

Cultivation of Business English Professionals in Higher Education: A Case Study of Yinchuan University of Energy in Ningxia, China

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Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is one of China's five ethnic autonomous regions. It provides a vast space for the development of international business professionals. Also, it puts forward new and higher requirements for the cultivation of Business English professionals in Ningxia universities with the development of the regional economy of Ningxia, especially the establishment of the Yinchuan Free Trade Zone in Ningxia and the release of the high-quality development plan of nine key industries. Cultivating international and complex Business English professionals is essential for Ningxia's economic development. This paper will discuss how to cultivate Business English professionals with an international perspective in Chinese colleges and universities in the context of Ningxia's economic development.

Keywords: colleges and universities, Ningxia's economy, Business English, talent training

INTRODUCTION

With the overall socio-economic development of China, Business English teaching has made great achievements as a distinctive specialty area in colleges and universities and is now being refined and detailed. China's Ministry of Education promulgated "National Standards for Teaching Quality in Foreign Languages and Literature" (from now on referred to as "National Standards") in 2018. In 2019, the Circular on the Implementation of "Double-10,000 Program" for the Construction of First-class Undergraduate Programs was released, planning to build about 10,000 national-level first-class undergraduate programs and 10,000 provincial-level first-class undergraduate programs, including 609 first-class programs in foreign languages and literature (Wang & Ren, 2019). Business English majors are exposed to both unprecedented development opportunities and new challenges. To cultivate Business English professionals, we should clarify and answer the fundamental questions of the types of talents required and how to cultivate talents in the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Also, we should improve the quality of talents cultivation, focusing on the reform of "new engineering" and "new liberal arts" in higher education in the new era, with the concept of a community with a shared future for humankind and the Belt and Road Initiative (Wang & Cui, Can 2020).

Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is an economically underdeveloped region among China's five minority autonomous regions. In its 14th Five-Year Plan for education development, it is proposed to promote the optimization and upgrading of the professional structure of the four private applied colleges and universities and to increase the supply of talents in short supply for the development of nine key industries (Chinese wolfberry, wine, dairy industry, beef cattle and Tan sheep, electronic information, new materials, green food, clean energy and cultural tourism). Moreover, a group of internationally competitive talents should be cultivated. The colleges and universities in Ningxia should cooperate with the top

universities in China and abroad to cultivate high-level international talents and high-end international talents in cross-disciplines such as wine, cultural tourism, and modern agriculture. The “14th Five-Year Plan” offers promising development prospects and opportunities for developing Business English programs in Ningxia. Given that professionals are needed to support the development of the economy, colleges and universities in Ningxia should cultivate a group of inter-disciplinary talents who know both English and business better to serve the development of the regional economy in Ningxia. The orientations of Business English programs should be well-defined by considering the “14th Five-Year Plan”, regional positioning, and industrial development focus to clarify the characteristics and orientations of cultivating Business English professionals (Zhao, Qin, & Wang, 2021).

In 2001, the Ministry of Education of China proposed that the development of applied programs should be closely integrated with local economic development. Local colleges and universities should utilize the market adjustment mechanism to adjust and allocate educational resources appropriately and strengthen the applied disciplines and programs. Then, they should supply all kinds of applied professionals to boost the local economic development. In 2007, the Ministry of Education of China further pointed out that universities should take the initiative to adapt to the needs of national economic and social development, strengthen the restructuring of majors, and set up disciplines and majors reasonably in the light of social demands. In 2019, the education authorities requested that the construction of new engineering, new medicine, new agriculture and new liberal arts be used as a leading force to adjust and optimize the professional structure of universities and improve their connotation.

Moreover, colleges and universities should reinforce the key majors, create special and competitive majors, upgrade and transform traditional majors, and resolutely eliminate the majors that cannot adapt to the changing needs of society. The Ministry of Education of China documents have indicated the direction and provided a sound platform for correctly guiding and encouraging universities to serve local economic and social development. Colleges and universities have incomparable strengths and irreplaceable positions in serving local economic development and building regional innovation systems.

There are 18 colleges and universities in Ningxia (8 universities and 10 higher vocational colleges). English programs are offered in Ningxia University, Ningxia Normal University, Ningxia Institute of Science and Technology, Xinhua College of Ningxia University and Yinchuan University of Science and Technology. In terms of employment channels, most of these English graduates teach foreign languages in regular secondary schools. Due to the limitation of their majors, few graduates are engaged in overseas investment, international trade, law, finance, marketing and public relations, which have restricted the development of Ningxia’s foreign economy to some extent.

To further adapt to the new requirements of economic development in Ningxia, the universities should cultivate qualified application-oriented talents in Business English in proper ways to better serve the local economic development. At present, only two universities in Ningxia (Yinchuan University of Energy and North Minzu University) offer programs in Business English. However, the Business English majors of these two universities need to be improved in terms of training specifications, program settings, personnel training programs and teaching content.

DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF BUSINESS ENGLISH PROFESSIONALS IN NINGXIA

Ningxia, one of the birthplaces of Chinese civilization, is located on the Silk Road, which has historically been an important gateway for east-west transportation and trade. During his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia in September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the joint construction of “The Silk Road Economic Belt” and “21st-Century Maritime Silk Road” (the Belt and Road). Ningxia is a strategic location along the ancient Silk Road and in the middle of the Chinese section of the New Eurasian Continental Bridge. Based on the strategic mission of opening up to the west in the national “Inland Opening-up Pilot Economic Zone” and the international platform “China-Arab States Expo” for cooperation and exchange between China and the Arab States, the government of Ningxia proposed to focus on integrating into the Belt and Road and make efforts to build a new pattern of comprehensive opening up. Specifically, departments at all levels in Ningxia should take the initiative to

serve and integrate into “the Belt and Road,” accelerate the construction of the Inland Opening-up Pilot Economic Zone, with a full range of opening up to fuel high-quality development. It should build an open carrier platform to deepen pragmatic economic and trade cooperation, expand the domain, improve the effectiveness and magnify the influence. Moreover, a new western land-sea corridor should be jointly built to enhance the operating efficiency of international freight trains in Ningxia. Road-railway intermodal transport and railway-sea intermodal transport modes should be developed to build Ningxia into an international logistics gathering area and a strategic logistics center in Northwest China.

Moreover, efforts should be made to make enterprises go global and bring in foreign investments to expand foreign cooperation and exchange. We should offer comprehensive foreign trade services, guide enterprises to explore diversified markets, develop cross-border e-commerce, trade in services, service outsourcing and other new business models, and promote the quality of foreign trade stably. However, the current deficiency of qualified business foreign language professionals in Ningxia can hardly meet the needs of the government’s strategic layout of economic and social development. Therefore, the cultivation of Business English professionals in Ningxia must be re-conceptualized from a strategic perspective.

Business English Professionals and the Export-Oriented Economy

The regional economy has made great achievements in Ningxia, especially the Yinchuan Free Trade Zone, and the nine industries have achieved high-quality development. In this context, it facilitates hinterland enterprises to “go global” and introduce new investments, advanced equipment and management models, contributing to their engagement in economic globalization and complete connection with the rules of supply competition (Wang, 2005).

The Teaching Guide for Undergraduate Business English Major” (from now on referred to as the Teaching Guide) was formulated by the Ministry of Education. It stipulates that the Business English program should cultivate international interdisciplinary talents with solid English basics and relevant business knowledge and excellent humanistic qualities, Chinese sentiment, and international vision. Moreover, they should be familiar with the literature, economics, management, law and other related theoretical knowledge, master the basic theory and practice of international business. They should be equipped with strong intercultural skills, business communication competencies and innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

They can adapt to the needs of national and local economic and social development, foreign exchange and cooperation. After graduation, they should be proficient in applying English to work in international business, international trade, international accounting, international finance, cross-border e-commerce and other foreign-related fields (English Teaching Guidance Subcommittee of the Foreign Language and Literature Teaching Steering Committee of the Ministry of Education, 2020:47). An evidence-based and effective evaluation mechanism should be established for Business English majors to regularly evaluate the training objectives and revise them promptly based on the evaluation results (Yan, 2020). In this way, Business English professionals can effectively publicize and raise the popularity and reputation of Ningxia. Thus, the foreign business community can better understand the industrial development of Yinchuan City and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and be willing to invest and develop in Ningxia, thus creating more opportunities for the employment of Business English professionals in Ningxia.

Integration With Local Economic Development

With economic globalization and the information technology revolution in the 21st century, cross-disciplines are emerging, and the demand for foreign language talents is diversifying. Graduates specialized in a single foreign language with only foreign language expertise, and basic skills are experiencing a significant decrease in jobs, and talents specialized merely in foreign languages can no longer fully meet the needs of society. English professionals with a wide range of skills, strong adaptability, and substantial application competencies are needed by society (Huang, 2001). According to National Standards for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Business English in Regular Colleges and Universities, colleges and universities should determine distinctive cultivation objectives and majors depending on the needs of regional social and economic development, school orientation, tradition, discipline characteristics and

strengths. Moreover, colleges and universities should develop individualized cultivation programs and teaching plans and categorize and stratify their development to avoid duplicated programs among different schools (Wang, 2015).

The establishment of the Yinchuan Free Trade Zone and the high-quality development of nine key industries have created higher requirements for the cultivation of Business English professionals in Ningxia. The cultivation of Business English professionals in Ningxia should be closely integrated with the local economic features. The cultivated Business English professionals can serve the local economy, conform to the market demand, and employ enterprises. Combined with the development of the Yinchuan Free Trade Zone and the prospect of nine key industries, higher and vocational education institutions in Ningxia must maintain their focus on serving the construction of the pilot zone for the ecological protection and high-quality development of the Yellow River Basin and the high-quality development of nine key industries. Meanwhile, such institutions should enhance the development of school connotations, create competitive and characteristic disciplines (groups), improve the level of school operation, and continuously enhance the attractiveness and influence of education.

Cultivation Orientation of Business English Professionals in Ningxia

The government of Ningxia has identified nine industries with a solid foundation and promising prospects and determined the implementation plan of their high-quality development. The plan aims to rebuild their supply systems, reconstruct their development patterns and reshape their competitive advantages. Given this situation, different types of universities should highlight their disciplinary advantages and characteristics when developing programs in Business English for undergraduate students (Wang, 2015). The Teaching Guide makes a clear plan for Business English majors, with five areas: international business, international trade, international accounting, international finance, and cross-border e-commerce. These five areas determine the characteristics of Business English majors that distinguish them from English and translation majors. They are also important guarantees of vocational competence for Business English majors (Chen & Yan, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study takes the Business English program of Yinchuan University of Energy as the target. The program has supplied many Business English professionals for Ningxia over the past 16 years of construction and development. To further improve the level and operation of education, Yinchuan University of Energy began to declare the undergraduate program of Business English in 2013. It was approved by the Ministry of Education to establish the undergraduate program of Business English in 2014. In total 237 students (153 in 2014 and 84 in 2015) were accepted, while 159 students (86 in 2014 and 73 in 2015) registered, with a registration rate of 67%. In terms of the number of applicants, many candidates choose to major in Business English. Thus, it can be seen that Business English majors have promising development prospects in Ningxia. The established program in Business English at Yinchuan University of Energy marks a new stage of development for Business English at Yinchuan University of Energy. At the same time, the experience accumulated in the earlier Business English education (higher vocational education) has laid a foundation for Yinchuan University of Energy to train qualified Business English professionals in the next step.

Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire survey mainly covers 1) students' opinions on the choice of Business English program and career path, 2) students' evaluation of the structure and mode of Business English courses, 3) students' requirements for Business English teachers and practical training courses, 4) students' knowledge of various skills and competencies of the Business English program. This survey is expected to understand the problems of the current curriculum, teaching mode, students' knowledge and ability and cultivation, and their learning needs of the Business English program at Yinchuan University of Energy. The survey

respondents were 86 current students (78 questionnaires were returned) of the class of 2014 of Business English at Yinchuan University of Energy.

Questionnaire Design

According to the content of the survey, the questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first section was to find out the respondents' opinions on the choice of the program and career path, using multiple-choice questions. The second section investigated students' knowledge and opinions on the curriculum model of Business English, professional elective courses, and evaluation of professional knowledge, using multiple-choice questions and a five-point Likert scale. The third section investigated the Business English teachers and Business English practice, using multiple-choice questions and a five-point Likert scale. The fourth section investigated students' evaluation of business (English) skills using a five-point Likert scale.

The data from the survey were divided into two categories: choice data and evaluation data. For the first type of choice data, the proportion of choice results was reported faithfully in the case of single-choice questions. The choices were accumulated in the case of multi-choice questions (the proportion of choices may add up to more than 100%). The choices of each respondent were then analyzed. For the second type of evaluation data, the data were categorized and summarized in the form of a five-point Likert scale, with 1-5 representing the following meanings: 1 = very important, 2 = relatively important, 3 = important, 4 = relatively unimportant, and 5 = very unimportant.

The current situation of Business English professional training in Yinchuan University of Energy was analyzed from the specific contents of the questionnaire survey to get a picture of the cultivation of Business English professionals.

SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to determine the respondents' opinions on their major and career path, using multiple-choice questions. First, we analyzed the number and percentage of candidates who chose Business English as their major from four aspects and evaluated them in descending order of percentage. When students applied for the Business English program, they prioritized working in business (65.3%), which fully indicates that students have a clear goal in choosing the Business English program. However, the percentage of students who have obtained relevant certificates (33.3%) reveals that students do not have a clear knowledge of the relevant skills certificates or industry entry certificates required for the Business English program. The lowest percentages of students were interested in going abroad (8.9%) and going to graduate school (7.6%), which indicates that students have not given sufficient consideration to the next step of education advancement and have not taken it seriously (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
CHOICE OF THE BUSINESS ENGLISH PROGRAM (MULTIPLE CHOICE)

Objectives of choosing Business English	Number of participants (persons)	Percentage (%)
Working in business	51	65.3
Obtaining relevant certificates	26	33.3
Studying abroad	7	8.9
Pursuing graduate studies	6	7.6

The number and percentage of students' choice of career path after graduation were listed in seven aspects, and they were evaluated in descending order of percentage. The majority of students (38.4%) chose to work in foreign trade, followed by those who chose to work in office and administration (32%) and teaching (29.4%). Since about 95% of the Business English majors at Yinchuan University of Energy are female, they would consider these career paths in job development and stability. It is followed by civil

servants (23%). Although the number of civil servants recruited in China has increased in recent years, few students chose civil service positions because of the limited number of jobs and fierce competition. A few students chose translation (16.6%) and secretarial (11.5%) because of the high intensity and pressure of translation and secretarial work and the high demands on their knowledge base and overall ability. Lastly, the lowest percentage was for tour guides and others (8.9%) (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
CHOICE OF CAREER PATH AFTER GRADUATION (MULTIPLE CHOICE)

Choice of career path after graduation	Number of participants (persons)	Percentage (%)
Foreign trade-related jobs	30	38.4
Office administration	25	32
Teacher	23	29.4
Civil servant	18	23
Translator	13	16.6
Secretarial	9	11.5
Tour guide and others	7	8.9

The second part of the questionnaire investigated students' perceptions and opinions about the curriculum models, professional elective courses, and evaluation of professional knowledge in Business English, using multiple-choice questions and a five-point Likert scale. First, we investigated the number and percentage of students in the four curriculum models and evaluated them in descending order of percentage. The highest percentage of students (79.4%) chose the model of English language knowledge and skills + business knowledge + Business English skills + intercultural communication competencies + humanistic literacy. It was followed by the model of English language knowledge and skills + business knowledge + Business English skills + intercultural communication competencies (16.6%) and the model of English language knowledge and skills + business knowledge + Business English skills (2.6%). The lowest was the model of English language knowledge and skills + business knowledge (1.4%). From this, we can see that students have a clear picture of the professional curriculum model of Business English (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
CURRICULUM MODEL FOR BUSINESS ENGLISH MAJOR (SINGLE CHOICE)

Curriculum model	Number of participants (persons)	Percentage (%)
Model of English language knowledge and skills + business knowledge + Business English skills + intercultural communication competencies + humanistic literacy	62	79.4
Model of English language knowledge and skills + business knowledge + Business English skills + intercultural communication competencies	13	16.6
Model of English language knowledge and skills + business knowledge + Business English skills	2	2.6
Model of English language knowledge and skills + business knowledge	1	1.4

We divided the Business English curriculum modules into basic, professional, and cultural courses and evaluated the professional knowledge. The evaluation results were listed in descending order of importance (1 = very important, 2 = relatively important, 3 = important, 4 = relatively unimportant, and 5 = very unimportant). On the whole, students' evaluation of professional knowledge was not very differentiated,

with the mean value ranging from 1.1 to 2.1, revealing that the students have a rather vague perception of professional knowledge of Business English. The majority of students consider Business English listening, Business English speaking and Business English translation to be more important than Business English reading and Business English writing. They all agree that international finance, international trade and business negotiation are the top three most important areas of business knowledge.

Still, they do not recognize the importance of international business etiquette in business activities. In particular, it is important to understand the business practices of English-speaking countries because knowledge of the customs and practices of various countries in business activities is of great importance to facilitate communication and exchange between business people from different cultural backgrounds (Wang, Wang, & Zheng, 2014). Chinese culture and Western society and culture are the first two most important subjects in the culture courses. In Business English teaching, we should highlight the comprehension of Chinese culture, strengthen the international comparison of cultures, and enhance students' cultural self-awareness and self-confidence. At the same time, case studies of excellent business culture, corporate culture and industry culture in China and abroad and comparison of cultural values should be reinforced (Zhao, Qin, & Wang, 2021). Given the above evaluation and analysis, the current talent training program should be revised and improved by considering the students' demand for professional knowledge in the Business English curriculum (see Table 4).

TABLE 4
EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Evaluation of professional knowledge	Mean
Basic courses	
Business English Listening	1.12
Business English Speaking	1.13
Business English Translation	1.26
Business English Reading	1.46
Business English Writing	1.62
Professional courses	
International Finance	1.51
International Trade	1.53
Business Negotiation	1.63
International Business Etiquette	1.63
Marketing	1.79
English Correspondence for Import and Export Trade	1.90
Cultural courses	
Chinese Culture	1.60
Western Society and Culture	1.76
A Survey of the UK and the US	1.94
English and American Literature	2.13

We surveyed the number and percentage of students who chose six professional elective courses and evaluated them in descending order of percentage. The highest percentage of students chose “International Business Law” (25.4%), followed by “English and American Literature” (18.2%). “Foreign Language Teaching: Theory and Practice” (16%), “Western Classical Culture” (15.5%), “Cambridge Business English” (14.9%) and “Business Correspondence” (14.9%) were roughly equally distributed. When offering professional elective courses, colleges and universities should fully consider the specific conditions of the major direction and innovate the elective courses by combining the specific needs of employers. The professional elective courses chosen by students can play an effective role in the actual work. According to the Teaching Guide, Yinchuan University of Energy should redesign the general elective courses of the

Business English program. The program should offer humanities, business, law and science courses, according to its positioning, characteristics; faculty status and the demand for talent cultivation (see Table 5).

TABLE 5
PROFESSIONAL ELECTIVE COURSES (MULTIPLE CHOICE)

Professional elective courses	Number of participants (persons)	Percentage (%)
International Business Law	46	25.4
English and American Literature	33	18.2
Foreign Language Teaching: Theory and Practice	29	16
Western Classical Culture	28	15.5
Cambridge Business English Certificate	27	14.9
Business Correspondence	27	14.9

The study analyzed the number and percentage of students choosing the four types of teachers' necessary knowledge and skills and evaluated them in descending order of percentage. Four out of 78 respondents chose two of the four types of teachers. Nearly half (47%) of the students expected Business English teachers to have a background in economics and trade + teaching in English among their main knowledge and skills. It was followed by a background in English + extensive business work experience (32%) and a background in English + business knowledge (21%). And no respondent chose a background in economics and trade + teaching in Chinese. There are two aspects: one is a background in English, and the other is rich business work experience. The former can ensure fluent English communication in class, and the latter can ensure that students learn practical business knowledge and skills. Business English teachers need to continuously improve their business literacy, especially their business thinking skills and awareness. Moreover, they should grasp interdisciplinary knowledge, including 5 categories of professional knowledge related to economics, management, marketing, financial accounting, and mathematical statistics (Wang, & Ge, 2016) (see Table 6).

TABLE 6
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHERS (SINGLE CHOICE)

Knowledge and skills	Number of participants (persons)	Percentage (%)
Background in economics and trade + teaching in English	37	47
Background in English + extensive business work experience	25	32
Background in English + business knowledge	16	21
Background in economics and trade + teaching in Chinese	0	0

In the third part of the questionnaire, we surveyed Business English teachers and Business English practice, using percentages of multiple-choice questions and a five-point Likert scale. We investigated the number and percentages of the four types of teachers and evaluated them in descending percentages. The highest percentage (56.4%) of students preferred instructors of practical teaching to be from the internship unit and the school, indicating that students preferred dual-teachers with rich business work experience and English professional background. It conforms to the fundamental requirements for dual-teachers in universities. It was followed by the percentage of teachers in professional courses in schools (32%). Students did not fully consider the background of teachers' business work experience, but only the English proficiency and expertise of professional teachers. The last was the teachers of the internship unit (9%) and the teachers of the basic courses at the school (2.6%) (see Table 7).

TABLE 7
INSTRUCTORS OF PRACTICAL TEACHING (SINGLE CHOICE)

Instructors of practical teaching	Number of participants (persons)	Percentage (%)
Teachers of the internship unit and the school	44	56.4
Teachers of professional courses at the school	25	32
Teachers from the internship unit	7	9
Teachers of basic courses at the school	2	2.6

We also investigated the seven practical Business English teaching evaluations categories and listed the results in descending order of importance (1 = very important, 2 = relatively important, 3 = important, 4 = relatively unimportant, and 5 = very unimportant). Practical teaching is an important part of the training for Business English majors. Students' evaluation of practical training is mainly reflected in the effect of practical training on employment, integration of business case studies in Business English teaching and 4 years of continuous practical teaching of Business English. According to the Teaching Guide, practical teaching is required to cover no less than 15% of the total credits of the major. It is completed under professional teachers and industry professionals (Wang, 2015). The main purpose of practical training is to enable students to acquire specific practical knowledge of the work they will perform before they are employed. For students, through practical training, they can apply their theoretical knowledge into practice, especially in specific positions to further enhance their professional competencies. As one of the situational teaching methods, a business case study teaches students to master business skills by solving real-life problems in a real business environment as the language background (Chen, 2013). The case study is the most popular teaching method among students, as students prefer to understand and grasp business knowledge through business examples (Wang, Wang, & Zheng, 2014). In conclusion, to ensure the teaching quality and effect of practical training in Business English, Yinchuan University of Energy needs to strengthen the construction of practical teaching facilities such as professional laboratories, practical training centers, on-campus and off-campus practical teaching bases, and innovation and entrepreneurship platforms for college students, to effectively improve students' professional practice skills (see Table 8).

TABLE 8
EVALUATION OF BUSINESS PRACTICE TEACHING

Practical teaching evaluation	Mean
The effect of practical training on employment	1.44
Integration of business case studies in Business English teaching	1.56
4 years of continuous practical teaching of Business English	1.62
Teaching with scenarios to simulate work situations	1.74
Learning in simulated Business English workshops	1.76
Inviting successful business people to give lectures	2.14
Visiting companies and factories	2.24

The fourth part of the questionnaire, which investigated students' evaluation of business (English) skills, was in the form of a five-point Likert scale. We investigated the evaluation of 14 business (English) skills and listed the results in descending order of importance (1 = very important, 2 = relatively important, 3 = important, 4 = relatively unimportant, and 5 = very unimportant). The students considered all of the above 14 business (English) skills important, especially Business English interpretation competencies, Business English application competencies, business communication competencies, and Business English reading competencies (e.g., relevant business documents). Therefore, in the daily teaching process, teachers should guide and develop students' business skills in all aspects. In particular, they should integrate the requirements of employers for the proficiency of Business English students into the whole process of

personnel training, including time management competencies, understanding and insight into foreign cultures, especially business cultures and the ability to operate office automation equipment. These are the basic skills essential for Business English employees to perform well in their jobs. In addition to the 14 competencies mentioned above, it is noteworthy that the Teaching Guide for the first time introduced two competencies, digital information literacy and quantitative thinking skills, in response to the development trend of digital trade and the application prospect of big business data (Wang, & Cui, 2020). Therefore, new competencies need to be incorporated into the training program to improve the integrity and innovation of the program in cultivating students' business (English) skills (see Table 9).

TABLE 9
BUSINESS (ENGLISH) SKILLS EVALUATION

Business (English) skills evaluation	Mean
Business English interpretation competencies	1.19
Business English application competencies	1.23
Business communication competencies	1.23
Business English reading competencies (e.g., relevant business documents)	1.31
Inter-cultural business communication competencies	1.36
Teamwork competence	1.36
Time management competencies	1.41
Business English translation competence	1.45
Self-learning ability	1.46
Business negotiation and marketing abilities	1.49
Business English writing competence (e.g., writing contracts, correspondence)	1.53
Business practice skills	1.55
Understanding and insight into foreign cultures, especially business cultures	1.65
Ability to operate office automation equipment	1.67

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study covers the curriculum, teaching mode, teachers' competence, and teaching practice of Business English in Yinchuan University of Energy in Ningxia. The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive survey of Business English majors in this university, understand in detail the students' knowledge and evaluation of these aspects, and propose corresponding suggestions to improve the practice of Business English teaching in Ningxia universities. The study concluded that: 1) Business English undergraduates at Yinchuan University of Energy have a clear idea of their future careers. Most of them like the major and pursue business-oriented careers after graduation. 2) They have a vague understanding of some of the basic courses of Business English, including the importance of the courses and the choice of courses, all reflecting that they do not know the major's basic courses. 3) Students generally believe that practical training in Business English is particularly important for improving Business English proficiency, which reinforces our confidence to further strengthen the construction of teaching practice bases and emphasize teaching practice in the future. 4) The different skills and competencies developed in different Business English courses are crucial for students to engage in practical business activities. Still, students' evaluation of these courses reveals ambiguities in their understanding. Therefore, we need to guide the students properly and improve their perceptions in future teaching.

After 16 years of exploration and practice, the Business English program at Yinchuan University of Energy has made some progress and accumulated some stable enrollment experience. However, there are still many shortcomings due to the low starting point, weak foundation, and geographical constraints. The faculty is of poor quality, and the current curriculum is less reasonable. Some teachers have outdated teaching concepts and adopt less scientific and efficient teaching modes and methods. There are insufficient

practical training bases, hindering students from practicing Business English. Furthermore, students' comprehensive knowledge and practical abilities acquired cannot meet the needs of society and employers. We believe that these problems exist in both Yinchuan University of Energy and other universities in Ningxia.

Therefore, given the above problems, Ningxia colleges and universities should first consider professional orientation in developing Business English programs. They should fully grasp and know the current economic development of Ningxia and the nine key industries and set up the programs reasonably. Secondly, their talents training should be closely integrated with the professional orientation. They can involve enterprise personnel in developing talent training programs, which can effectively combine professional knowledge with professional practice and further improve the quality of talent training. Moreover, they should innovate the teaching mode and adopt a two-way teaching mechanism between teachers on campus and teachers in enterprises. Finally, to cultivate dual-teachers, they should improve teachers' comprehensive business practice ability and reinforce the teaching practice ability of dual-teachers. In addition, they should leverage the platform of industry-university cooperation and collaborative education to sign off-campus training bases and strengthen the cultivation of students' practical abilities.

Both from the development of national talent strategy and the economic development of Ningxia, colleges and universities in Ningxia should fully implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and effectively intensify the training quantity and quality of Business English professionals. They should solidly promote the connotation construction and development of Business English majors. In particular, they should keep abreast of the new requirements for industrial development in Ningxia's "Fourteenth Five-Year Plan" and focus on the dynamics of high-quality development of the nine key industries.

Moreover, they should conduct in-depth investigation and research in a wide range of employers and enterprises, analyze and judge the settings of Business English majors, and reasonably develop talent training programs. They should summarize the teaching and research experiences, learn new education and teaching concepts, and comprehensively upgrade the colleges and universities in Ningxia to cultivate talents in Business English and serve the economic development of Ningxia.

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