culture on a mutually-respecting basis. In order to achieve this objective, government support and training and direction for the leadership are also necessary.

V. Conclusions

Gone are the days when foreign companies wishing to invest in China were limited. They may now purchase operating Chinese businesses and may restructure their existing investments in China through M & As. And these developments are not confined to foreign investors only. Domestic Chinese companies are also merging and acquiring one another, and the more successful among them have begun to buy out foreign investors. The result of all these is a rapidly expanding M & A market in China.

Horizontal merger, the mainstream of multinational M & As, is an exterior path to development for a company in a short period of time. China has been on the 5th tide of its M & A, and it is developing like rising winds and surging clouds with the help of it in order to manage the adjusting and upgrading of its industrial structure. At the same time, the demand for more internationalized enterprises is also increasing in China.

However, as the trend flows, more and more questions seem to arise. Are multinational M & As beneficial to China and Chinese customers? What kinds of attitudes should Chinese firms take and what strategies should they adopt when they are taking part in a multinational M & A? Why haven't many enterprises met their original goals and their expectations? In order to find the answers, a study of the two recent cases may provide us with some hints.

On all accounts, coping strategies toward multinational M & As are playing more and more important roles in the development of Chinese enterprises. The cores of most failures are due to the improper tactics in organizing, managing, and culture uniting. The success of tomorrow is based on the efforts made today; all the work conducted now will probably lead to a rewarding exploration for Chinese firms. Equipped with a more open attitude and mature running expertise, Chinese enterprises are bound to take more advantages of multinational M & As which will ultimately facilitate the progress of the economy of China.

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Title

Towards Business Pragmatics

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to approach business pragmatics based on the literature review of business discourse research relevant to pragmatics and the formulation of central concepts essential to business pragmatics. Business pragmatics is usually evaluative in that the aim is to evaluate contextual factors determining successful business interactions, and to find out which strategies or behaviors are associated with success. Successful business communication, partly determined by language use, depends on business people who are pragmatically competent in business contexts. Therefore, the central concepts essential to business pragmatics are business context and business pragmatic competence.

Key words. business pragmatics, business context, business pragmatic competence

1. Introduction

The 21st century has brought a swift boom in countless areas of human activity, among them technology, computer science, and business. Language use in these specialized areas is receiving more and more attention from researchers in linguistics and business communication. "Business discourse is all about how people communicate using talk or writing in commercial organizations in order to get their work done" (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2007, p. 3). In the process of economic globalization, business discourse is language use which takes place in all economic and social interactions centering on trade, commerce, investment, management, finance, marketing, tourism, etc. One of the aims of business discourse research is to find out how people use language to achieve their business and interpersonal goals in the workplace.

Pragmatics, generally defined as the study of language in use, is characterized by the study of linguistic choices, context, and language users' intention with the purpose of making sense of language use in different types of context. In this sense, "pragmatics is a very useful tool in business discourse research because business discourse is a site of communication where language plays a subtle role in negotiating human relationships, and hence, the outcomes of a transaction" (Kong, 2009, p. 241). Therefore, pragmatics is a disciplinary perspective on business discourse research.

Chen, Cramer & Kojuma (1996) first use the term "business pragmatics" when examining how far culture-specific traits persist or change in both American and Japanese business people who interact for business interactions. Shaw (2001) introduces the term "prescriptive business pragmatics", which describes how various transactions should be carried out, teaching people how to perform functions like giving presentations, negotiating, and serving customers. In general, business

pragmatics can be defined as the study of language use in business interactions.

The purpose of this paper is to approach business pragmatics based on (a) a literature review of business discourse research relevant to pragmatics and (b) the formulation of central concepts essential to business pragmatics. Section 2 reviews some pragmatic strategies and contextual factors in successful business interactions as discussed in a range of scholarly publications. Section 3 presents two central concepts in business pragmatics: business context and business pragmatic competence.

2. Previous work on business pragmatics

There is a lot of descriptive and interpretive research that is concerned about how people manage to communicate and achieve understanding often in spite of linguistic and other barriers, but "work on business pragmatics is usually evaluative in that the aim is to find out which strategies or behaviors are associated with success" (Trosborg & Shaw, 2005). It is safe to say that previous business discourse research is mostly success-oriented. Previous work on business pragmatics tends to answer the following questions:

(1) What pragmatic strategies can be exploited to ensure success in business interactions?
(2) What contextual factors will determine success in business interactions?
(3) What influences success in cross-cultural business interactions?

2.1 Pragmatic strategies in successful business interactions

Successful business interactions involve, among other things, favorable relationship and organizational goodwill, i.e. the attainment

of business and interpersonal goals. To establish a strong business relationship, business people should relate to each other in three important ways: positively, personally, and professionally. Some of the ways the sender can do include the following: stressing the receiver's interests and benefits; using positive wording; doing more than is expected (Krizan, Merrier, Logan & Williams, 2007, p. 4).

In business interactions, favorable relationships can be characterized by concord and solidarity, good impression, effective leadership, to name but a few. Business people may exploit pragmatic strategies to attain the above interpersonal goals. Firstly, the person deixis "we", both hearer-inclusive and hearer-exclusive, is often used in business meetings to achieve ambiguous referential meanings for the sake of concord (Poncini, 2004, p. 144). Furthermore, people tend to prefer *we*, *us*, *our* to *you* and *I* in business interactions, for example, when performing requests in the workplace, business correspondence and negotiations, since the use of first-person plural deixis is more cooperative and intimate while the use of other deictic terms is more threatening and less sociable. For instance, "if we just tell them exactly where it is …" is preferred to "if you just tell them …" when requests are performed (Holmes, 2000).

Moreover, verbal humor, especially supportive humor, contributes to concord and social cohesion in business interactions, increasing feelings of solidarity or collegiality between co-workers, colleagues, managers and employees (Tannen, 1994). Supportive humor agrees with, adds to, elaborates or strengthens the propositions or arguments of previous contribution(s), and takes the form of very collaboratively constructed humor sequences, an obvious means by which people ''do collegiality'' at work (Holmes, 2000). Adopting this style, people in workplaces tend to integrate contributions tightly, using devices such as echoing, mirroring or completing another's utterance.

Secondly, favorable relationships are built on the basis of good impression. In an increasingly competitive employment market, making a good impression on one's interviewers could make the difference between getting the job or not. Job applicants' lexical-grammatical choices are certain to influence interviewers' impressions of applicants during interviews, and politeness theory is used to highlight the beliefs that motivated the candidates' linguistic choices in negotiating their expertise. Lipovsky (2006), based on the analysis of five role-played interviews and four authentic interviews, discusses how job applicants negotiate their expertise politely so as to make a good impression on their interviewers. To be specific, what is considered being polite in a job interview? What level of politeness is appropriate? How do interviewers assess the politeness of the candidate they are interviewing? For instance, the candidates' style of speaking with confidence and enthusiasm protects their interviewers' face as it removed the need to request extra information. It also enhanced the candidates' own face as they looked more proactive in their approach to the interview and more reliable in a general way.

Thirdly, favorable relationships are further embedded in effective leadership. Language use helps to achieve the construction of leadership in business interactions. Tannen (1994) and Holmes (2000) show that female managers sometimes adopt male humor to make their leadership more prominent. Schnurr, Marra & Holmes (2007) investigate the ways in which leaders in ethnically diverse workplaces in New Zealand construct themselves as effective leaders in interaction with subordinates, including contestive humor and the use of formal speech in meeting openings. Nielsen (2009) analyzes authentic verbal communication between middle managers and employees, especially managers' interpretative discourse in business meetings, and concludes that two kinds of repair, i.e. clarifications and self-repair, are important

ways in which middle managers "do leadership". When it comes to the degree of imposition in business interactions, Holmes' (2000) research on language in the workplace shows that leaders in companies tend to use many different strategies to achieve low imposition when giving directives, including using the pronoun *we* instead of *you* to soften the impact of the directive; using hedged structures to make the statement less strong; using modals to soften the strength of the directive.

Successful business communication aims at not only favorable relationships but also organizational goodwill, which means stressing benefit to the organization. Business people do so by ensuring that their communications reflect positively on the quality of the company's products or services (Krizan, Merrier, Logan & Williams, 2007, p. 4). Metaphor, for instance, is exploited in advertising products. Metaphors in commercials take different forms, including gender metaphors, linguistic metaphors, visual metaphors, and other types of multi-modal metaphors (Velasco-Sacristán & Fuertes-Olivera, 2006a; 2006b). In order to attract customers' attention, manufacturers choose novel target domains when constructing metaphors, and at the same time adopt the strategy of muting, i.e. imposing artificial mapping constraints on innovative metaphors, to minimize negative effects of metaphorical mapping and maintain positive effects (Ungerer, 2000).

Stressing benefit to the organization also means obtaining the goodwill of customers which is essential to any business or organization. If a company has the goodwill of its customers, it has their confidence and often their continued business. In order to win goodwill, the company may take advantage of some pragmatic strategies. For example, Del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck (2009) explores how TV commercials convey overt information about female hygiene products with positive and off-record politeness strategies, including the following: claiming common ground; conveying that the seller and

potential buyer are co-operators; fulfilling H's want (for some X); inviting conversational implicature via hints triggered by violation of Gricean Maxims; being vague or ambiguous. Trosborg and Shaw (2005) present a list of possible strategies for handling complaints in customer interaction as follows: thanking for the complaint, direct apologies, indirect apologies, remedial acts, offer of repair, checking customer satisfaction, prevention of future mistakes, and rejections, which promotes retention of customers and increased sales. The two ritual acts of thanking and apologizing are frequently recommended as obligatory, such as "*Thank you for taking the trouble to complain—I realize it has taken both time and effort*". The more goodwill a company has, the more successful it can be.

2.2 Contextual factors in successful business interactions

Language use (pragmatic strategies) for successful business interactions is determined by contextual factors related to the situation in which business is conducted. Social distance between *S* (speaker) and *O* (others) (in terms of status, power, role, etc.), for instance, is a highly relevant factor. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) discuss possible linguistic variations in business correspondence containing requests which are attributable to the influence of the interpersonal variables of power, social distance, imposition and, in particular, status. Jung (2005) explores how power affects the appropriateness of politeness strategies used by Korean business professionals in business correspondence. For instance, positive politeness (solidarity enforcement strategies) is typically used (i.e. in 82% of cases) when the writer's power is greater than the reader's.

However, social distance is not the only relevant factor, but is simply one among many. Variation in language use cannot therefore be accounted for solely by factors pertaining to the interlocutors, such as

social distance and power (Vine 2009). Other factors may include cultural factors, situational factors (such as purpose of interaction, meeting type), etc. Bilbow (2002) concludes that two factors (participants' cultural predispositions and meeting-type) appear to significantly affect how and when commissive speech acts are used in business meetings. Jung (2005) investigates how national culture always affects the choice of politeness strategies by Korean business professionals in business settings.

Moreover, those contextual factors work together to determine language use on most occasions. Nickerson (2000, p. 54) investigates contextual factors affecting the use of written English and written communication patterns within British subsidiaries in the Netherlands, including factors related to corporate culture (cultural differences) and factors related to corporate activity (type of company, departmental activity) to find, for instance, that the relationship the subsidiary has with its Head Office in Britain clearly influences the amount and type of written English required. Vine (2009) explored the frequency and expression of directives in data from three managers working in two New Zealand government departments based on the following contextual factors: purpose of interaction, participant status and social distance, potential gender differences. Some findings are that the purpose of interaction influences the frequency and density of directives, with directives being much more frequent in problem-solving and task-allocation meeting, and that the male manager, who uses a larger percentage of imperatives (the most forceful form) to express his directives than the female managers, comes across as more forceful and direct.

2.3 Success in cross-cultural business interactions

With the development of globalization and economic integration, cross-cultural business interactions are booming. When people use a second language for cross-cultural communication, pragmatic differences in the business world can lead to communication problems such as misunderstandings and pragmatic failure. For instance, Miller's (2000) research on negative assessments in Japanese-American workplace interaction indicates that cultural differences result in cross-cultural misunderstandings. Spencer-Oatey & Xing (2004) analyze conflicts and misunderstanding that a Chinese business delegation were confronted with in UK and find that the root cause is the two parties' different understanding of "identity face", the value that people claim for themselves in terms of social or group roles. Cultural differences tend to account for most communication problems, and thus become the focus of cross-cultural pragmatics in business.

By contrast, Ryoo's (2007) research on business services interactions between African American customers and Korean immigrant shop owners tends to draw a different conclusion that the main determining factor in ritual service talk is not the interlocutors' cultural background but their situational roles. What is more, interculturality does not hinder and instead promotes successful communication.

It is noteworthy that "more research into intercultural business communication needs to go beyond a focus on miscommunication and cultural differences" (Varner, 2007). Cross-linguistic research may further our understanding of stumbling blocks to successful cross-cultural workplace communication and provide insights for the teaching of socio-pragmatics in second language acquisition settings. For example, Staplers (1995) and Neumann (1997) study respectively different ways of expressing disagreements by the Dutch and French, and different request types by Norwegians and Germans, which both reveal that people in business contexts prefer clarity and directness over

politeness and indirectness in performing face-threatening acts such as disagreements and requests. Birkner & Kern (2000) make a cross-cultural analysis of different presentation styles and disagreement management during job interviews by people from West Germany and East Germany respectively. Grieve (2009) reports on a study of cultural differences in conversational structure and the expression of apology in German and Australian workplace telephone discourse to find that Australians prefer to avoid face-threatening acts and, if an apology is required, minimize threat to face by telling half-truths while Germans are more likely to provide a truthful account of events, express disappointment and chastise their interlocutors.

Methodologically, though work on business pragmatics is usually evaluative in that the aim is to find out which strategies or behaviors are associated with success, it cannot be separated from being descriptive (describing what strategies are used), prescriptive (prescribing what strategies should be used), interpretive (interpreting why such strategies are used), and comparative (comparing strategies used in different cultures). Theoretically, previous work on business pragmatics accords with two main schools of thought identified in contemporary pragmatics: Anglo-American (the component view of pragmatics) and European Continental (the perspective view of pragmatics). It is concerned not only with the central topics of inquiry including politeness, speech acts, deixis, etc. but also with general functional (i.e. cognitive, social, cultural) perspective on linguistic phenomena, such as cognitive-pragmatic perspective (metaphor), social-pragmatic perspective (impression management), cross-cultural-pragmatic perspective. Pragmatic strategies guaranteeing successful business interactions will involve more than one discipline on most occasions. Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken (2007, p. 39, 57) argue that it is a must to take a multi-disciplinary and multi-method approach to

business discourse research, which coincides with the European Continental approach of pragmatics. A multidisciplinary perspective on language use is what pragmatics is doing and will do.

3. Towards business pragmatics

Pragmatics has potential application to all fields with a stake in how utterances are understood, including man-machine interaction, communicational difficulties in face-to-face interaction, second language learning (Levinson, 1983, p. 376), which are also referred to as applied pragmatics. Applied pragmatics focuses also on issues other than mentioned above, in particular on problems of interaction that arise in professional practices where successful communication is critical, including medical interviews, counseling, judicial sessions, etc. In professional practice, participants should be competent enough to manage uncertainty and risk in turbulent contexts, and to create and maintain trust through interaction (Candlin, 2009) for the sake of success. Managing risk, trust, and success, situated and context-dependent, is discursively constructed, i.e. a discursive process of mediating meaning. The same is true for business interactions. Therefore, two assumptions are formulated as follows:

(1) Successful business interactions are discursively constructed in business contexts.
(2) To guarantee successful business interactions, business people need to be pragmatically competent.

In order to explore the two assumptions and resulting concepts essential to business pragmatics, i.e. business context and business pragmatic competence, which are stepping-stones to approaching business pragmatics, we draw on insights mainly from Leech's (1983) pragmatics and Kecskes' (2008) dynamic model of meaning on the one

hand, and on the other hand, Bhatia's (2004) concept of discursive competence in professional practice and Varner's (2007) conceptual model of intercultural business communication.

3.1 Meaning construction and business context

According to Kecskes' (2008) dynamic model of meaning, meaning is the result of interplay between the speaker's private context and the hearer's private context in the actual situational context as understood by the interlocutors. Therefore, the first priority is to understand context and its roles in business interactions. Business context, though notoriously all-inclusive and indivisible, is segmented into the following parts for the convenience of research, as demonstrated in Fig. 1.

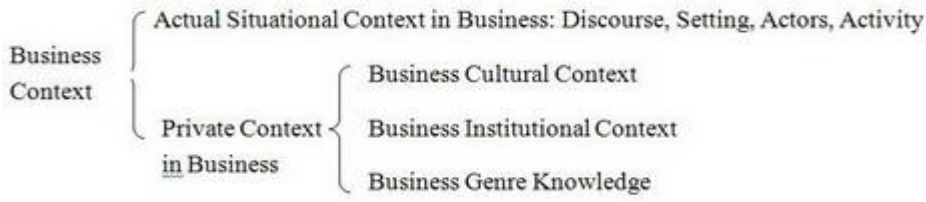

Fig.1 Business Context

3.1.1 Actual situational context in business interaction

The actual situational context in Kecskes' (2008) model is part of the context created online as discourse unfolds, i.e. the interlocutors' present experience of the outside world. The actual context in business interactions comprises the actual language used within business discourse, and the online situation in which business exchange is conducted. The latter is characterized by a schematic structure of social situations (van Dijk, 2009, p. 39) as follows: a Setting/Scene category,

featuring location, time and various kinds of physical and social circumstances, and a main category for what happens in such a scene consisting of Actors (personal identities and social identities, such as gender, roles, etc.) engaging in some kind of Activity (plans, intention, purposes). For instance, business people have to be aware of their own and others' roles in the current situation, such as employers or subordinates in the company; of the purpose of interaction, like problem-solving or task-assignment. In general, the actual situation context plays a selective role in meaning construction. It will help interlocutors to determine appropriate strategies and interpret online meanings used in business interactions.

3.1.2 Private context in business interaction

"Prior experience creates private context that gets encapsulated in lexical items in the mind of speakers of a particular speech community" (Kecskes, 2008). Kecskes' (2008) term "private context" is followed to accentuate the differences as well as similarities between the speaker's and the hearer's context, and their dynamism and interplay in business interactions. Business people acquire their private contexts from their prior experience of the business world.

Firstly, any communication requires specific knowledge about the topic and business communication must take into account the specific business context (Varner, 2007), which is labeled as business institutional context. In order to ensure success in business communication, business people need to be equipped with professional expertise, including knowledge of institutional goals, corporation size and activity, organizational structure, available technology, methods of control, business strategies, business practices, working procedures, etc. As far as institutional goals are concerned, business interactions involve an orientation to some core goal, task or identity conventionally

associated with a business organization. For example, products need to be sold to customers, and employees need to be put into the right positions to maximize the effective operations of the corporation (Nickerson, 2000, p. 37). Institutional context is instrumental in business interactions in that it highlights professionalism and business-orientation within a business context and distinguishes business context from other contexts.

Secondly, business interactions are grounded in certain cultures, and business cultural knowledge is of vital significance, especially in cross-cultural business interactions. Business people need to know about the national culture, the general business culture, and the specific corporate culture. Vandermeeren (1999) identifies national culture within the same type of business as a determining factor in the amount and type of foreign languages used in promotional material. Corporate culture, a contributing factor to economic success, refers to "the pattern of beliefs, values and learned ways of coping with experience that have developed during the course of an organizations' history, and which tend to be manifested in its material arrangement and in the behaviors of its members" (Brown, 1995, p. 5). For instance, the use of the English language is part of the corporate culture in a Chinese-foreign Equity Joint Venture. Besides, cultural adaptation and cultural empathy are equally important in cross-cultural communication in order to achieve cooperation and common ground, and eventually business goals.

Thirdly, business interactions manifest regularity to a large extent in that the configuration of "recurrent situations that occur within a business organization, the participants involved and the social action that is viewed as necessary by the participants" (Nickerson, 2000, p. 38) determines the typified communicative practices of an organization, i.e. genres (e.g. promotional genres). In short, professional practice determines discursive practice. Then business people need to embody

both discursive practice and professional practice, i.e. business genre knowledge. Business genre knowledge, highly structured and conventionalized in form and content, refers to business people's repertoire of situationally appropriate responses to recurrent business situations, including the awareness and understanding of the shared practices of certain business communities as well as their choices of genres in order to perform their everyday tasks. In this sense, context is constitutive, especially in intra-cultural communication, since it helps interlocutors predict and expect conventionalized language use.

It deserves to be specially noted that the tentative division may result in some overlap between actual situational context and private context but they highlight different aspects. To take "goal" in both parts for example. The former underscores the interlocutors' online evaluation of the relatively flexible "goal" in the current situation while the latter emphasizes their entrenched knowledge of the persistent business "goal", which can be accessible at any time. They work together to facilitate business interactions.

3.1.3 Features of business context

Business context displays generality and specificity in that it shares the same attributes as other forms of context and at the same time possesses its unique attributes. The generality of business context refers to the universal features of context. Firstly, context is dynamic. Dynamism of context means that "when people speak or write they craft what they need to express to fit the actual situational context in which they are communicating. But, at the same time, the way people speak or write, including the words, expressions, and utterances they use, create that very situation or context in which the given communication occurs" (Kecskes, 2008).

Secondly, context is cognitive in that it is a subjective representation of people's experience. Private context is derived from people's repeated experience of similar and regular situations, which is then converted into expectations as to what will or will not happen, and on which people rely to understand and predict how the world around them works. For instance, people's knowledge of business organizations, including type of business activities, corporate culture, etc., takes the form of interconnected mental models stored in their minds and tends to be activated in response to similar situations.

Thirdly, context is selective and constitutive. For one thing, context is seen as a selector of lexical features because it activates some of these features while leaving others in the background. Meanings are specified entirely by their contexts (Kecskes, 2008). On the other hand, context may help predict and expect conventional language use. To some extent, it is exactly these standard contexts that linguistic meanings are tied to. As mentioned above, business genre knowledge will facilitate the process of achieving business goals since many situations are shared across the business world.

The specificity of business context refers to its distinguishing features. One is that business context is professional. "Just as language use is one of the most important means of fulfilling professional objectives, similarly the elements of professional practice largely determines the nature and use of linguistic behavior in professional contexts" (Bhatia, 2004). To put it simply, professional practice shapes discursive practice. Therefore, professional expertise in business interactions defines that business context is business-expertise-oriented and different from other daily contexts.

The other feature is that business context is synergistic. Varner (2000) argues that intercultural business communication is more than the sum of its parts: culture, business and communication, and that the

process actually results in a new synergy and presents a new construct. Similarly, business context is more than the sum of professional expertise and daily context, but a new emergent structure from their blending and interaction. Corporate cultures are examples of the synergy of diverse cultures. For instance, the English writing tasks of a British subsidiary company in the Netherlands are influenced by a variety of factors collectively referred to as corporate activity (Nickerson, 2000, p. 61), including type of company, departmental activity, profession or rank, participants' relationship, communication task, etc.

3.1.4 Meaning construction in business communication

Since professional practice determines the typified communicative practices of an organization, business cultural context and business institutional context deriving from professional practice determine business genre knowledge. Furthermore, business genre knowledge is the interface between private context in business and actual situational context in business because genre, not only linguistic but also socio-cognitive and ethnographic, extends the analysis beyond the textual product to the specific institutional context. As demonstrated in Fig. 2, the private context in business encoded and formulated in an utterance (actual linguistic context in business) is uttered (or written) ''out there'' in the world by a speaker in a situation (actual situational context in business), and is matched (''internalized'') to the private context ''inside'' the head of the hearer (prior business knowledge). Meaning construction in business communication is the result of interplay between the speaker's private context and the hearer's private business context in the actual situational context as understood by the interlocutors.

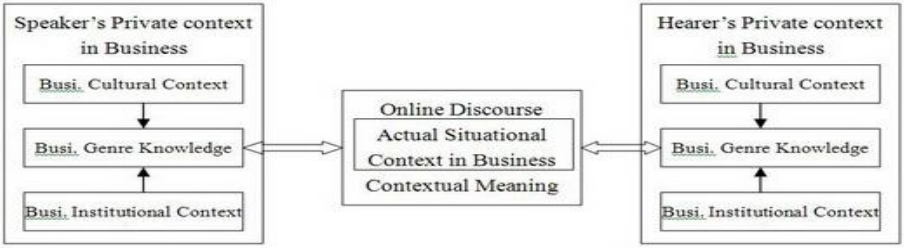

Fig. 2 Meaning Construction in Business Communication

3.2 Pragmatic competence in business interaction

Successful business communication depends on pragmatically competent business people. How do business people acquire pragmatic competence to ensure successful business communication? What does it mean for business people to become pragmatically competent in business interactions?

Business people acquire pragmatic competence both naturally and socially. Pragmatic competence in business is partly acquired as linguistic and cognitive abilities mature. Furthermore, it is mostly learned as they gain a full participation and membership in a society, especially in a business community so that they are acculturated into it and acquire specific manners of business communication that reflect beliefs, values, practices of the given business culture.

Pragmatic competence is broadly defined as the ability to use language appropriately in a social context. Generally speaking, the major components of pragmatic competence are systems of knowledge related to speech acts in general and speech acts of certain, basic types in particular, as well as systems of knowledge related to what is implicated in addition to what is said. Following Leech (1983), most scholars divide pragmatic competence into two types: pragmalinguistic competence (the ability to use linguistic resources available to perform

pragmatic functions) and sociopragmatic competence (the ability to achieve appropriate use of linguistic resources in a given cultural context. Bhatia (2004) defines discursive competence in professional practice as the knowledge and skills that expert professionals use in specific discourse situations of their everyday professional activities, which consist of three parts: textual space (textual knowledge), socio-cognitive space (genre knowledge in relation to professional practice), and social space (social and pragmatic knowledge).

The above account of general pragmatic competence suggests two levels from which business pragmatic competence could be investigated. In terms of goals, it is the competence of using language appropriately to achieve business and interpersonal goals, which feed into each other. Based on Cap (2009, p. 5), it is business people's ability of using language to represent the organization, i.e. building up the image and identity of the organization, and to accomplish smaller-size goals, such as promoting one's point of view and managing their floor in a business meeting. In terms of components, business pragmatic competence, in line with Leech (1983) and Bhatia (2004), is argued to comprise the following: business pragmalinguistic competence, business generic competence, and business sociopragmatic competence.

Business pragmalinguistic competence represents not only an ability to master the linguistic code, but also an ability to use knowledge of the business cultural context, business institutional context, and actual situational context to construct and interpret business discourse. When performing requests in the workplace, for instance, mangers should be able to take into account not only the cultural factor (e.g. high-context or low-context culture) but also the situation factor (e.g. purpose of interaction, role relationship) to choose appropriate linguistic resources. The same is true for responding to customer complaints.

Business generic competence is the ability to respond to recurrent and novel business situations by constructing, interpreting, using and often exploiting generic conventions and practices embedded in business cultures to achieve institutional goals. For example, advertising brochures are expected to follow four distinct stages (Sobhie, 2009, p. 50) in which the company first presents the brochure, then highlights the products and their benefits, provides reasons showing why these benefits are important to the customers and invites them to contact the company. Moreover, business people should associate their language use with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts. When the company promotes benefits in their advertising brochures, declarative clauses are believed to be typical choices for supplying information.

Business sociopragmatic competence incorporates an ability to use language more widely to participate effectively in a variety of business contexts to give expression to one's social identity, to construct favorable relationships (between customers and members of the business organization, and between members of the business organization), and also to establish social structures and social processes in certain business communities (for instance, multinational corporations). This type of competence is illustrated by the female manager's use of male humor for leadership (Holmes, 2000), the use of politeness strategies in job interview to achieve good impression (Lipovsky, 2006), the use of metaphor in advertisements to enhance the company's reputation (Ungerer, 2000), to name but a few.

4. Conclusions

Successful business communication, partly determined by language use, depends on business people who are pragmatically competent in business contexts. Business context comprises the following

components: the actual situational context, business cultural context, business institutional context, and business genre knowledge. It is noteworthy that business context is more than the sum of professional expertise and daily context but a new emergent structure from their blending and interaction. Meaning construction in business communication is the result of interplay between the speaker's private context and the hearer's private business context in the actual situational context as understood by the interlocutors.

Therefore, business people need to evaluate contextual factors before choosing appropriate pragmatic strategies. Business pragmatics is usually evaluative and interpretative in that the aim is to find out how to be successful in business interactions, and ultimately prescriptive in that it states what should be done to be successful in business. Such individuals are expected to be equipped with business pragmatic competence. It consists of business pragmalinguistic competence, business generic competence, and business sociopragmatic competence.

A full understanding of business context and pragmatic business competence will pave the way for the construction of business pragmatics, which will lend support to the research into business discourse and the teaching of business discourse at different levels. Nevertheless, business pragmatics still remains to be investigated in a systematic way.

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