Task Design in Oral Business English Teaching in South China

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Abstract

This project develops a task design process in oral business English teaching in a university in southern China based on Task-based Language Teaching, Intercultural Language Teaching and genre analysis, to answer the questions: what kind of factors would influence the design of tasks in oral business English? Can the intercultural dimension be successfully addressed in the process of task design? By doing this project, after analyzing the related proclaims of significant scholars in the field, the writer would like to get a deeper comprehension of the approaches which are suitable for the target students and how tasks could be designed to match specific teaching aims better. Moreover, some implications for the writer's teaching practices in the future are expected after this project.

Keywords

Task design; Oral business English; English teaching; Intercultural.

1. Introduction

The learners who want to learn Business English (BE) can usually be categorized into two types: job-experienced language learners who work in business field and pre-experienced (low-experienced) language learners who are students in full-time education preparing for a business career (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). This project focuses on task design process in the teaching of oral business English to students in a university in China who have little or no experience of the business world. There are four parts in this project. The first part is the description of the topic, the significance of the topic, and the foci. The second part describes the approaches the writer used in task design which are task-based language teaching (TBLT), intercultural language teaching (ICT), and genre analysis. Then the rationale of the choices the writer made in designing tasks is followed. At the end, the tasks designed by the writer are presented.

2. Description, Significance and the Focus

In the worldwide context, business English teaching started at the end of 1960s. From the end of 1960s to the early years of 1970s, professional terms were regarded as the distinctive feature between business English and general English. Business words and terminology became the teaching foci, as well as the training of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills under business context. Then the focus was shifted to a number of functions such as recommendations, expression of ideas, reaching consensus. In late 1980s, the focus of teaching practices was extended to learners' communicative techniques in using business English, for example, socializing, presentation, negotiation, and participation in meetings, and so on. From 1990s, there seemed to be a consensus among researchers and practitioners in China and beyond (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Feng, 1999) that Business English is a branch or variety of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which provided an operating frame for teaching Business English (Zhang, 2007). Moreover, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) identified two categories of business

English, which are English for general business purposes and English for specific purposes. They also confirmed that western culture mainly represented business English culture (as cited in Bargiela-Chiappini & Zhang, 2013).

However, with the spread of English, English has become as a lingua franca or an international language in the world. At the same time, it also turns to be the dominant language in business worldwide, especially in Asian. Regarding this, more and more scholars are putting their focus on researching the specific features of business English in particular context and how these differences could incorporate better to serve the international communication in business. Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang (2013, p.208) concluded that business English should be regarded as a "research-led enterprise" for scholars.

In China, the fast growing economy could answer the demand for and development of business English. The teaching of Business English could date back to the early 1950s (Chen, 2001). The business skill courses and language courses in business English teaching coexisted from the right beginning. The number of these two kinds of courses increased gradually which were integrated closely along with the development of business English teaching. In 1970s, when China started to take an open policy to the world, students of English major were required to learn more business skills as well as language skills. In 1990s, business English teaching was enlarged fairly board with business subject knowledge courses being complemented in large amount. In the early 2000s, English language teachers in China put forward the idea of introducing business English into the higher education curriculum (Bargiela-Chiappini & Zhang, 2013). In 2007, business English was issued as an undergraduate major by the Ministry of Education. Now in China, business English is a competitive degree program and both language skills and business practices are stressed in business English teaching.

As a main component in Business English, oral business English is going to be focuses on in this project. Besides this, task design would be the core keyword. There is a consensus among scholars that the concept of task is an important element in language curriculum, classroom teaching and learner assessment in business English teaching (Nunan, 1989; 2004; Crookes & Gass, 1993; Willis & Willis, 1996; Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003). In China, many studies concerning oral business English teaching have drawn great attention on defining the concept or testing the effectiveness of three-phase task implementation procedure proposed by Willis (1996) and the investigation of curriculum design. In terms of curriculum design, Wang and Xu (1997) proposed a curriculum which attached importance to the learning of subject knowledge as well as language skills. In addition, Zhang (2007, p.407) designed a curriculum which incorporates the three areas of knowledge and skills, "business knowledge", "business discourse", and "business practice". While reviewing the studies about oral business English teaching, the writer found that most studies are more concerned about the implementation and principles of tasks with less consideration on task design itself (Cheng, 2011). Therefore, in this project, the writer focuses on task design itself and believes that designing tasks is essential to success in oral business English classrooms and before carrying out approaches in classrooms, there should be a task design process.

By doing this project, after analyzing the related proclaims of significant scholars in this field, the writer would like to get a deeper comprehension of the approaches which are suitable for the target students and how tasks could be designed to match specific teaching aims better. Moreover, some implications for the writer's teaching practices in the future are expected after this project.

This project develops a task design process in oral business English teaching in China based on Task-based Language Teaching, Intercultural Language Teaching and genre analysis with the foci below.

1) What kind of factors would influence the design of tasks in oral business English? Can the intercultural dimension be successfully addressed in the process of task design?

2) A task design process would be proposed.

3. Approaches

In the field of oral business English teaching, many approaches such as Direct Method, Communicative Approach, Audio-lingual Method, Cognitive Approach, Situational Method, and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) and so on are all used in Business English teaching in different contexts. Among these approaches, TBLT is no doubt one of the most popular approaches. In China, English language teachers who teach different levels in EFL context have taken TBLT as an effective method to accelerate language development and acquisition. Ellis and Johnson (1994) believed that business English teaching should be based on tasks which are identical to those learners will encounter in target circumstances. TBLT emphasizes on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language. By introducing authentic texts into the learning situation and finishing certain tasks, it provides learners opportunities to associate classroom activities with real business world. As an extension of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) movement (Richards, 2005), TBLT aims at developing learners' communicative competence and language abilities. Regarding the communicative competence in business English teaching, as Frendo (2005, p.8) proposed, in the teaching of business English, communicative competence should be focused on three key components in particular, which are "linguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence". However, intercultural dimension of language learning is often neglected among communicative approaches (Martin, 2012). Crozet and Liddicoat (1999, p.113) thought that as the emerging modern approach to language education, Intercultural Language Teaching (ILT) overcomes the main disadvantages of CLT which changes the goals of language learning from "communicative competence" to "intercultural competence". Moreover, Martin (2012) also identifies that it is possible to address the intercultural dimension via TBLT successfully. Therefore, in this project, in order to develop students' communicative competence completely, both TBLT and ILT are considered in the process of designing tasks incorporating with business genre analysis. Besides these, Ellis's (2003) framework for describing tasks is used to depict all the designed tasks. Detailed description and explanation of the approaches are presented below.

3.1. Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Oriented by social constructivism, TBLT has gained popularity in the field of language teaching since the last decade of the 20th century. Significant scholars have joined the discussion and increased the amount of analytical studies on the issue (Nunan, 1989; 2004; Crookes & Gass, 1993; Willis & Willis, 1996; Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003). TBLT, as a second/foreign language teaching approach, engages learners in authentic language use by having them perform a series of tasks (Ellis, 2003).

Task, as a key factor, is of great importance to TBLT. The way of defining a task varies with scholars. Nunan (2004, p.1) proposed the concept of "real-world or target task" and "pedagogical task". Target tasks refer to "language uses in the world beyond the classroom", while pedagogical tasks are "those conducting in the classroom". He pointed out that most definitions in pedagogical tasks focus on meaning as opposed to language form. Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001, p.11) claimed that a task is "an activity, influenced by learner choice, and susceptible to learner reinterpretation, which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective". Ellis (2003, p.16) defined a pedagogical task as "a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate prepositional content has been conveyed". He insisted TBLT should not only focus on meaning but also involve focus on form.

From the above definitions, it should be noted that though meaning is the priority and the traditional form practicing is excluded from definitions of tasks, it does not mean a task cannot be used to foster form. Meaning and form are highly interrelated. Form development can be achieved in a communicative task in several ways. Ellis (2003) claimed that it can be achieved through pre-task and on-line planning, through corrective feedback, and through post-task activities of a traditional nature. Therefore, both meaning and form will be considered in the writer's task design. For example, in task 2 telephoning, besides understanding the information transferred on telephone, students are also expected to pay attention to the specific form of opening and closing a conversation on telephone.

When applying TBLT in the classroom, the consideration of the stages or other component of a lesson should be involved in the designing process. Wills (1996, p.53) summarized three principal phases that sequenced chronologically in TBLT. The first phase is "pre-task" which introduces the topic and tasks to learners. The second is the "task cycle" centered on the task itself which includes task, planning, and report. The final phase is "language focus" which deals with following up activities to the main task. According to this, all the procedures in implementing the designed tasks in Material part will follow the similar three-step sequence: pre-task, task-cycle, and post-task.

Besides the definition of task and the framework of TBLT discussed above, task type, task complexity and characteristics all influence learners' performance and teachers' teaching effect in a TBLT classroom.

In terms of task types, Prabhu (1987, pp.46-47) categorized meaning-focused activities into three types: "information-gap activity, reasoning-gap activity, and opinion-gap activity". Willis (1996, pp.26-28) offered task types from a pedagogic point of view. These tasks are commonly found in text book materials, and reflect the kind of operations learners are required to carry out in performing six types of tasks: "listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks". Richards (2001, p.162) proposed five types of task: "Jigsaw task, information-gap tasks, problem-solving task, decision-making tasks, and opinion exchange tasks". In this project, based on Willis's (1996) classification of task types, designed tasks in Material part can be divided as follows: ordering (like Task 3), comparing (like Task 1 & 2), problem-solving (like Task 5), and sharing personal experiences (like Task 4).

For task complexity and difficulty, they both exert great influence on task performance. According to Robinson (2001), complexity and difficulty concern different aspects of a task. Task complexity depends on the cognitive demands a task imposes to participants, which chiefly rely on their on-line cognitive resources. Task difficulty is a result of participants' factors which can be measured from the participants' individual feeling of task demands arousing a cognitive resource distribution. Task complexity and difficulty of the designed tasks would be adjusted to meet the teaching aim and target students' actual learning level.

As the main topic of this project is task design, the aim and factors in TBLT approach discussed above are viewed as the basis in the designing process. Both meaning and language forms are emphasized by following the three-step sequence to develop target students' communicative competence. Besides TBLT, in order to help students to develop their intercultural competence, intercultural language teaching approach is also utilized to create tasks.

3.2. Intercultural Language Teaching (ILT)

Nowadays, culture is seen as one of the central concerns for language teaching. In order to achieve intercultural competence, as a new emerging teaching approach, Intercultural Language Teaching (ILT) combining both culture and language together during language teaching and learning is getting more and more concerns from a number of people, such as, language teachers and curriculum designers. As a language teacher, in order to be an intercultural speaker, it is also very important for the writer to understand what intercultural

language teaching is and how it would be applied in classrooms, especially in an oral business English classroom in China.

The importance of culture in language teaching and learning can be illustrated through the following review. As Byram (2008) pointed out, Communicative Language Teaching or CLT, a most influential teaching methodology today, is still identified to be the methodology that most language teachers use in their classrooms. In Richards' (n.d.) booklet, he depicts the importance of CLT and shows us the significant impact of CLT on language teaching today since it was first proposed in the 1970s. Richards (n.d., p.3) defined the goals of CLT as the teaching of "communicative competence", compared with the concept of "grammatical competence". He says that it is not sufficient for language learners to only master the grammatical competence in a language. Without communicative competence, learners could not succeed in communicating meaningfully.

However, Crozet and Liddicoat (1999, p.113) believed that although CLT is in the purpose of teaching learners to communicate in a foreign language, it ignores both the connection between language and culture and the necessity to consider communication as "intercultural communication" between native speakers and non-native speakers rather than "communication" in the target language. As Moran (2001) said, people need language to practice the culture, to express themselves and to communicate with each other. People create language to embody culture. Lo Bianco (2003, p.11) suggested that culture could be clarified into three different dimensions, "visible", "invisible", and "multiple". He also found that quite recently the role of culture in language teaching turns to be prominent. For this point, Kramsch (1993) has written that we perform a cultural act when we speak and it shows that culture is not a separate skill, which is integrated into other language skills (Liddicoat, 2004). Crozet and Liddicoat (1999, p.113) also mentioned that "language use is fundamentally cultural". In Liddicoat's (2004) research, he cited Crozet's (1996) words to mention that communication is not only about grammar and vocabulary, but also about culture. To cover the shortage of not considering culture in language education, a large number of people have started to link an intercultural approach to language teaching (Liddicoat, 2004).

As Byram (2008) said, for language teachers, it is necessary to consider how intercultural language education is providing new perspectives to language teaching and learning. Crozet and Liddicoat (1999, p.113) thought that as the emerging modern approach to language education, Intercultural Language Teaching (ILT) overcomes the main disadvantages of CLT. ILT has changed the goals of language learning from "communicative competence" to "intercultural competence". One's own culture and the culture of the target language are both involved in the implement process of intercultural approach. Intercultural language teaching puts the need to communicate in the first place and aims at developing intercultural communicative skills as well as developing language skills (Liddicoat, 2004). The goals of ILT, according to Crozet and Liddicoat (1999, p.117), are threefold. Firstly, "learning about culture", secondly, "comparing cultures", and thirdly, "intercultural exploration". Learning about culture implies understanding culture as a process. Comparing cultures show learners how to recognize the constructing and reconstructing of their own identity. Intercultural exploration is talking about striving for the third place where one negotiates for oneself in different cultures. The pedagogical principles for developing intercultural language teaching and learning, as Liddicoat et al (2003, pp.46-51) has researched, include "active construction", "making connections", "social interaction", "reflection", and "responsibility". Active construction shows that learners need to create their own understanding about the culture when developing an individual perspective on both their native and target culture. Making connections means that learners are inspired to make the links between their existing culture and the new one they are learning. Social interaction allows learners to experience difference during communication. Reflection asks learners to respond to the culture they are learning and acknowledge the impact

of the target culture on their understanding. Responsibility makes learners understand that they have a responsibility for successful communication in all of their languages and to value other cultures.

With an intercultural stance, there are also considerations for identity in language teaching and learning. Moran (2001) addresses identity in two dimensions, individual's identity in one's own culture and that in target language culture. For language teachers, they should not only focus on teaching language, but pay more attention to learners' culture learning (Moran, 2001). When teaching the target language, Crozet and Liddicoat (2000, p.12) proposed that in an intercultural approach to language teaching, the teacher becomes the principal mediator between cultures. Language teachers should teach learners how to make their first culture relate to the target culture.

For business learners, it is vital for them to develop their intercultural competence and find their identities in given culture in order to be successful in international business field. Therefore, Intercultural Language Teaching is necessary to be implemented in oral business English teaching. After explaining the effect of TBLT and ILT in this project's task design, next section will illustrate why business genres should be incorporated in the designing process and how it could be.

3.3. Genre, Business Genres and Genre Analysis

Incorporating the notion of genre and genre analysis into oral business English teaching has particular benefits. It may help develop learners' communicative competence and improve task performance as well. As an oral business English teacher for more than a decade, Li (2004) found that in addition to linguistic errors in terms of grammar and lexis, Chinese business English major students have three difficulties with written and spoken language. First, students do not have an understanding of the structural procedure of business spoken and written discourse. Second, students do not have a command of the language function required in particular context. Third, some expressions are inappropriate as a result of miss using formal and informal language for particular context. These difficulties may, to some extent, be overcome by introducing genre and genre analysis in oral business English classrooms. After reviewing Li's (2004) study, the writer believes that at the very beginning of task design, the business genres which will be involved in tasks should be determined first.

The term genre is not new, of course. Freedman and Medway (1994) pointed out that for more than a century, genres have been defined as written texts, while Paltridge (2006, p.84) described genres as ways in which people "get things done" through their use of spoken and written discourse. According to Paltridge (2006), genre analysis is a branch of discourse analysis that explores specific uses of language. It is driven by a desire to understand the communicative character of discourse by looking at how individuals use language to engage in particular communicative situations. Genre analysis is distinct from textual analysis in that "it can provide students with both rhetorical and linguistic awareness of different genres, as well as a context in which both the general and particular expectations of different discourse communities can be explored" (Paltridge, 2001, p.4). Moreover, genre analysis provides insights for language teaching. It seeks to identify how texts are structured in terms of functional stages or moves and the features that characterize texts and that help realize their communicative purposes.

For business English, spoken genres refer to the spoken text types under which different business activities are carried out. With respect to the notion of genre in spoken discourse and business English, successfully defining all those spoken genres is by no means easy. Detailed business skills about speaking or interacting are specified by Ellis and Johnson (1994, p.36), like "giving a formal presentation, giving an informal presentation, instructing or demonstrating on the job, giving description and explanations, visiting a company or receiving

visitors, showing visitors around or being shown around, entertaining or being entertained, participating in discussions and informal meetings, participating in formal meetings, chairing meetings, interviewing, negotiating, and telephoning". Besides, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p.63) researched a lot in defining what business genres are. They argued that to determine which genres exist in business English, "significant differences and specific communicative purposes" should be understood. They attempted to propose a list of spoken genres used in business communications as follows: description and explanation; warnings and instructions; professional telephone conversations; business-related telephone conversations; interviews; counseling; negotiations; professional meeting, workshop discussions; short professional talks.

From the points above (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998), the writer thinks that oral business genres are closely related to oral business skills with particular communicative purposes. To see how genres could be incorporated in oral business English teaching, all the tasks in Material part will be designed based on oral business genres chosen by the writer, like socializing, telephoning, talking to client, interviewing and negotiating. Furthermore, in addition to these three approaches, Ellis's (2003) framework for describing tasks is used to depict all the designed tasks.

3.4. Ellis's Framework for Describing Tasks

Ellis (2003, p.21) proposed several task design features that should be taken into consideration: "goal, input, conditions, procedures and outcomes" as shown in Table 1. This framework allows for the systematic description of different tasks. It provides a basis for identifying the various options for designing tasks in this project.

Table 1. A framework for describing tasks (Ellis, 2003, p.21)

Design feature	Description
1 Goal	The general purposes of the task.
2 Input	The verbal or non-verbal information supplied by the task.
3 Conditions	The way in which the information is presented.
4 Procedures	The methodological procedures to be followed in performing the task.
5 Predicted outcomes Product Process	The product that results from completing the task. The linguistic and cognitive processes the task is hypothesized to generate.

The starting point of task design is the determination of the goals. Task goals can "be specified in terms of what aspects of communicative competence the task is intended to contribute to" (Ellis, 2003, p.19). Although TBLT and intercultural education are often viewed as two distinct fields of research and scholarship (Adams & Newton, 2009), in this project, as the main aim of ILT, intercultural competence is categorized as a developed understanding of communicative competence. The communicative competence of oral business English can be elaborated in three aspects: "linguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence" (Frendo, 2005, p.8). Tasks can potentially contribute to the development of all three with particular tasks designed to emphasize aspects of communicative competence. As Frendo (2005, pp.8-12) said, "linguistic competence is shown in the use of the basic elements that go together to form a language, such as vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and so on. Discourse competence deals with language in use, shown in how learners interact with each other within context. Typical examples of discourse include negotiations, correspondence, telephoning, and so on". All these examples can also be categorized as spoken business genres. Therefore,

mastering specific spoken business genres can be pointed out as one of discourse competence. For Intercultural competence, Frendo (2005, p.12) defined it as "the ability to deal with differences in how other cultures do things". In this project, the goals of designed tasks take Frendo's (2005) three aspects of communicative competence as a standard.

Input and conditions are two correlated items, which both have an effect on task performance. Input refers to "the kind of input data that a task provides" (Ellis, 2003, p.19), for example, whether it is written, pictorial or verbal, while conditions refer to "the way in which the data are presented" (Ellis, 2003, p.19), for example, whether the data are split among the task participants or shared by them, or the way in which it is to be used, for example, converging or diverging. Thus, a task may have the same input but different conditions, or with the same conditions but different input.

Procedures concern "the methodological options available to researchers and teachers for implementing tasks" (Ellis, 2003, p.19). Students can be instructed to work in pairs or groups. Teachers can decide to give the students time to plan or not.

The last element is the predicted outcomes. In order to qualify as tasks, a task must have clear product outcomes that result from completing a task. Process outcomes are what actually happen when participants perform a task. It is much more difficult to predict as the language and cognitive behavior are dependent on each participant and cannot be reliably predicted.

4. Rationale

Based on the three approaches discussed before and Ellis's (2003) describing framework, this project proposes a process for task design in oral business English teaching as follows:

a. determine spoken business genres.

b. specify design features of tasks.

c. design cultural points in tasks.

d. adjust task complexity in terms of design features.

First, choose the genres to be incorporated into tasks to form genre-based tasks. Second, according to the general framework of design features (Ellis, 2003), specify the nature of the tasks to be used in terms of goal(s) (which combine the aims of both TBLT and Intercultural Language Teaching), input, conditions, processes, and predicted outcomes. Third, design some cultural points in tasks if possible to help students recognize cultural differences and find the "third place" between their mother culture and the target culture. At the end, adjust the complexity of tasks to achieve the best teaching effect.

It should be noted that in practice, these steps might be interwoven to each other, for example, sequence of these steps might not be observed rigidly as the adjustment in business genres and complexity might influence the specification of a task.

Many factors are taken into consideration during the process of task designing which are suitable task types and business genres, design features such as task goal, input, conditions, procedures and predicted outcomes are generally prescribed, intercultural dimension and task complexity. It should be noticed that there are various factors influencing task performance and success in oral business English instruction, such as teacher's role, learners' affective factors and context of oral tasks. However, due to the limitation of time and space, these aspects are not taken into consideration in the designed materials.

By considering the oral business skills (Ellis & Johnson, 1994) and the spoken genres in business (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) and taking Ellis's (2003) framework to describe task features, the writer designs tasks on the basis of the following oral business genres: socializing with colleagues; telephoning; talking to clients; job interviewing; and negotiating.

Task 1 socializing

Socializing with colleagues in informal chats is quite natural in the business context, like Monday morning chats, party invitation, and family invitation and so on. Therefore, the designing process: first, take socializing as the oral business genre; second, in order to decrease the task difficulty, a video showing dialogues between colleagues is presented in pre-task phase. And students are required to write down some useful language phases which could help them to run their role-play in task-cycle smoothly; third, specify the task features as follows:

Design features	Description
1. goal	Tag question, intercultural competence.
2. input	Video
3. conditions	Shared
4. procedures	Pair-work; individual
5. predicted outcomes	
Product	Written phases and oral role-play
Process	Invitation and informal chatting in colleagues

At the end, design cultural points in the post-task phase. In socializing with colleagues, cultural differences would cause embarrassment or confusion. Taking Chinese greeting for example, Have you eaten? in Chinese sometimes sounds strange to foreigners. In regards of this, learners in business English should pay attention to these point, while Have you eaten? in Chinese should be translated as How are you? in English. Another popular example should be gift-giving that varies between Chinese culture and Western culture. Although gift-giving may have the function of maintaining social relationships, it could have negative impact when western colleagues ask you to take something as presents, and you just think it as a joke and bring nothing. When talking with a colleague face to face, the other person involved in the conversation would feel uncomfortable when private space is not considered. According to all these, it is very important for business English learners to consider the cultural differences between their own culture and the target culture.

Task 2 telephoning

As non-native English speakers, Chinese students need to be able to use the telephone effectively if they are to survive in an international office environment. However, it is quite often that Chinese students would perform impolitely even they are not intended to. Therefore, it is necessary for Chinese learners to learn how to ask questions and how to answer questions when calling for someone. The designing process: first, determine the spoken genre as telephoning. Knowing how to answer and finish telephone conversation in companies, and how to enquire things politely on the phone would seem difficult for students. Hence, it is necessary for learners to practice such a spoken genre or skill in business; second, in pre-task, a video as the input could help students to be familiar with the situation of telephoning. As a telephone operator, introducing the company's name first is easy to be forgotten when answering a phone for Chinese students. For this reason, the teachers' instruction of asking students to focus on specific language use is needed which could reduce the task complexity as well; third, specify the task features below:

Design features	Description
1. goal	Language competence;
2. input	Video
3. conditions	Shared
4. procedures	Pair-work
5. predicted outcomes	
Product	Phone call practice
Process	Changing arrangement on the phone

Task 3 talking to clients

Business English students should be capable of introducing themselves, their company to clients or potential clients, although not all will need to deal directly with clients as part of their normal job. In addition, students should learn how to deal with clients' complaints or claims so as to avoid embarrassment and maintain company's benefit. When talking to clients, how to show him/her politely and patiently is definitely essential in the purpose of receiving clients' satisfaction. The designing process: first, talking to clients is the task's genre; second, specify design features of the task as follows:

Design features	Description
1. goal	Language competence, discourse competence
2. input	Written information
3. conditions	Split
4. procedures	Pair-work
5. predicted outcomes	
Product	Written list and oral presentation
Process	Narration of the story

Third, adjust the task complexity. Narration of the story is required as the outcome instead of impromptu conversation practices.

Task 4 job interviewing

How to show oneself enough and shine in a job interview? Every college student would like to know the answer which is beneficial to their career after graduation. Some basic business etiquette are needed to show, like how to do eye contact, how to make a good first impression, how to show enthusiasm, and how to be polite and tactful and so on. The designing process: first, decide the oral business genre as job interviewing, because learning how to be a good applicant is important, as it is on learning how to be a good interviewer when someone after graduation is going to work in HR team; second, video is also used to provide a structure or procedure first for students' task implementing in task-cycle phase; third, task features are designed as below:

Design features	Description
1. goal	Language competence; intercultural competence.
2. input	Video
3. conditions	Shared
4. procedures	Pair-work
5. predicted outcomes	
Product	Job interview practice as interviewer and interviewee
Process	Showing yourself well in an interview

Final, design cultural points. In post-task phase, students are asked to discuss how to perform well in interview and ultimately get the job when the interviewer is not a Chinese. By doing this, students would consider their own Chinese identity compared with Western identity.

Task 5 negotiating

The designing process: first, negotiating is chosen as the genre of this task; second, the task features are shown in following:

Design features	Description
1. goal	Discourse competence
2. input	Audio-recording; transcript
3. conditions	Shared/ split
4. procedures	Pair-work
5. predicted outcomes	
Product	Schematic structure in bargaining on price
Process	Narration of the strategies used by the interlocutors

In this task, a text material (the transcript) is chosen to provide a model of authentic written language, which to some extent could also develop learners' reading skills. However, as Ellis and Johnson (1994) mentioned, a large proportion of business English learners need speaking and listening skills. To provide this kind of practice, the writer uses audio-recording to record word for word on tape; third, stages in price bargaining rather than language use in the written context are more focused on in this task. By doing this, the complexity of the task is reduced.

5. Materials

Task 1 socializing
Preparation
A video Office Party on YouTube is to be shared with the whole class.
Procedure
Pre-task:
1. Listen to the video to get the general idea, paying attention the tag questions used.
2. Listen again and take some notes about basic phrases which could be used in asking colleagues to the party (e.g. you are going to the office party this weekend, aren't you; It's OK if we bring someone, isn't it?).
Task-cycle:

3. Role-play the following task orally in pairs.

Student A: you are in the planning company in your office, organizing an office party this weekend. Ask one of your colleagues to join the party.

Student B: you are an employee in an office. One of your colleagues is organizing an office party this weekend. You are not sure if you could go. The organizer now is inviting you to join together.

4. Volunteers present their conversations in front of the class.

Post-task:

5. Discuss in groups of four. Think about how to start an informal chat with colleagues and the differences compared speaking to Chinese colleagues with speaking to foreign colleagues.

Task 2 telephoning

Preparation

A video Office Phone on YouTube is to be shared with the whole class.

Procedure

Pre-task:

1. Listen to the video to get the general idea, paying attention the questions and answers used when telephoning.

2. Listen again and take some notes about basic phrases which could be used in telephoning (e.g. Hi, could I speak with Marty Bickman, please? Can I speak with Marty Bickman, please? Marty isn't in the office? Can I take a message? I'm sorry, Marty isn't here. Can I help you? I'm afraid I can't make it for lunch.).

Task-cycle:

3. Prepare to make a phone call to someone. Role-play one of the two situations in below.

Student A: you are the secretary in your company. One of the boss's friends is calling for him/her. However, he/she is not in at the moment.

Student B: you are a friend of the person you are calling for. However, your friend is not in at the moment. His/her secretary is answering the phone.

Or

Student A: you are calling to your friend to cancel your lunch appointment.

Student B: you have arranged lunch together with your friend. Unfortunately, she/he could not come to lunch with you now. She/he is telling you this situation on the phone now.

Post-task:

4. Discuss how to open and close a business call in groups.

Task 3 talking to clients

Preparation

Two cards with situation description and detailed steps are prepared in advance.

Procedure

Pre-task:

1. Split the two cards to students in pairs;

Card A/ student A

Situation: you, a client, are calling for getting your bank card back which didn't come out after being inserted into ATM.
Step 1: Introduce yourself and make a complaint about bank card's not coming out of AMT. Step 2: Express urgency to have it back for the coming vacation. Step 3: Ask when to get the card back. Step 4: Show that regular steps were followed in the morning. Step 5: Agree to have a new card. Step 6: Show great gratitude for timely service. Step 7: Provide detailed personal information for applying for a card.

Card B/ student B

Situation: you, a bank clerk, are handling the complaint from a client who is calling for getting his/her bank card back which didn't come out after being inserted into ATM.
Step 1: Ask when and how the card was inserted. Step 2: Suggest replacing it with a new card. Step 3: Promise to fix ATM at the earliest convenience of maintenance staff. Step 4: Introduce yourself. Step 5: Ask for detailed personal information for issuing a card. Step 6: Promise to let the client have the new card in two days. Step 7: Assume that ATM may get wrong.

Task-cycle:

2. Students are asked to arrange steps of the two cards by exchanging the information orally without seeing each other's card, and make a final written list of the steps that constitutes the whole story;

3. Ask students to report orally to describe the problem and the solution

Post-task:

4. Discuss with your partner about how to explain complaints politely and get a good result.

Task 4 job interviewing

Preparation

A video Job Interview on YouTube is to be shared with the whole class.

Procedure

Pre-task:

1. Watch the video to get the general idea, paying attention the questions and answers used in job interviews.

2. Listen again and take some notes about basic phrases which could be used in job interviews (e.g. What do you consider your greatest strength? What do you consider most important in your career? What do you consider your greatest achievement? May I ask you what your greatest weakness is? Could you tell me what salary you expect?).

Task-cycle:

3. Interview one of your classmates in the classroom. Role-play the task.

Student A: you are working in the HR department of your company. Now you are interviewing an applicant.

Student B: you are interested in a job from a company. Now you are attending the job interview provided by the company. The interviewer is waiting for you to come in.

Post-task:

4. After the oral presentation, think about some etiquette in job interviews and discuss with the person next to you about in order to get a job how to be a better interviewee when the interviewer is a foreigner.

Task 5 negotiating

Preparation

A dialogue about negotiation on price is chose from the Internet. Audio-recording is used to record this dialogue word for word on tape for students to practice their listening and speaking skills.

Procedure

Pre-task:

1. Listen to the audio recording about bargain on price, and take dictation.

2. Share your noting with your partner.

Task-cycle:

3. Read through the transcript of this dialogue, discuss the stages of the bargain, and work out together the schematic structure in bargaining on price.

Dialogue

Sunburst, Inc., a Mexican company, is negotiating a contract with Gemini, Ltd., a Taiwanese company, for the manufacturing of PC mainboards. John Liu is the Production Manager for Gemini and Cynthia Chase is the Purchasing Manager for Sunburst.

Cynthia: What is your production situation now? Do you have the capacity to provide us with a substantial number of units?

John: Provided that you give us sufficient notice, we have the production capacity to meet your needs. What sort of quantities are you looking for?

Cynthia: We are considering an initial quantity in excess of 200,000 units, with additional similar quantities ordered on a quarterly basis.

John: What did you have in mind regarding specifications?

Cynthia: We would like units for both P4 and AMD CPUs. About 20% would be for entry-level desktops, 40% would be for business use and the remaining 40% for multimedia use. Supposing we placed an order for 200,000 units for the second quarter of 2004 and follow-up orders of 200,000 units for each of the following three quarters, what unit price could we expect?

John: As long as we are clear on your specifications and have 30 days before beginning production, we could offer a unit price of NT$1,700.

Cynthia: If we doubled the number of units in our order, what discount on the unit price could we receive?

John: Before I answer that, could you tell me what you were thinking about in terms of delivery dates?

Cynthia: We were thinking about delivery dates of 120 days following our order.

John: On the condition that we would have such a delivery period, we could offer a 5% discount on the larger order.

Cynthia: If you could offer an 8% discount, then we could agree to place the larger order.

John: Supposing we offered a compromise discount of 6.5% on the larger order, would that satisfy you?

Cynthia: I think we can live with that providing you supply good technical support and documentation in Spanish.

John: No problem. We can do that.

Cynthia: OK. It's agreed then.

John: Thank you.

Post-task:

4. Describe and explain the strategies the interlocutors used to achieve their function.

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