

Theoretical Analysis of Business English Education Reform in the Context of E-commerce

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Abstract: In the context of the profound integration of economic globalisation and the digital economy, the vigorous development of e-commerce has reshaped the application scenarios and competency requirements of Business English. Consequently, traditional Business English education models struggle to adapt to these industrial transformations. Grounded in a theoretical analysis perspective and based on theories such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Social Constructivism, this study systematically reviews the intrinsic correlation between e-commerce and Business English education. It analyses the limitations of existing research on Business English education reform and constructs a theoretical framework for reform driven by e-commerce from three dimensions: the core logic of reform, core dimensions, and implementation paths. The research clarifies that reform should uphold the core logic of needs-orientation and scenario integration, focus on the synergistic reconstruction of objectives, content, and assessment, and rely on the implementation paths of theoretical fusion and resource integration. The aim is to cultivate interdisciplinary Business English professionals adapted to the demands of cross-border e-commerce, enrich the theoretical system of ESP education, and provide theoretical guidance for Business English education reform in higher education institutions.

Keywords: E-commerce; Business English Education; Reform Direction; Theoretical Construction; English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

1. INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of the deep integration of economic globalisation and the digital economy, e-commerce has become a core engine driving the development of international trade. Its cross-regional and cross-cultural transaction attributes have imposed entirely new requirements on business communication personnel. As a crucial link connecting linguistic tools with business practice, the quality of Business English education directly impacts the supply efficiency of cross-border e-commerce talent. Traditional English education models, which emphasise the systematic transmission of linguistic knowledge, have gradually revealed a lag in terms of adaptability to business scenarios and the integration of e-commerce skills, making it difficult to meet the demand for interdisciplinary professionals in the e-commerce environment.

The reform of Business English education has become an inevitable choice to cope with industrial changes. However, current reform practices mostly focus on local adjustments to teaching methods, lacking a systematic theoretical integration of e-commerce development logic and language education laws. Based on this, the present study adopts a perspective of theoretical analysis to review the intrinsic connection between e-commerce and Business English education. Combined with relevant theoretical foundations, it explores the direction of Business English education reform in the context of e-commerce, providing theoretical support for constructing an education system that matches industry demands. The core questions of this study include: how e-commerce reshapes the application scenarios and capability requirements of Business English; where the theoretical shortfalls of the existing Business English education system lie; and how the reform path based on this should be constructed at the theoretical level.

1.1 Research Background and Significance

The iterative upgrading of digital technology has promoted the leapfrog development of e-commerce. The continuous expansion of cross-border e-commerce transaction volumes has diversified business communication scenarios, rendering communication content more professional and time-sensitive. As the core communication medium in cross-border e-commerce activities, the application of Business English has extended from traditional correspondence to diverse scenarios such as platform operation, live streaming sales, and cross-border negotiations. This imposes synergistic requirements on users' language application abilities, business professionalism, and e-commerce operational skills.

Current Business English education still faces issues such as a disconnect between the curriculum system and e-commerce practice, teaching content lagging behind industry development, and singular dimensions of capability cultivation. Consequently, graduates struggle to quickly adapt to the requirements of e-commerce positions. In this context, conducting theoretical research on Business English education reform driven by e-commerce can, on the one hand, enrich the theoretical system of ESP education and achieve a deep integration of education theory with e-commerce development practice. On the other hand, it can provide clear theoretical guidance for reform in higher education institutions, assisting in the cultivation of interdisciplinary professionals who meet industry needs, thus holding significant theoretical value and practical significance.

1.2 Research Approach and Methods

This study adopts a path of pure theoretical analysis, taking the characteristics of Business English application in the e-commerce environment as the entry point. By reviewing relevant theoretical literature, the study clarifies the theoretical basis for Business English education reform. On this basis, it analyses the insufficient adaptability of the traditional Business English education system to e-commerce demands, subsequently constructing a theoretical framework for reform and proposing targeted directions.

The research methods primarily include the literature review method and the logical deduction method. The study systematically reviews domestic and international literature regarding Business English education, ESP, and e-commerce talent cultivation to clarify core concepts and theoretical veins. Through logical deduction, combined with the development laws of e-commerce and the application logic of Business English, the core dimensions and implementation paths of education reform are derived, ensuring the theoretical rigour and logical coherence of the research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academia, both domestically and internationally, has conducted extensive research surrounding Business English education, yielding rich theoretical results. Simultaneously, research on talent demand in the e-commerce environment provides significant references for reform. This chapter reviews relevant literature from three dimensions: core theories of Business English education, language capability requirements in the e-commerce environment, and the limitations of existing reform research, laying a theoretical foundation for subsequent analysis.

2.1 Core Theories of Business English Education

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) theory is the core theoretical support for Business English education. This theory emphasises that language teaching should focus on the needs of specific occupational scenarios, achieving an organic integration of linguistic knowledge and professional skills. Strevens (1988) proposed that the core characteristics of ESP lie in its goal-orientation and scenario adaptability, arguing that teaching content should revolve around the specific occupational needs of learners. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) further perfected the theoretical framework of ESP, proposing a closed-loop teaching model of 'Needs Analysis—Course Design—Teaching Implementation—Effect Assessment', which provides theoretical guidance for the construction of Business English curriculum systems.

Based on ESP theory, domestic academia has conducted in-depth discussions on the positioning and objectives of Business English education. Wang (2003) pointed out that Business English education should break through the limitations of traditional language teaching and focus on cultivating learners' cross-cultural business communication abilities. Zhang and Chen (2021), in the context of the New Liberal Arts construction, proposed that Business English education should construct a three-dimensional cultivation system of "Language + Business + Culture," strengthening the comprehensiveness and applicability of the curriculum. These studies provide important support for the theoretical construction of Business English education, yet most still focus on traditional business scenarios, without fully considering the scenario transformation brought about by e-commerce.

2.2 Language Competence Needs in the E-commerce Environment

With the rapid development of e-commerce, scholars have begun to focus on language capability needs in cross-border e-commerce scenarios. Through investigation, Huang (2024) found that the demand for Business English capabilities in cross-border e-commerce positions has extended from traditional written communication to multiple dimensions such as real-time oral interaction, platform copywriting, and cross-cultural marketing communication, requiring learners to possess greater linguistic flexibility and scenario adaptability. Starting from the operational logic of cross-border e-commerce, Yang (2023) proposed that the application of Business English should adapt to platform rules and the cultural characteristics of target markets, emphasising the practicality and pertinence of language.

International research on cross-border e-commerce language needs focuses more on empirical analysis. Ellis (2022), through case studies of cross-border e-commerce enterprises, found that task-based language ability is a key factor affecting business communication efficiency, advocating that language teaching should be conducted in combination with real e-commerce business tasks. Graham (2006) discussed the application of blended learning models in Business English teaching, suggesting that simulating e-commerce scenarios through online platforms can effectively enhance learners' language application abilities. These studies clarify the core connotation of Business English capabilities in the e-commerce environment but have not yet formed a systematic theoretical framework for education reform.

2.3 Limitations of Existing Reform Research

Existing research on Business English education reform mostly focuses on local adjustments to teaching methods, with explorations often remaining at the level of classroom teaching optimisation. For instance, Li (2024) discussed the reconstruction of the *Comprehensive Business English* teaching model based on the OBE concept, focusing on the optimisation of teaching processes and the design of teaching activities. Ren (2021) proposed practical teaching reform paths from the perspective of industry-education integration, centring on the construction of off-campus practice bases and the setting of practical courses. Although these studies provide specific ideas and operational schemes for improving Business English teaching practice and possess certain practical guidance significance, an in-depth analysis reveals obvious limitations.

Firstly, the reform perspective is relatively singular. Existing research mostly cuts in from the specific teaching level, confining the reform focus to the updating of teaching methods or the supplementation of practical links, failing to conduct a comprehensive systematic reconstruction from macro dimensions such as the positioning of educational objectives, the overall architecture of the curriculum system, and the systematic design of assessment mechanisms. This results in reforms struggling to touch upon the core issues of the education system. Secondly, there is insufficient adaptability to e-commerce. Most reform plans still continue the orientation of traditional business scenarios in content design and goal setting, failing to fully integrate core elements of the e-commerce field such as core operational processes, mainstream platform rules, and cross-border marketing strategies. This leads to a significant gap between reformed teaching content and the actual needs of cross-border e-commerce positions. Thirdly, theoretical support is not sufficiently solid. Existing research often emphasises the summary of practical experience and the application of teaching models, lacking a systematic review and integration of the deep correlation between e-commerce development laws and the intrinsic logic of Business English education. Consequently, a theoretical system of Business English education reform adapted to e-commerce scenarios has not been constructed, resulting in relevant reform suggestions lacking universal theoretical guidance and being difficult to widely promote in the Business English education practice of different types of universities.

3. THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION AND DIRECTION ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS ENGLISH EDUCATION REFORM DRIVEN BY E-COMMERCE

Based on the literature review above, it is evident that existing Business English education theories and reform practices struggle to adapt to the development needs of e-commerce. This chapter, based on ESP theory and Social Constructivism theory, combined with the development logic of e-commerce, constructs a theoretical framework for Business English education reform from three levels: core logic, core dimensions, and implementation paths, clarifying the core directions of reform in the context of e-commerce.

3.1 Core Logic of Reform

In the context of the digital economy fully penetrating global trade, the vigorous development of e-commerce has fundamentally reshaped the application scenarios and core capability requirements of Business English. Compared with traditional offline business activities, e-commerce relies on the internet to break geographical and temporal restrictions, forming diverse and dynamic new business scenarios covering online platform operations, cross-border live streaming, global customer online service, and cross-border electronic contract negotiation. These scenarios not only change the carriers and forms of Business English communication but also impose higher requirements on the immediacy, precision, and strategic nature of language application. This profound transformation of scenarios and demands dictates that Business English education reform must break through the inertia of traditional language teaching, establish a reform logic centred on needs-orientation, promote the deep integration of language teaching with e-commerce scenarios, and achieve a precise match between educational supply and industry demand.

As the core theoretical support for Business English education, ESP theory consistently emphasises the fundamental and leading role of needs analysis in course design (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This theoretical core possesses stronger realistic adaptability in the context of e-commerce. It is noteworthy that the 'needs' here are no longer singular language communication needs under traditional business scenarios but present multi-dimensional composite characteristics. These include not only basic listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills but also professional skills required for cross-border e-commerce operations, such as language application abilities adapted to platform rules, language strategy formulation abilities in cross-border marketing activities, and business communication and conflict resolution abilities in cross-cultural contexts. These diverse needs collectively constitute the core cultivation direction of Business English education in the e-commerce context.

Starting from the core logic of needs-orientation, the primary task of reform is to conduct systematic and precise needs research and analysis to clarify the differentiated capability requirements of different positions in the entire cross-border e-commerce industry chain. The industry covers various niche positions such as platform operation, cross-border marketing, customer service, logistics coordination, and compliance risk control, each with significantly different Business English capability requirements. For example, platform operation positions require practitioners to possess the linguistic ability for precise product listing writing, platform rule interpretation and adaptation, and the English presentation of data analysis reports. Cross-border marketing positions focus on the creation of marketing copy adapted to the target market culture and the design of English promotional scripts for social media. Customer service positions require efficient English instant communication skills, language strategies for handling customer complaints, and cross-cultural empathetic expression. Systematic organisation and classification of these position needs can provide precise grounds for the reconstruction of the curriculum system and the optimisation of teaching content, ensuring a seamless interface between education and job requirements.

Simultaneously, scenario integration is the specific implementation path of the needs-oriented logic in teaching practice and the key to enhancing teaching effectiveness. This requires Business English teaching to break the boundaries of the traditional classroom and fully integrate real e-commerce business scenarios into the entire teaching process. Examples include introducing real product listing writing tasks from mainstream cross-border platforms like Amazon and Alibaba International Station, simulating English product introductions and interactions in cross-border live streaming, and recreating English negotiation processes in international trade disputes. This ensures language learning is no longer isolated knowledge memorisation but a capability construction process closely combined with real e-commerce practice. Social Constructivism theory provides solid theoretical support for this scenario-integrated teaching model. The theory posits that learning is not a passive process of knowledge reception but a process wherein learners actively construct knowledge and capabilities within real social interaction scenarios (Anderson et al., 2008). Applying this theory to Business English teaching involves creating real e-commerce interaction scenarios to guide learners to actively integrate linguistic knowledge, business common sense, and e-commerce skills during language practice and interaction. This facilitates the gradual construction of composite Business English capabilities that possess linguistic accuracy, business professionalism, and scenario adaptability, truly realising the transformation from 'language learning' to 'capability application'.

3.2 Core Dimensions of Reform

The core logic of needs-orientation and scenario integration dictates that Business English education reform must be synergistically reconstructed from three core dimensions: objectives, content, and assessment, breaking the limitations of traditional education models. These three dimensions are interrelated and mutually constraining, collectively constituting the theoretical framework for reform and ensuring its systematic nature and completeness.

The reconstruction of educational objectives is the core prerequisite for reform. It should shift from traditional 'language capability cultivation' to 'composite e-commerce Business English capability cultivation'. Traditional objectives focus on the mastery of linguistic knowledge, whereas objectives in the e-commerce context should be clarified as cultivating interdisciplinary professionals possessing "language application ability + e-commerce professional ability + cross-cultural communication ability". Zhang (2010) pointed out that Business English education objectives should precisely match market demand. Combined with e-commerce scenarios, this objective needs further refinement: possessing language communication abilities required for platform operations (e.g., product description writing, customer enquiry response); possessing language strategy abilities required for cross-border marketing (e.g., culturally adapted language design, marketing copy creation); and possessing cross-cultural business dispute resolution abilities (e.g., language communication and negotiation in international trade disputes).

The reconstruction of curriculum content is the core path to achieving educational objectives. It should construct a three-dimensional content system of "Language + Business + E-commerce" surrounding e-commerce scenarios. Traditional content often focuses on traditional scenarios like correspondence and negotiation, lacking adaptability to e-commerce. Based on the needs-orientation theory of ESP, curriculum content should first eliminate traditional content disconnected from e-commerce scenarios and increase content relevant to core e-commerce scenarios. Specifically, core modules such as "Cross-border E-commerce Language Application," "E-commerce Platform Copywriting," and "Cross-cultural E-commerce Marketing Communication" can be established. Each module should be carried by real e-commerce tasks, integrating linguistic knowledge with e-commerce skills. For instance, in the "E-commerce Platform Copywriting" module, combined with rules from platforms like Amazon, teaching can cover linguistic techniques for product title keywords and product detail descriptions, while incorporating basic knowledge of platform operations to achieve deep integration.

The reconstruction of assessment mechanisms is the key link guaranteeing reform effects. A diversified process-oriented assessment system should be constructed. Traditional evaluation is mostly summative, focusing on linguistic knowledge, which struggles to fully reflect learners' composite capabilities. Based on the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) concept, assessment mechanisms should shift towards process evaluation centred on learning outputs (Li, 2024), conducting comprehensive assessments combined with the completion effects of e-commerce tasks. Specifically, assessment subjects should be diversified, integrating teacher evaluation, peer evaluation, and enterprise evaluation. Enterprise evaluation can introduce professionals from cross-border e-commerce companies to assess learners' performance in simulated tasks. Assessment content should cover multiple dimensions such as language application accuracy, e-commerce task completion quality, and cross-cultural communication effectiveness. Assessment methods should combine formative and summative assessments, comprehensively examining learners' overall capabilities through process indicators such as classroom performance, task completion, and simulated training effects.

3.3 Implementation Paths of Reform

The effective advancement of Business English education reform requires reliance on the implementation paths of theoretical fusion and resource integration to ensure the reform theory can be implemented. Theoretical fusion refers to the systematic integration of relevant theories such as ESP, Social Constructivism, and OBE to form a theoretical synergy supporting reform. Resource integration refers to integrating educational, enterprise, and technological resources to build a comprehensive reform support system.

The theoretical fusion path requires breaking the limitations of a single theory and constructing a reform framework supported by multiple synergistic theories. ESP theory provides the core logic of needs-orientation for course design; Social Constructivism provides implementation ideas for scenario-based teaching; and the OBE concept provides theoretical support for assessment mechanism reconstruction. The three complement each other to form a complete theoretical system. In practice, cultivation objectives can be clarified based on needs analysis; scenario-based teaching activities (e.g., simulated

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cross-border live streaming, e-commerce negotiation) can be designed combining Social Constructivism; and a process assessment system can be built relying on OBE to assess learners' performance. This ensures every link of the reform has solid theoretical support.

The resource integration path requires constructing a "University—Enterprise—Technology" tripartite resource support system. Universities should strengthen cooperation with cross-border e-commerce enterprises, introducing real business scenarios, case resources, and professionals into course design and teaching implementation. They should fully utilise digital technology to build online simulation training platforms, integrating e-commerce platform resources and language learning resources to provide technical support for scenario-based teaching. Faculty construction should be strengthened through university-enterprise cooperative training and special training to enhance teachers' e-commerce professionalism and language teaching abilities, creating a "Language + E-commerce" composite teaching team. He (2018) proposed the idea of constructing an industry-education integration ecosystem; this approach is equally applicable to Business English education reform. Through the integration of university, enterprise, and technological resources, a comprehensive reform support system can be formed to ensure the realisation of reform goals.

4. CONCLUSION

Grounded in a theoretical analysis perspective, this study has systematically explored issues related to Business English education reform in the context of e-commerce. Through literature review and logical deduction, a reform theoretical framework has been constructed. This framework takes needs-orientation and scenario integration as the core logic, the synergistic reconstruction of objectives, content, and assessment as core dimensions, and theoretical fusion and resource integration as implementation paths, clarifying the core direction of Business English education reform.

The study finds that the development of e-commerce has reshaped the application scenarios and capability needs of Business English, rendering traditional education models ill-adapted to this change; thus, reform is imperative. Relevant theories such as ESP, Social Constructivism, and OBE provide significant support, and their fusion forms a theoretical synergy. Reform should focus on the cultivation goal of composite e-commerce Business English capabilities, construct a three-dimensional "Language + Business + E-commerce" curriculum system, establish a diversified process assessment mechanism, and rely on a university-enterprise-technology tripartite resource integration system to ensure effective advancement.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in constructing a systematic theoretical framework for Business English education reform in the context of e-commerce, remedying the limitations of existing research regarding singular perspectives and insufficient theoretical support, and enriching the theoretical system of ESP education. Simultaneously, the reform directions and implementation paths proposed provide clear theoretical guidance for reform in higher education institutions, possessing certain practical reference value.

This study has certain limitations. As a pure theoretical analysis, the effectiveness of the reform framework has not been verified through empirical research. Future research could conduct empirical studies based on the theoretical framework proposed herein, using methods such as case analyses and teaching experiments to test the feasibility and effectiveness of the reform paths. Furthermore, future work should further refine the capability requirements of different e-commerce positions to construct more targeted curriculum systems and teaching models, thereby enhancing the practical adaptability of the research.

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