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新媒体技术下中国高校商务英语教师信念及教学模式演化研究

Business English Teachers Beliefs and Attitudes Towards Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Related Pedagogy in Chinese Higher Education

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内 容 简 介

以维果斯基和恩格斯托姆的活动理论为基础,通过案例研究探讨了新媒体技术改革情境下中国商务英语教师信念及教学模式的相互作用和演化过程。书中梳理了国内外教师专业发展和外语教学模式演化的相关文献,对南方一所重点大学商务英语教师团队在新媒体教学情境下的教学信念和态度、教学实践与专业发展状况进行了实证研究,呈现了他们的信念和教学实践模式的双向互动过程,分析了教育技术革新在不同教师个体中的融合过程,总结出促进商务英语教师整合新媒体技术、形成以学生为中心教学模式的内在推力,对我国商务英语教师培养产生积极影响。

新媒体技术下中国高校商务英语教师信念及教学模式演化研究
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Contents

Chapter 1　Introduction

1. 1　Introduction

　　The current book presents the process and findings of a qualitative multi-case study that explores Chinese higher educational teachers' attitudes and beliefs of adopting Information and Communication Technology(ICT)in English for Business Purposes(EBP)(see Section 1. 2)teaching in a Chinese higher educational institution. The impact of contextual factors and personal beliefs on their ICT pedagogy will be examined. As this introductory chapter will show, the wide spread acceptance of ICT in EBP teaching in the world has been echoed in Chinese higher educational EBP teaching. Such similarity makes it possible for the study to draw reference from researches in other countries for comparison. However, understanding of ICT and EBP teaching in a Chinese context is not exactly the same as that in the western countries such as the UK and the USA. This therefore makes the study distinguished for its special contexts as well as the way it approaches the research questions from the teachers' perspective.

　　The study has been conducted in a period after China became a World Trade Organization(WTO)member and experienced a rapid expansion of international trade(Pang,Zhou et al. 2002). This has accelerated EBP teaching but also challenged the quality of EBP teaching because business and governments urged higher education to produce graduates with both English proficiency and business competence in a more globalised working environment(Ye and Chen 1999;Lin 2004;Niu and Wolff 2005). At the same time, the National English Curriculum encourages ICT to be adopted and integrated into higher education (MOE China 1999,2006;Zhu 1999). In many universities, the use of ICT for

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teaching has become part of the criteria for a qualified higher educational teacher's teaching practice(Ye and Chen 1999). This was the context for the teacher participants in this study.

1.2　Teaching English for Business Purposes(EBP)

1.2.1　Teaching English for Business Purposes(EBP)

Teaching EBP has long been seen as a separate branch within English Language teaching(ELT). In recent years, teaching English for Business Purposes has become more and more popular. In 1994, among the "24 new published materials in ESP, 21 were about Business English" (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998, p. 9). Along with the popularity of EBP teaching is the introduction of ICT and the shifting of teacher-centred to a student-centred learning approach (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998; He 1999; Zhang 2004).

Table 1-1　The Four Categories of Contents for EBP

• Business communication skills are about the core skills of business activity. These activities include negotiation, letter corresponding, telephoning etc. They depend on both verbal language skills and other skills such as organisational skills, non-verbal language and awareness of audience.

• Business context refers to the discipline specific materials such as finance and marketing. The aim of these materials is to transfer known knowledge of language and skills to a specific field, for example, discussion of particular products or theoretical debate on business.

• Business studies materials are materials adopted from business courses. Different materials may be offered to learners of EBP according to their different levels of language proficiency.

• Language in business settings is the material that aims to help the pre-experienced learners in the EBP world. Materials in this category are closely related to EFL material and form the core of EGBP teaching.

St. John (1996) summarises the contents of EBP into four categories: business communication skills, business context, business studies materials and language in business settings.

The unique features of the materials in the four categories require different teaching methods to achieve the various goals. It thus becomes a major concern for ICT in EBP teaching (Section 1. 3).

1. 2. 2   EBP Teaching in China

The teaching of English in China can be dated back to the 1830s. It is worth noting that from the very beginning, the contacts between the Chinese and English were all generally for business purposes. EBP teaching in China after the 1980s became more and more important because of the development of the Chinese economy, and the expansion of bilateral and multilateral trades between Chinese businesses and foreign companies. In the 1993 National Curriculum, it has been clearly stated that

> A foreign language is an important tool for interacting with other countries and plays an important role in promoting the development of the national and world economy, science and culture. In order to meet the needs of our Open Door Policy and to accelerate socialist modernization, efforts should be made to enable as many people as possible to acquire command of one or more foreign languages (Adamson and Morris 1997, p. 21).

The 1993 National Curriculum indicates that English teaching in China, especially in higher education is partly for the purpose of students' business communication in their future careers or jobs.

Recent years have witnessed innovations in curriculum design in numerous colleges and universities. B. A. in Business English attracted a large number of students every year (Lin 1999; He and Xiao 2004). In 2009, Business English has been established as an independent major for undergraduate student education in China mainland (Zhu 2011). By 2013, more than 100 universities and colleges offered EBP courses. Researchers in China claimed that EBP has been developed into a branch of applied linguistics independent from English for General Purposes and English for Academic Purposes (Lin 2001; Chen 2004; Weng 2009).

Researchers in China classified EBP courses into two categories, picking up the names used in the UK and the USA: English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP). However, the meanings of the two courses in the UK and the USA are different from those in China. In the English speaking countries, EGBP refers to courses provided to those with little business experience. ESBP refers to the courses provided to those who are in business for many years. Some learners could even be senior members of business organisations.

The situation in China is different. EBP courses are provided as a discipline for undergraduate or postgraduate studies in Chinese higher education (Gong 1999; Lin 2001; Lin 2004). While most students in the Chinese higher educational system are pre-experience learners, differences between EGBP and ESBP courses in Chinese higher education are in two aspects. First, EGBP is for Year 1 or Year 2 students while ESBP is for Year 3 or Year 4 students. Second, EGBP focuses more on language competences while ESBP focuses more on business professional knowledge or skills.

Specifically, EGBP courses are designed for two types of students: those who majored in economy and international trade, finance, accounting and international law, and those in traditional English language and literature. Popular courses include general business English, Business English Correspondence, English for Finance, English for Marketing and English for Law. ESBP courses are offered to those students who major in EBP. They attend ESBP courses when their English proficiency reaches a certain level. When participating in an ESBP subject, students are expected to identify key business features, to apply management theories to a specified situation and evaluate the result of relevant actions and management or business decision. They are more likely to focus on one or two language skills and specific business communicative events. The core of an ESBP subject is not the accuracy and fluency of languages but the outcome of the work (St. John 1996). ESBP subjects may include international marketing, economics, advertising, cross culture communication and management, etc.

Although EBP Teaching is booming in the Chinese higher education system, it is criticised as intuition- or experience-led (Chapter 3). More research is needed related to Business English curriculum design and the corresponding

teaching pedagogy.

1. 3   EBP and ICT

In the last two decades, there has been a global discussion in higher educa-
tion about the application of ICT and its impact on teaching and learning(Darby
1992; Bates 1995; Catalano and Catalano 1997; Bates 2000; Collis *et al.* 2000;
Browne and Jenkins 2003). These include research on the influence of ICT on
effective management(Hurst 1983; Lim and Hang 2003), the efficiency of ICT
(Darby 1992; Collis *et al.* 2000; Hinostroza and Mellar 2001) and the impact of
ICT on learning outcomes(Jong *et al.* 1992; Catalano and Catalano 1997; Cox
1997; Jakobsdóttir 2001; Loveless and Ellis 2001; Louvieris and Lockwood
2002; Lim and Chai 2004). The application of ICT has also been studied and re-
ported in a number of EBP related studies, and will be discussed in this section.

1. 3. 1   Integrating ICT into EBP Teaching

EBP teaching is always pioneering in the field of education that applies the
latest technology into its teaching process(St. John 1996). The improvement of
teaching materials has for a long time been seen as a critical part for EBP teach-
ing(St. John 1996). Reports(Reed and Nolan 1997; Klassen and Milton 1999;
Brett 2000; Flinders 2001) showed that large quantities of ICT related teaching
materials such as audio cassettes, videos, TV programs, courseware and Inter-
net-based interactive courses were available in the market. It is therefore under-
standable that some researchers would focus their studies on the improvement
of teaching materials for EBP education. For example, Gain(1999) reckoned
that "there is almost no guidance available in the textbooks for students of
English for academic or special purposes(EAP/ESP) who wish to use this
means of communication(Email) proficiently" and therefore started a project to
investigate the features of real examples of Email messages and its implication
for EBP teaching. There were also introduction of websites, which contained
groups of electronic documents relevant to the demands of the ESP classroom
and to meet the needs of ESP learners(Peterson 1999).

Another group of studies investigates the impact of ICT on EBP teaching. Learners' experience in a multimedia CD-ROM learning environment is a highlighted topic in EBP learning. The results of these studies are contradictory though. For example, a research project (Klassen and Milton 1999) at the City University of Hong Kong in 1997 explores the effectiveness of multimedia-enhanced instructional materials, an interactive multimedia CD-ROM, *Business English* in an English language learning curriculum. Comparison between Multimedia Mode (MM) learners and classroom learning (CL) learners indicates that MM students has demonstrated significant improvement in listening skills when compared with CL students. It also reports positive attitudinal changes for MM learning among the learners. However, a study (Trinder 2002) conducted in Austria demonstrates negative impacts of ICT among a group of IT experienced learners for the application of multimedia CD-ROM into their (Business) English language programme. The questionnaire survey indicates that although learners were aware of the benefits of Multimedia for their learning, only 67% of them would choose continuous application of multimedia for their learning in contrast to a 100% when the study had started. Complaints came from the lack of pedagogical design of the contents and the unclear layout of critical functions in the programs. Similar findings are reported by Brett (2000) when he investigates 60 undergraduates' experiences of learning through CD-ROM based materials and finds in his study a massive decrease (48.1%) in the attitudes and perceptions to the benefits of ICT for self-directed learning.

The limitation of these studies is threefold. First, they focus on one particular type of ICT, such as a CD-ROM package (Klassen and Milton 1999; Trinder 2002), and for the purpose of improving teaching materials (Gains 1999; Peterson 1999). Second, they approach the application of ICT from the learners' perspective (Klassen and Milton 1999; Brett 2000; Busch 2003). That learners have been the foci of the studies is coincident with St. John's (1996) conclusion that research on EBP education is leaner driven and that teachers are not the subject of academic research projects. Third, they each focuses on one particular skill of language, such as reading, writing, or pronunciation (Slaouti 2002). Many of them collect data through questionnaire, or pre- and post tests for learners' achievements but lack observation of teaching, learning and interactions in the EBP classroom.

A number of studies about participants' positive attitudes towards the integration of ICT in EBP(Brett 2000;De Beaugrande 2000;Busch 2003)are available. However, compared to papers and other publications on Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language(TES/FL),research on EBP teaching is still limited. The reason may lie on the fact that the field is "practice-led" (St. John 1996)and many EBP courses in the UK or the USA are offered within private companies or language schools. Research requires data, people and time. However,the administration in private companies and language schools would not be willing to cooperate with researchers for such academic purposes. St. John (1996) argues that as more and more students are now studying Business English, it is likely to have more research in this field in future. However,ten years later,few studies focused on EBP teaching are reported or published.

1. 3. 2　Integrating ICT into EBP Teaching in China

With regard to the application of ICT in Chinese EBP teaching, the Chinese government encourages the uptake and implementation of ICT in higher education. The 21st Century Teaching Content and Curricula Innovation in Higher Education Project launched in 1997 by the Ministry of Education targets a fundamental change of pedagogy and educational philosophy,an innovative modelling of talent cultivation and the modernization of teaching facilities, teaching content and curriculum design.

In 1999,the State Council issued and enacted the 21st Century Education Revitalization Project,one main propose of the Project was to "set up an open educational network based on modern educational technology" and to"construct a lifelong learning system for the people". Funded by the central government and universities respectively,several projects have been launched in this period to improve the design of courseware, online teaching and learning resources, and the implementation of ICT to EBP teaching in China.

One good example is a cooperative project among three major EBP course-providing universities in China(The Guangdong Foreign Languages University,the Hunan University and the Beijing Foreign Economy and Trade University). Teachers in the three universities work collaboratively for the design and

development of a series of 12 pieces of web-based EBP courseware to assist students' learning. The project lasted for more than three years(from 2000 to 2003). It is the first nationwide project attempting to integrate ICT into EBP teaching in Chinese higher education. The team has claimed to achieve some important outcomes.

In addition, universities and colleges have developed on-campus virtual learning resources to help students with EBP learning(Zhu 1999；Zhou and Shi 2003；Liu and Hu 2004；Zhu 2004). For example, Guangdong Foreign Languages University developed their language laboratory, using authentic economic news reports and financial information for the EBP teaching and learning (Zhou and Shi 2003). Hunan University set up a virtual business environment laboratory to help students get familiar with the international trade process (Liu and Hu 2004). A number of universities have declared that the abilities of teaching with ICT become part of the criteria for teacher qualification(MOE China 2005). These practices have accelerated students' enthusiasm in EBP learning and teachers who have engaged in these projects reported positive changes in their attitudes towards ICT and teaching practices(Liu and Hu 2004；Wang and Zhang 2004).

Concerns are raised in the process of introducing ICT into higher education, particularly those related to students' autonomy(Lim and Chai 2004), and teacher professional development (Supovitz and Turner 2000; Dexter *et al*. 2002; Littlejohn 2002; Zhou 2002). In the field of EBP teaching, a study (Pang, Zhou *et al*. 2002)conducted in Zhejiang Province in 2001 highlights the need for pedagogic improvements in EBP teaching in higher education. At the same time, some Business English practitioners have also reported their own experiences of using ICT in EBP teaching(Zhu 1999; Zhou and Shi 2003)and the application of Corpus to Business English learning(Zhang 1999). These reports suggest that modern educational technology such as the Internet, and the web-based courses should be introduced to EBP learning to make lifelong learning a possibility for every learner by joining the effort of universities with companies and businesses. However, these reports are often simplified and the ICT related pedagogy has been only an additional part in the report rather than a major concern. Studies on ICT related pedagogy in China are still limited, and researchers(Lin 1999; Lin 2001; Chen 2004; Lin 2004)call for more studies, es-

pecially empirical studies in this field to promote and improve EBP teaching in China.

1. 3. 3　Challenges to EBP Teachers: What Matter

The introduction of ICT in EBP teaching in Chinese higher education positions EBP teachers to a dynamic changing situation because ICT is always updated and the theories about how ICT may support learning are changing(Gong 1999; Zhang 1999; Zhang 2002; Zhou 2002; Ma 2003). Change is time consuming and uncomfortable for most of the participants in the process(Rogers 1995; Fullan 2001).

At the first glance, ICT challenges teachers' ICT competence. Teaching with new technologies requires new skills. Teachers need to learn the use of new hardware and software in their classrooms. Looking insight into teaching, more factors need to be considered. ICT challenges teachers' existing pedagogy of EBP teaching, their beliefs about students' learning, and their relationship with students. Teachers have to take technology to their teaching practices and to adapt themselves to new roles(Fullan and Hargreaves 1992; Preston and Cox *et al.* 2000; Zhang 2002; Cox and Webb *et al.* 2004). This is important because "they are gatekeepers for instructional technology"(1986, p. 37). However, few reports about teachers and pedagogy in higher education are available(Pickering 2002)and even fewer publications related to EBP teachers in higher education can be identified in literature.

Many factors could influence teacher change(Chapter 2). However, most of the relevant studies have been conducted in the UK or the USA. It is still not clear which factors may influence EBP teaching in Chinese higher education. Therefore, the core issue for this study is to identify these factors and to help EBP teachers to understand their ICT pedagogy.

1. 4　Research Design

A pilot study has been conducted between March and April 2004. Questionnaires were sent out to three universities that offered undergraduate EBP courses. The survey identified two issues that needed more attention: 1) teachers'