

Innovating Graduation Thesis Writing for Business English Majors in Application-Oriented Colleges: Taking Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences as an Example

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Abstract: *The main target of application-oriented colleges is to cater to the practical requirement of different social sectors so as to serve local economy and talent market. How to differentiate Business English major students in application-oriented colleges is important in the talents cultivation to improve the quality and competitiveness of students. This paper will take graduation thesis, a result of 4-year talents cultivation, of Business English major students in Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, an application-oriented college, as an example to find out some innovative ways to realize differentiation and practicability of Business English talents cultivation in application-oriented colleges.*

Keywords: Innovation of graduation thesis, Business English, Application-oriented college.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the major Business English has been set up in more than 430 universities and colleges, which has attached increasing interest and awareness. But how to differentiate this major between application-oriented colleges and other universities and how to make their talents more competitive in the market is an important question to think. The main target of application-oriented colleges is to cater to the practical requirement of different social sectors so as to serve local economy and talent market.

And graduation thesis, as a result of 4-year talents cultivation, plays a crucial role to prove the quality and competitiveness of Business English major students in application-oriented colleges. Thus, this paper will take graduation thesis of Business English major students in Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, an application-oriented college in Hubei Province, as an example and find out some ways to realize differentiation and practicability of Business English talents cultivation in application-oriented colleges.

2. The Analysis of Current Situation

As Business English major students, graduation thesis is compulsory based on the requirement of Ministry of Education, which will focus on the comprehensive application of business English and professional knowledge, as well as the practical and creative ability of students. The thesis can be in practical or academic form, and is required to conform to industry or academic norms, be written in English, and have a body length of not less than 5,000 words. One kind of practical category includes project reports, for example, business plans, marketing programs, case studies, translations and commentaries and the other kind is research reports, such as research and analysis of enterprises, industries and markets.

In the Foreign Language School of Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, graduation thesis in academic form is required and it should be related to both English and

Business studies, which leaves less space of options of thesis topics. From analysis of the topics, among 150 Business English major students, 93 of them chose to study translation of business contracts, letters, trademarks etc. and a majority of the rest focused on cultural differences and etiquettes in business context. Thus, it's very hard to avoid repetition of topic choices in three years which is demanded by school.

Besides that, lack of innovation and practicability in graduation thesis is also a problem facing by Business English major students in Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences. Due to limitations in class, students' knowledge is still at theoretical level because they could only get the information from different business-related classes or online research by themselves. Though they are majoring in Business English and will have internships in their last year of study, their lack of practical skills and professional knowledge will definitely be barriers for them to propose innovative ideas so as to write graduation thesis in practical form, which in turn limits their choices of thesis topics,

Guidance and advice are very crucial for students to write their thesis properly as well. In Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, students will only have classes for academic writing which prepares them for graduation thesis, resulting in their lack of enough writing skills for practical graduation projects. And only one teacher will be assigned to a student to provide guidance and advice to complete their graduation thesis before topic is chosen, which may cause divergence of interests and study areas between teachers and students.

3. Possible Solutions to Current Problems in Graduation Thesis

To sum up, based on the analysis above for graduation thesis in Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, there are three kinds of obstacles to achieving the goals of differentiation and practicability of Business English talents cultivation in application-oriented colleges. The first one is

requirements for graduation thesis in school; the second is lack of interdisciplinary knowledge and practical skills of Business English major students; and lastly, there is not enough support for students to complete their graduation thesis in practical form. Several suggestions are then provided here in this paper in order to improve students' quality and competitiveness and meet the goals for application-oriented colleges to serve local economy and talent market.

3.1 Broadening the Scope of Topics Chosen for Graduation Thesis

Based on the latest national requirement for Business English major students, they are encouraged to complete their graduation thesis in more innovative ways, meaning that Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences could broaden the scope of topics for its Business English major students to choose and change the requirements accordingly.

For graduation thesis in academic form, research on business market, including company management, job requirements for different positions or even regional economies, could also be done by students majoring at Business English only if English is used and minimum words requirement is met. Translation, cultural differences and linguistic analysis will no longer be the only choice for a majority of students.

Besides academic form, to complete graduation thesis in practical form is also a good way to stimulate students' innovative thinking and create more ideas or interesting products to benefit the society and local community as well as increase competitiveness of students to differentiate application-oriented colleges in talent market. Inspired by new social situations, new social phenomena, new products or new services, students will have a wide range of topic choices to finish practical reports, including Business Plan, Business Research Report, Business Case Study and Marketing Program.

3.2 Perfecting Scoring System of Graduation Thesis

Currently traditional scoring system is applied in Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, and scores will only be given based on academic thesis in Foreign Language School. For students with traditional graduation thesis related to both English and Business areas such as translation of trademarks, current scoring system is suitable with the thesis and graduation defense. However, if the scope of topics could be broadened and practical graduation projects may be carried out by students, then scoring system for these practical reports should be involved with not only teachers at school but also industry or corporate experts according to the latest national requirements.

Thus, perfecting scoring system is a must for application-oriented colleges to reform graduation thesis and achieve their goals to cultivate high-quality Business English talents. The suggested scoring system of practical reports may be divided into four parts: first, from graduation advisors at school based on the written report; second, from mentors outside in industries or from companies based on the written report; next, from teachers at school based on graduation defense; and lastly, from industry or corporate experts based

on graduation defense.

3.3 Encouraging Students to Attend More Business-related Contests

There are many entrepreneurship contests in recent years, aiming to have more young entrepreneurs to help with development of local economy. Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, as an application-oriented college, also encourages students to attend these contests to start their own business in the future. For example, "Challenge Cup" *Entrepreneurship Program Competition*, one of the most popular contests for Chinese college students, is also regarded the Olympic Game for entrepreneurship contests and Business Plan contest. *China International "Internet+" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition*, another entrepreneurship competition in China, is also to stimulate creativity of college students but it's more focused on the achievements through Internet and encourages students to start business and promote employment, while *Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program*, an entrepreneurship project in China, is for college students to prepare business plans, conduct feasibility studies, simulate business operations, participate in business practices, and complete start-up reports.

These three contests are typical entrepreneurship contests in China. From the introduction of these contests, we will know that business plans, a representative practical form for graduation thesis, are crucial in all the mentioned contests above. Thus, if Business English major students attend these contests, they may put forward some interesting ideas and have an overview of business plans at least, which may benefit both themselves and the society. Moreover, maybe they could search online and find out information to create more innovative products to serve local economy and finalize their reports, which will in turn help with their practical graduation thesis. Besides that, students will also acquire other abilities definitely during the process of contests, such as analyzing and marketing etc. to help with other form of practical graduation thesis. Therefore, the more contests they attend, the easier for them to write their high-quality graduation thesis in practical form. It is a win-win situation for both colleges and students.

3.4 Providing More Opportunities for Students to have Internships

During four-year study at school, Business English major students will only go for internships in the last year which is compulsory in Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences. This is too late for them either to attend entrepreneurship contests or to start with their practical graduation thesis. Students are always more willing to attend English contests to prove their abilities in usage of English because they have more confidence in English but are reluctant to attend business-related contests due to lack of innovation or creative products.

Thus, it's important for students to broaden their horizons and get to know more knowledge in practical circumstances, and internships provide good opportunities for that. If more internships are provided to students in the early stage of study, they may put their theoretical knowledge into practice early to

enhance their abilities and regard work from different perspectives. It will be easier for students to start up their own business with interesting new ideas or products as hoped by both our nation and college, encouraging them to attend more business-related contests and complete innovative graduation thesis.

3.5 Introducing Writing Skills of Practical Graduation Thesis

In current curriculum for Business English major students in Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, the course of thesis writing is in the last semester of third year study, just before opening defense of graduation thesis, and the course will only teach students how to write academic thesis. Now that topics could be broadened and practical form of graduation thesis could be added based on new national requirement, introduction and writing skills of practical graduation thesis may be taught earlier for students to attend entrepreneurship contests and accumulate experience for practical graduation thesis. Thus, courses for Business English major students should be rearranged based on teaching objectives and learning needs.

3.6 Inviting Companies and Entrepreneurs to Provide Support for Graduation Thesis

According to the latest national requirements, thesis evaluation should be taken by both teachers at school and industry or corporate experts, resulting in more difficulties in writing practical graduation thesis. Application-oriented colleges, such as Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, could cooperate with local companies and entrepreneurs to provide internship opportunities for students to enhance interdisciplinary knowledge at early stage of students' study and finally cultivate talents for themselves and help them with their graduation thesis. Thus, after students have chosen their topics, a thesis advisor from school and a corporate mentor can be assigned to each of them accordingly. Both thesis advisors and corporate mentors will definitely support and evaluate students' practical graduation projects.

4. Conclusion

Therefore, innovating graduation thesis writing for Business English major students is imperative in application-oriented colleges. However, from the analysis above, taking Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences as an example, there is still a long way to go. Colleges need to make some changes in the traditional beliefs and establish an in-depth cooperation with more companies and entrepreneurs, while students should enhance interdisciplinary knowledge and accumulate practical experience so as to realize differentiation and practicability of Business English talents cultivation in application-oriented colleges.

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