

Cross-border E-commerce Live Streaming as a Catalyst for Interdisciplinary Practical Teaching of Business English

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Abstract: The *New Liberal Arts Initiative* in China's higher education aims to break the traditional and fragmented disciplinary boundaries, and make talent training better fit the national development strategy. In the field of business English, this transformation is particularly challenging. We need to go beyond the existing language-centered education model and consider and develop an education model that naturally combines language ability, business acumen, digital literacy, and cross-cultural understanding. This paper introduces an educational reform implemented in Guangxi University of Science and Technology, which takes cross-border e-commerce live broadcast as a practical platform for interdisciplinary learning. Based on the concept of Outcome-Based Education, teachers use reverse engineering to build a four-dimensional framework of language+business+technology+culture, and gradually systematically integrate learning outcomes into the three stages of foundation, development and application. With the support of school enterprise cooperation and a dedicated live studio, the project aims to bridge the gap between classroom teaching and the real and rapidly changing business environment. After two years of implementation, the model has shown encouraging but still early progress in students' English level, operational flexibility and digital literacy, and has been verified in regional and national competitions. This paper summarizes the reasons, implementation mechanism and structural challenges of the reform, and puts forward a practical benchmark for the interdisciplinary transformation of foreign language teaching. However, although the framework shows the potential to cultivate immediate practical ability, its scalability and long-term effectiveness in different institutional environments are still unresolved issues, requiring continuous empirical evaluation.

Keywords: New liberal arts; Business English; Cross-border E-commerce live streaming; Interdisciplinary practical teaching; Outcome-based education

Online publication: May 26, 2026

1. Introduction

In 2018, when the Ministry of Education proposed the New Liberal Arts Initiative, its goal was clear: interdisciplinary integration is no longer a marginal experiment, but a strategic and inevitable choice to deal with the current technological industry reform. The Declaration on the construction of new liberal arts education issued in 2020 closely links this change with national interests and cultural influence, and essentially calls for a structural paradigm shift in the humanities ^[1]. This guideline has caused a particularly heavy blow to the foreign language major. Overreliance on independent language training is obviously outdated, but the modernization of the curriculum has also brought new challenges. Nowadays, the foreign language major is facing the problem of not only actively responding to the digital economy and national strategic priorities, but also avoiding completely weakening the humanistic core of language education. Its goal is to cultivate foreign language professionals with extensive interdisciplinary knowledge and practical skills, but how to achieve this balance in practice is still a controversial topic.

Business English, being among the most practice-oriented specializations within foreign language education, has naturally attracted sustained scholarly attention to its pedagogy. Wang and Ai (2019) traced four decades of development in the field and identified what they considered the urgent need to respond to a “digital commerce era” that was reshaping professional requirements ^[2]. Zhan (2023) advanced the discussion further from a New Liberal Arts angle, mapping out key issues and developmental pathways for the discipline ^[3]. Yet a scan of the broader literature reveals a persistent pattern: most reform efforts still focus on a single course or an isolated teaching module. Systematic cross-disciplinary design remains scarce. At the course level, the disconnect between theory and practice continues to challenge instructors—real business scenarios are notoriously difficult to bring into the classroom. Meanwhile, cross-border e-commerce live streaming has quietly emerged as a marketing format that fuses English interpreting, copywriting, short video production, social media management, and consumer psychology into a single package. It does not respect traditional disciplinary lines, and the people who thrive in this space are not simply good English speakers. They must integrate language ability, business knowledge, digital tool fluency, and cross-cultural awareness simultaneously—under real-time pressure.

It is this combination that makes live streaming such a compelling pedagogical entry point. At Guangxi University of Science and Technology, our School of Foreign Languages started experimenting with cross-border e-commerce live streaming as a practical vehicle for interdisciplinary integration in 2022. The following content describes the basic logic, the system we designed and the results observed so far, hoping to provide useful enlightenment for other colleges and universities facing similar curriculum problems.

2. Theoretical foundations and literature review

2.1. Core meaning of the new liberal arts

It is very important to clarify the practical connotation of the New Liberal Arts Initiative. It is not just to superimpose isolated technical elements on the existing humanities curriculum. After carefully reading the policy document, we can find that it contains at least three levels of meaning. At the knowledge level, it calls for the promotion of real exchanges and integration among humanities, social sciences, and STEM fields, and the breaking of disciplinary barriers. At the ability level, the focus has shifted to cultivating students' ability to solve complex practical problems, which cannot be simply classified into a single discipline. At the service level, higher education institutions are required to respond to national strategies and regional development

needs actively. Fan (2020) captured the spirit well when she argued that the real goal is creating “chemical reactions” between disciplines rather than mere physical patchwork ^[4]. Zhang (2024) operationalized a closely related idea through OBE-informed curriculum design for Comprehensive Business English, proposing layered teaching objectives, dynamically updated content, and full-spectrum assessment ^[5].

For foreign language programs specifically, the current situation is as follows: the traditional “language + literature + translation” paradigm no longer covers what society expects from graduates, yet ad hoc additions of business or computing modules tend to produce what Chinese practitioners call a “two separate skins” problem—courses sitting side by side without genuine integration. Cross-border e-commerce live streaming turns out to be a natural meeting point. It demands solid language and communication skills, certainly, but also business operations expertise, digital tool competence, and cross-cultural understanding—all at once. The various abilities have to work together, or the whole enterprise falls apart. That is precisely the kind of chemical reaction the New Liberal Arts agenda calls for.

2.2. Outcome-Based Education (OBE)

Spady first articulated the OBE framework in the early 1980s, and its central claim remains elegantly straightforward: design teaching around the learning outcomes you actually want, not around what happens to be convenient to deliver ^[6]. The principle of reverse design is first to define the abilities that graduates should have, and then reverse design courses and teaching activities to achieve these goals. When applied to foreign language education, this means that the focus of teaching has shifted from what teachers teach to what learners can actually master. In Business English teaching, Outcome-Based Education (OBE) requires first identifying industry needs - specifically, the skills required for a position - and then designing course content and evaluation criteria based on these needs, and completing a circular process from needs analysis to training and results evaluation.

Chinese scholars have made remarkable progress in this field. Liu (2025) has built an integrated model of “employment curriculum competition certification” for students majoring in Business Administration English. He believes that connecting the curriculum with employment requirements, professional certification and academic competition through these four integration paths can strengthen the matching degree between talent training and actual market demand ^[7]. Zou (2024) used the simulation company as the main tool to show the practical application of reverse design, and pointed out that it would help gradually improve students’ professional quality and entrepreneurial ability ^[8]. Zhang (2024) discussed the same problem from the perspective of the combination of production, study and research, and proposed a blueprint for regional colleges and universities to cultivate practical and innovative business English talents ^[9].

2.3. Prior research on interdisciplinary practical teaching

In terms of implementation, Hu (2023) took the “business practice” course as the experimental field and carried out a “classroom revolution” integrating the concept of OBE, including the reconstruction of course content, the redesign of classroom activities and the comprehensive reform of evaluation methods ^[10]. Yang (2023) proposed the “6I” teaching mode, which improves the teaching effect of the business English course through interdisciplinary content reconstruction ^[11]. Zhou (2022) proved in his research that the reform of a business English correspondence course based on achievement-oriented education can effectively improve students’ innovation and entrepreneurship ability ^[12]. However, the deficiencies of the

existing research are obvious. Most studies are based on a single course. At present, there is still a lack of a systematic interdisciplinary integration framework in the literature, and the empirical verification of the claimed teaching improvement effect is also relatively limited. This paper aims to construct and test a more comprehensive interdisciplinary practical education system according to the guiding principles of OBE, so as to make up for the shortcomings of the above two aspects.

3. Why cross-border E-commerce live streaming works as an interdisciplinary vehicle

3.1. Multidimensional competency demands

During a typical cross-border e-commerce livestream, the host usually sits in front of the camera to introduce products to audiences in different countries, which activates the capabilities of many fields at the same time. In terms of language, the host needs to produce fluent English on the spot: product descriptions, answers to customer questions, promotional pitches, all in real time and often under considerable time pressure. Regarding business competencies, there is product selection analysis, market research, pricing strategy, and writing compelling product listings (none of which can be done without solid commercial knowledge). Digitally, the work involves video shooting and editing, operating livestreaming software, managing social media campaigns, and analyzing sales data after each session. And threading through all of this is cross-cultural communication: understanding what consumers in different countries actually care about, how they prefer to be addressed, and what triggers a purchase decision.

What makes this combination so pedagogically interesting is that it collapses the artificial separation between “language” and “business” that has long plagued conventional business English instruction. In a livestream, it is impossible to separate the English from the selling—they are the same act. Students are not rehearsing language in a simulated environment; they are operating in a genuine commercial context where their choices have real consequences and real audiences.

3.2. Fit with the existing business course cluster

In our English major curriculum at Guangxi University of Science and Technology, business-oriented courses already form a reasonably coherent cluster: Comprehensive Business English, Business English Writing, International Trade Practice, Cross-border E-commerce Practice, and International Business Negotiation. Live streaming can serve as the capstone practical project that threads through all of them. The product copywriting drills in Business English Writing feed directly into livestream listing composition. Market research assignments from International Trade Practice morph into pre-livestream target market analyses. The key insight: live streaming is not a new course bolted onto an already crowded curriculum. It is the natural extension—the practical implementation point—of courses already in place, giving students a unifying context in which scattered knowledge and skills finally come together.

4. Design and implementation of the interdisciplinary teaching system

4.1. Backward design: Setting competency targets from needs analysis

Following OBE’s backward design logic, our team carried out a structured industry survey. We interviewed cross-border e-commerce firms in Liuzhou and the surrounding region and reached out to English major

alumni who had graduated within the past three years. The feedback was consistent and predictable: employers praised graduates' language fundamentals but flagged real weaknesses in marketing copywriting, livestream platform operation, data analysis, and team collaboration. Over 60% of respondents noted that their post-graduation adjustment periods would have been considerably shorter had the curriculum exposed them to authentic cross-border e-commerce workflows, rather than just theoretical models. This friction between academic preparation and daily industry reality forced the teaching team to define five non-negotiable competency targets. These include: (1) English business communication, focusing on oral fluency, commercial writing, and intercultural exchange; (2) applied business skills, specifically market analysis, product strategy, and operational management; (3) digital literacy, which now demands livestream hardware operation, video production, and basic data analytics; (4) cross-cultural adaptability; and (5) the capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship. Rather than treating these as abstract goals, we anchored each target to specific deliverables within a tiered pedagogical structure.

4.2. Three-tier progressive module structure

Practical coursework was distributed across three progressive tiers to build these competencies systematically. The foundational tier targets applied language skills, but deliberately strips away manufactured textbook dialogues. Instead, all training material is pulled directly from live e-commerce contexts, forcing students to grapple with authentic commercial copywriting and scenario-based oral communication from day one. The developmental tier then shifts the focus to backend operations. Working in small cohorts, students navigate the complete commercial cycle. Crucially, this is not a simulation. They operate inside the actual backend environments of platforms like Amazon, Shopee, and Lazada—listing products, composing English titles, fielding real customer inquiries, and parsing raw sales data to draw actionable conclusions.

Everything converges in the applied tier. Here, students execute live cross-border e-commerce campaigns, operating out of a dedicated livestreaming studio established in late 2022 through a demanding university-industry partnership. Student teams are responsible for live product promotions targeting Southeast Asian markets. The “Koslo” luosifen (snail-rice noodles) project serves as a concrete example of this architecture in practice. For this project, student cohorts managed the end-to-end commercial loop to help a highly localized Liuzhou specialty brand penetrate the Malaysian market, testing the limits of the skills they acquired in the earlier tiers. Students carried out market research, developed a product selection strategy, wrote English marketing copy, planned and executed livestreams, and then conducted post-session performance reviews. A complete commercial loop, from start to finish. Along the way, we also channeled practical experience into competition preparation. Students entered the iCAN “Yixue Cup” National Foreign Language Competency Contest (first prize in the 2024 finals, second prize in 2025), the National Business English Skills Competition (second prize, 2023), and the ASEAN “AI + Cross-border E-commerce” Competition (third place, 2025 season). Several students went further: after the “Koslo” project wrapped up, they spontaneously formed a startup group to promote other Liuzhou products through cross-border e-commerce channels—an unanticipated outcome.

4.3. Implementation pathways

Four implementation strategies shaped how this was implemented. First, we built a physical practice platform: the livestreaming studio came online in the second half of 2022, equipped with dedicated hardware

and software tools, run under a student self-management model with faculty serving as advisors rather than directors. Second, we pursued structured university-industry collaboration—signing agreements with several Liuzhou-based cross-border e-commerce and foreign trade companies. These partners supply product selection support and operational mentorship; students, in turn, contribute manpower and fresh perspectives to real projects. (Liuzhou’s product strengths—luosifen, engineering machinery parts—carry a natural geographic advantage for Southeast Asian markets, which made finding willing partners relatively straightforward.) Third, competition-driven learning: we guided students to translate project experience into competition entries for national events such as the Cross-border E-commerce Competition and the “FLTRP · Guocai Cup” Business English Practice Skills Contest. Fourth and perhaps most important, real-market marketing projects—the “Koslo” Malaysian marketing proposal being the flagship case, where students navigated the full journey from initial market research through to actual sales conversion.

4.4. Illustrative case: The cross-border E-commerce practice course

To ground the discussion, here is how one course was restructured. The Cross-border E-commerce Practice course, totaling 48 credit hours, was reorganized into four modules. Module 1 (12 hours) covers foundational knowledge: major business models, platform characteristics, and industry development trends. Module 2 (12 hours) is the operational practicum—platform registration, product listing, pricing decisions, and logistics arrangement. Module 3 (16 hours) is the livestream marketing practicum: student teams plan and execute livestreams, with scheduled class time devoted to brainstorming sessions, skill workshops, and rehearsal, while actual broadcasting takes place after hours in the studio. Module 4 (8 hours) wraps up with project review, data analysis, and final presentations.

5. Teaching outcomes and reflection

5.1. Competition results and competency gains

After more than two years of iterative practice, the results have been encouraging by most measures. At the iCAN “Yixue Cup” 2024 National Finals, our students won the first prize; they followed up with a second prize in 2025. The National Business English Skills Competition yielded a second prize in 2023. In the 2025 ASEAN “AI + Cross-border E-commerce” season, the student team placed third. Beyond the trophies, though, the qualitative feedback matters more. Students who went through the livestreaming practicum reported noticeable gains in oral fluency, business scenario responsiveness, and comfort with digital tools. Several were already handling cross-border e-commerce operations and livestream promotion independently during internships—and employer feedback has been consistently positive. The fact that some “Koslo” participants went on to form their own startup group (promoting other local Liuzhou products through e-commerce) merits attention: well-designed hands-on practice does spark genuine entrepreneurial initiative, not just coursework compliance.

5.2. Interdisciplinary team collaboration experience

The teaching team comprises six core members, drawing on expertise in English language and literature, translation studies, international trade, and e-commerce. Each contributor works according to their strengths: language and translation faculty handled communication skills and intercultural guidance; international trade faculty contributed business operations expertise; e-commerce faculty covered digital tools and platform-

specific skills. Through repeated joint workshops and considerable experimentation (the early sessions were, admittedly, disorganized in the initial stages), the team converged on a shared operating principle: practice tasks as the vehicle, competency outputs as the measure of success. Pushing beyond internal faculty coordination, we actively embedded team members into specialized cross-border e-commerce training programs. Corporate mentors were also brought directly into the instructional space. The overarching goal was to forge a “dual-qualified, dual-capability” teaching team—a profile heavily promoted by current Chinese educational policy, yet notoriously difficult to operationalize given the traditional siloing of academic departments.

5.3. Remaining problems and directions for improvement

Problems remain in real practice. University-industry engagement, for instance, remains frustratingly uneven. Because most partnerships still operate on a short-term, project-by-project basis, establishing a genuinely stable, institutionalized mechanism for sustained collaboration is still an elusive goal. Student baseline skills present another point of friction. We observed distinct disparities in incoming digital literacy, forcing us to consider embedding systematic technical training modules directly into the foundational tier to close the gap before students reach the applied stages. Assessment poses an even more complex methodological problem: how does one reliably quantify a student’s cognitive and operational growth across multiple, fluid dimensions during live, unpredictable commercial practice? We have not yet engineered a fully satisfactory evaluation matrix for this. Finally, the question of scalability looms large. Moving forward, the most critical challenge is determining how to expand this resource-intensive model beyond business English, extending these practical learning pathways to a broader demographic of foreign language students without diluting the quality of instruction.

6. Conclusion

The New Liberal Arts initiative supplied the policy scaffolding; the explosive growth of cross-border e-commerce provided the practical demand and working platform. Between them, they created a window of opportunity that this project has tried to seize. The four-dimensional framework—Language + Business + Technology + Culture—designed under OBE principles and tested at Guangxi University of Science and Technology, offers one answer to the persistent problem of language-business separation and theory-practice disconnect that has plagued business English education for years. The evidence so far is promising: students are demonstrably more capable, more confident, and more employable than before the reform was introduced.

Ultimately, interdisciplinary practical teaching is not a static, one-time endeavor. It demands continuous iteration and honest self-assessment. Looking ahead, the team plans to push forward on three fronts: deepening university-industry collaboration into a sustainable, institutionalized mechanism; integrating AI tools into the teaching workflow (livestream data analytics and AI-assisted copy generation are already under consideration); and building an inter-university exchange network so that peer institutions can share experiences and jointly advance the cause of practice-oriented business English education. The challenges ahead are considerable, yet the trajectory of reform is well grounded.

Funding

2024 Guangxi Undergraduate Teaching Reform Project, “Reform and Practice of Practical Teaching System for Business-oriented Courses of English Majors Based on the OBE Concept” (Project No.: 2024JGB251)

Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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