

# An Exploration on the Pedagogy of MIB (Master of International Business) Business English Course in the Context of Course-based Ideological and Political Education

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## ABSTRACT

Business English is a compulsory degree course for Master of International Business program (MIB). Under the context of course-based ideological and political education, this course undertakes the tasks of language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating. In order to fulfill the 3 tasks in limited time, special pedagogy should be introduced. By incorporating the advantages of content-based instruction and production-oriented approach, the content-based-production-oriented approach has better realized the above tasks and has brought qualitative changes to both teaching and learning. Meanwhile, the refinement of morality education themes, the choice of supplementary materials, the effectiveness of teacher's evaluation, and the design of facilitation still need systematic coordinating and further researching.

**Keywords:** Master of International Business (MIB), Business English Course, Morality education, Content-based instruction, Production-oriented approach.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Master of International Business program (hereinafter referred to as "MIB") was established in 2010[1] with the purpose of cultivating international business professionals urgently needed by China[2]. Although MIB is a young major, its development momentum is relatively rapid and strong. According to the data released by the National MIB Teaching Guiding Commission (hereinafter referred to as "Commission"), there are nearly 200 universities or colleges offering MIB programs[3]. MIB is a typical foreign-related major in which business English undoubtedly plays a decisive role. The *Guiding Curriculum for MIB* issued by the Commission[4] lists Business English as a compulsory degree course, accounting for 3 credits.

On June 1, 2020, the Ministry of Education of PRC issued the *Guidelines for the Construction of Course-based Ideological and Political Education*

*in Higher Education*<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter referred to as "Guidelines"), making the effect of morality education and personality cultivation the fundamental quality evaluation standard of Chinese higher education. The *Guidelines* specifically proposes that course-based ideological and political education (hereinafter referred to as "CIPE") should be carried out in an all-dimension pattern in which teachers are the "main force", the curriculum construction is the "main battlefield" and course teaching is the "main channel" [5].

In order to meet the requirements of CIPE, all the courses of high education need new teaching designs including English courses.

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1. Guidelines for the Construction of Course-based Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education

## 2. THE TASKS OF MIB BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE IN THE CONTEXT OF CIPE

Even if the *Guidelines* calls for the all-dimension integration of CIPE, it never means that CIPE should be carried out in an explicit way. On the contrary, the *Guidelines* especially emphasizes that CIPE in public basic courses should be performed in an “implicit” way while in specialized courses teachers should dig deeply and refine the ideological value and spiritual connotation contained in the system of specialized knowledge. From the above requirements, it is safe to draw the conclusion that CIPE is in no way the same as or similar with special ideological and political courses and the so-called CIPE is an organic integration of knowledge impartation, ability cultivation and morality education.

According to the *Guiding Curriculum for MIB*, MIB students are required a relatively better command of a foreign language and the ability to use it as a working language in routine international business activities. Business English is the very foreign language in most MIB curricula, therefore, Business English Course is not only a language course but also a specialized course.

Based on the above understanding and context, the tasks of Business English Course could be defined as follows: Business English Course is a content-based high-level interdisciplinary degree course with humanistic, specialized and instrumental features and it is an organism that integrates language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating.

## 3. THE PEDAGOGY DESIGN OF BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE IN THE CONTEXT OF CIPE

Since MIB Business English Course in the context of CIPE undertakes systemic tasks, it needs a more comprehensive and efficient pedagogy. Luckily, the integration of content-based instruction and production-oriented approach can better achieve the tasks, and the author of this paper names this pedagogy as “content-based-production-oriented approach” (hereinafter referred to as “CBPOA”).

### 3.1 Supporting Theories

Chinese high education circle has been attaching great importance to English teaching and the research on the corresponding pedagogies. Among many English pedagogy methods, the following two ones highlight themselves for their practical values.

#### 3.1.1 Content-based Instruction

The traditional second language acquisition teaching approach perceives language as a driver, making it a course and focusing on the training of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating ability. The starting point and the ending point of teaching both revolve around acquiring language by language rather than acquiring knowledge by language. After years of practice, it has been found out that the language-driving mode has split the relationship between language acquisition and knowledge acquisition, making English study not only a low-efficient and time-consuming job but also an exam-oriented course[6]. In the context of CIPE, some scholars have especially considered the correlations between the language-driving mode and CIPE, drawing the conclusion that foreign language teaching and CIPE are almost isolated from each other and the isolation is deeply rooted in this traditional teaching concept and teaching approach[7].

In contrast to language-driving mode is content-driving mode. Content-driving mode emphasizes the instrumental feature of language, believing that the purpose of language study is not only to acquire language itself but also to acquire the knowledge borne by the language and to express one’s mind[8]. Empirical investigations and researches have proved that content-driving mode is an applicable approach for ESP<sup>2</sup> teaching for this approach can effectively enhance learners’ study initiative and study efficiency so that they can realize a simultaneous acquisition of both language and specialized knowledge[9]. Since content-driving mode has been widely used in English major teaching as an instruction mode, it has been called “content-based instruction” (hereinafter referred to as CBI).

#### 3.1.2 Production-oriented Approach

Production-oriented approach (hereinafter referred to as “POA”) is a theoretical achievement

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2. English for Special Purpose

of Professor Qiufang Wen based on her “production-driven hypothesis”[10] proposed in 2007. Since this approach emphasizes production, it poses an English proficiency requirement on teaching targets, and students with middle to high English levels are perceived as applicable targets. After the introduction of POA, Chinese domestic education circles have conducted many researches and practice on it, proving that it is an effective teaching approach[11].

The teaching concepts of POA are study-centered theory, learning-using integration theory and holistic education theory. Study-centered theory is different from “student-centered theory” in that it emphasizes the dominant position of teachers, requiring classroom teaching activities be conducive to achieving teaching objectives and promoting effective learning. Learning-using integration theory calls for the unity of input (including listening and reading) and output (including speaking, writing and translating), advocating using while learning, learning from using and using from learning. What makes the theory more interesting is that the “output” here is not a simple repetition of input but a production based on re-creation, which thus entitles this approach “production-oriented approach” rather than “output-oriented approach”. Holistic education theory and content-based instruction happen to agree with each other to some extent, believing that the object of language education is human, so foreign language teaching should not only achieve the instrumental goal of comprehensive English application ability but also achieve humanistic goals, such as improving students’ critical thinking ability, independent learning ability and comprehensive cultural quality.

With the support of the above three theories, POA further proposes three teaching assumptions: production- driving, input-facilitating and selective learning[12]. Production-driving believes that production is the driving force and the goal of language learning, and the purpose of input is to produce. Input facilitation believes that proper input is conducive to effective production and effective learning. Therefore, teachers need to play a leading role and carefully design input to arouse students’ interest and trigger their production impulse. Selective learning means that learners tend to select useful parts from the input materials for in-depth processing and practicing according to the needs of production. The effectiveness of selective learning is often superior to that of non-selective learning.

On the basis of the above three theories and three assumptions, POA further proposes three teaching processes: driving, facilitating and evaluating. Driving generally happens at the beginning of a teaching unit, aiming to effectively stimulate students’ willingness to learn. Driving usually follows the below processes: teachers present communicative scenes — students try to produce — teachers explain teaching objectives and production tasks. Facilitating consists of three steps: teachers describe the production task in detail, and the students carry out selective learning and prepare corresponding production on this basis. Evaluating can be carried out in the whole teaching process either in an immediate form or in a deferred form, in which not only teachers but also students can participate the evaluation to allow students more opportunities to involve, compare and produce.

### ***3.2 Content-based-Production-oriented approach***

As having been discussed above, the tasks of Business English Course in the context of CIPE is higher and more complicated than the conventional Business English Course for the incorporation of language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating, therefore, an compressive and systemic pedagogy has to be applied in order to achieve the tasks.

In the above supporting theories part, two effective teaching approaches have been introduced. It can be expected that the integration of CBI and POA in MIB Business English Course can better realize its multi-tasks.

Firstly, if CBI approach is applied, compared with the traditional grammar teaching approach and translation teaching approach, the teacher does not have to spend too much time on micro level, such as vocabulary, sentence, and etc.; instead, the teacher can lead students to learn specialized knowledge conveyed by language from a macro level and a discourse perspectives, during which teachers would have more time and possibilities to incorporate morality education implicitly.

Secondly, although content-based instruction approach holds more likeliness to fulfill the 3 tasks of Business English Course, the likeliness will not become reality without a sound pedagogy. The teaching process suggested by POA can fix the problem. By integrating using and learning, the specialized contents and morality borne by language can be reinforced together with the

improvement of language ability. Since this pedagogy is an organic combination of content-based instruction and production-oriented approach, it is thus entitled content-based-production-oriented approach.

#### **4. THE EXPLORATION OF CBPOA ON MIB BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE IN THE CONTEXT OF CIPE**

Kunming University actively responds to the call of CIPE and requires all the courses of MIB to implement this education theory. Under this circumstance, CBPOA has been applied in the Business English Course to the batch of 2022 MIB students to test its effectiveness.

##### **4.1 The Textbook**

The textbook for Business English Course is *Advanced Business English (the 2nd edition)* edited by Lifei Wang and Chun Jiang and published by the Press of the University of International Business and Economics in July, 2020. The textbook takes business knowledge as the context and business subject as the guide, centering on business skills and aiming at students' future demands for business English in their workplaces. The reading materials are chosen from the mainstream business journals; the listening materials come from the English business news or reports issued by some official media or self-media, and the speaking topic involves business themes, such as business meeting, business negotiation, product introduction and so on. The textbook especially connects its writing part with Chinese business cases, for example Lenovo, Haidilao, Jianlibao, Alibaba, Taobao, etc., requiring students to analyze cases and prepare meeting minutes, memos, etc.

##### **4.2 The Content Design in CBPOA**

As discussed above, MIB Business English Course teaching under the context of CIPE will incorporate language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating. The content design is the core of CBPOA.

Since the textbook has already involved many business topics, the design of specialty cultivating and morality educating is preferred to align with each business topic. Different from undergraduate students, MIB students to some extent are better prepared for self-education. When designing the

contents, it is better for the teacher to leave the factual knowledge to students and concentrate on creative knowledge. In addition, the teacher should be careful about self-learning specialized materials, better including both designated supplementary specialized materials and open selective specialized materials. The designated supplementary specialized materials are for the purpose of instructive teaching and instructive learning while the open selective specialized materials are designed for students to conduct selective learning. Since CIPE is supposed to be conducted in an implicit way, the morality education is better to be incorporated into the textbook materials and supplementary specialized materials.

To illustrate the above content design principle, Unit 1 is herein taken as an example. The topic of Unit 1 is about globalization trend, which determines the theme of specialty cultivating and morality educating. Therefore, the designated supplementary specialized material is an English article *An introduction to RCEP*<sup>3</sup> published in *China Daily* on November 8, 2019; the open selective specialized materials involve China's role in globalization and students are required to consult materials online or offline to shape their conclusions. The following tablet illustrates the content design based on the principle of the incorporation of language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating. ("Table 1")

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3. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

Table 1. The content design

Unit	Tasks of MIB Business English Course		
	Specialty cultivating ( instructive learning)	Morality educating (selective learning)	Language training
Globalization Trend	Globalization and RCEP	China's role in globalization	Business English skills (including listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating)
Success and Happiness	GDP and people's Happiness	Chinese people's sense of fulfillment	
Internet and Mobile Phone	Digital economy	Chinese e-commerce	
Employment and Job Satisfaction	Labor law cases	The evolvement of Chinese labor law	
Competition and Pressure	Anti-unfair competition cases	The construction of Chinese fair competition atmosphere	
Entrepreneurship and Innovation	Famous entrepreneurial and innovative business cases	Chinese policies for entrepreneurship and innovation	
Risk and Crisis	Businss risk management cases	Chinese culture in globalization	
Moralityity and Change	Firm behavior and customers' purchase intention	The best morality example of Chinese firms	
Advertising and Brand	Product promotion strategy	Chinese brand global promotion	

### 4.3 Teaching Design in CBPOA

A good content design, even if a good incorporation of language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating, never works by itself. A proper teaching approach has to be introduced to promise the success of content design.

As discussed above, POA has been proved to be an effective teaching pedagogy. POA includes three teaching processes: driving, facilitating and evaluating, and each process should be given due care.

#### 4.3.1 Driving

According to the 3 assumptions of POA, the purpose of driving is to orient students to finish the production tasks, therefore, tasks design is the core of driving. Corresponding to the 3 tasks of MIB Business English Course, driving also includes 3 parts: language training tasks, specialty cultivating tasks and morality educating tasks.

Since in CBI, content is perceived superior to language which should be incorporated into content as an instrument; therefore, when designing tasks, the language exercises in each unit weigh less in class teaching. Teachers do not have to spend too much time in language teaching, such as the

exercises related to vocabulary, translation or grammar. The language training tasks are mainly to impose pressure (fg. quick online tests or quick check) on students to push them to finish the study by themselves.

When designing specialty cultivating tasks and morality educating tasks, it is better to abide by the following rules.

- Since morality education should be carried out in an implicit way, it is preferable to incorporate morality education tasks into specialty cultivation and language training.
- For selective learning, it is better to design some open tasks. Since open tasks usually allow many possible solutions, students can draw different conclusions or make out different solutions, which will stimulate students to dig deeply, think critically and demonstrate creatively.
- The tasks are better to include topics concerned with China. For MIB students, the so-called international business is actually closely related to China. A better understanding of China will help them to do well in their future international business. What's more, the topics related to China are superb implicit morality education themes.

### 4.3.2 *Facilitating*

In the driving process, many tasks related to language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating have been prepared for students. A good design of the task implement way is the very facilitation to the ultimate production.

Since the ultimate purpose of facilitation is to make production happen, the facilitating approach will in a large degree decide how well students will produce. When facilitation enables several productions, the facilitation would be regarded as multi-facilitation, and on the contrary, if facilitation only triggers one production, it would be called uni-facilitation. In the exploration of CBPOA on MIB Business English Course in the context of CIPE, multi-facilitation proves definitely superior to uni-facilitation. For example, if facilitation only requires a production of essay, most likely the students will not interact with each other; on the contrary, if facilitation involves group debate, multiple productions will naturally be incorporated, such as material collecting, analyzing, interacting and so on. Taking Unit 2 as an example, the topic of this unit is success and happiness; therefore, the supplementary designated specialized material is an economic article about GDP and people's happiness while open selective material is that Chinese government outweighs people's sense of fulfillment over the sheer number of GDP. The facilitation is to require students to make an English video interview on their friends, classmates or teachers about whether high GDP leads to their sense of fulfillment and at the end of the interview the students should make oral summary. The facilitation urges students to collect corresponding materials, to prepare questions, to persuade others to take the interview, to communicate in English and to make a short speech and so on. This facilitation is definitely a multi-facilitation and has achieved heated response from students.

During the exploration on CBPOA, in addition to video interview, many multi-facilitations have been tried and enjoyed positive feedbacks, for example, consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, news release meeting, debate, advertising plan and so on.

### 4.3.3 *Evaluating*

Evaluation is an important part of CBPOA, which will to an large extent guarantee the effectiveness of driving and facilitating. Evaluating

may be introduced during the whole process of CBPOA as long as teachers think necessary.

When evaluating, one thing important is that evaluation should also be production-oriented. Just like multi-facilitation, evaluation may be as well divided into uni-evaluation and multi-evaluation. If an evaluation triggers several productions, it would be a multi-evaluation; otherwise it will be a uni-evaluation. In CBPOA, multi-evaluation should be preferred to uni-evaluation.

In order to carry out multi-evaluation, mutual evaluation among students should be encouraged, during which students are invited to evaluate their classmates either orally or literally rather than only by grading. Even if in the case of teacher evaluation, students should be allowed to challenge so that they will have more chances to produce.

## 5. THE REFLECTIONS ON CBPOA ON MIB BUSINESS ENGLISH COURSE IN THE CONTEXT OF CIPE

Since CBPOA is oriented on content and production, language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating have the opportunity to be integrated. This 3-dimension integration does improve the MIB Business English Course teaching and learning effectiveness in many perspectives while arousing some issues which hinder CBPOA from realizing its maximum functions.

### 5.1 *Achievements*

From the perspective of teaching, CBPOA imposes the quality ascension requirement on teachers. The Business English Course teachers need to understand the teaching materials not only from the angle of language training but also from the angles of specialty cultivating and morality educating. Business English Course teaching can no longer be achieved simply by a textbook and a dictionary. The teachers have to facilitate himself with the knowledge of international business, its latest dynamics, Chinese pertinent policies, events and etc.. And in addition to that, the teachers have to rack their brains to design production-oriented tasks to facilitate production and the ways of evaluation to guard production.

From the perspective of learning, CBPOA also has produced many qualitative changes. Because CBPOA emphasizes content-based instruction and production orientation, all the processes, including

preview, class learning and review, involve substantial activities such as cooperative study, critical study and creative study. From the teacher's personal teaching experiences, compared with other teaching approach, CBPOA has stimulated students to prepare more, participate more and interact more, leading to a more active learning atmosphere.

## 5.2 Reflections

In spite of the above achievements, CBPOA is not mature yet and many perspectives need improving.

### 5.2.1 The Theme of Morality Education

CIPE is indeed an implicit ideological and political education mode, so when designing the ideological and political teaching based on foreign language courses, it is noteworthy that the objectives set in CIPE must be based on the text of the textbook but higher than it[13]. This seems to be an obvious thing, but in practice, owing to the different understanding of the text and the uneven ability in inducing the theme of ideology and politics, the effect of morality education substantially varies. For example, Unit 1 Global Britain, SOS discusses Britain's attitudes towards globalization. For the theme of morality education, it can be Chinese continuous marching towards globalization or Chinese contributions to globalization and the world, etc. However, which theme is more valuable, more updated or more consistent with the ideological and political goals sometimes is beyond the competence of a language teacher even if he has tried his utmost to improve specialized knowledge and political sense. Therefore, the systematic coordination among language teachers, specialty teachers and ideology-politics teachers is needed.

### 5.2.2 The Choice of Supplementary Materials

As mentioned above, a different set of morality education theme will influence the effects of CBPOA. However, even if the theme is properly set, the supplementary teaching materials may not turn out to be exactly suitable. For the purpose of language training, most of the supplementary materials will inevitably be chosen from some English native webpages or journals, which may contain something inconsistent with Chinese mainstream ideology or politics. Therefore, some

remedial measures need to be established such as a scanning system.

### 5.2.3 The Effectiveness of Teacher's Evaluation

Proper evaluation is one of the key factors which will guard an effective production. If a teacher wants to give the right evaluation, he has to systematically enhance his capacity in specialty, ideology and politics, which is never an easy job. A practical and convenient way is to establish and reinforce the joint efforts among the Business English teachers, the specialty teachers and ideology-politics teachers.

### 5.2.4 The Effectiveness of Facilitation Design

CBPOA involves a lot of facilitation design. In the practice of CIPE, some scholars have begun to explore a variety of facilitating approaches, for example, thematic approach, task-oriented approach, project-oriented approach, etc.[6], and some scholars have further explored digital narrative production approaches, for example micro-videos and micro-posters[14]. However, there is still a lack of sufficient data to assess the effectiveness of these facilitating approaches on production. Many issues need further research, for example, which facilitating approach is the most effective for cultivating students' critical thinking ability, which one is more helpful to promote students' cooperative learning ability, which one is more productive in stimulating students' production willingness, and how to incorporate different facilitating approaches into one task.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Under the leading of *Guidelines* and the *Guiding Curriculum for MIB*, this paper points out that Business English Course of MIB in the context of CIPE bears 3 tasks: language training, specialty cultivating and morality educating. To achieve these tasks, a teaching pedagogy named CBPOA has been proposed and explored in teaching. The so-called CBPOA is originated from content-based instruction and production-oriented approach and does turn out to be more advantageous over conventional Business English teaching approach while some improvements and researches still remain to be done.

It is definitely true that the research and exploration on the pedagogy of MIB Business English Course is not only conducive to the improvement of the teaching quality of this course, but also has a certain reference for other ESP courses in the context of CIPE.

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