

# *The Application of Virtual Simulation Technology in Business English Practice Teaching*

Ma Lijuan<sup>a</sup>

*School of Foreign Languages, Zhengzhou University of Industrial Technology, Zhengzhou, 451100, China*

*<sup>a</sup>malijuan2019@163.com*

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**Abstract:** Virtual simulation technology can build a highly simulated virtual environment. The application of practice teaching platform based on simulation technology breaks through the limitations of traditional practice teaching, and brings students a sensory immersive learning experience, so that business English practice is more interesting, intelligent and intuitive. This article aims to study the application of virtual simulation technology in business English practice teaching. It firstly outlines the deficiency of traditional business English practice teaching and analyzes the application value of virtual simulation technology. Based on this, this paper expounds the application of virtual simulation practice platform in Teaching Business English, especially the blended teaching mode based on virtual simulation technology. Virtual Simulation technology can help teachers create a practice teaching mode integrating virtuality and reality, which is conducive to training students' business English practical skills and improving the teaching effect.

## **1. Introduction**

Aided by network communication technology, virtual reality technology and so on, virtual simulation technology builds a virtual environment of visual, auditory and tactile integration. It creates a virtual three-dimensional scene, in which people and objects can be presented in highly-simulated real-life effect. People can interact with this virtual environment through verbal and body language. Virtual simulation is also widely used in the field of education and training because of its strong interactivity and strong motivation<sup>[1]</sup>. In the practice teaching of business English, Virtual simulation teaching platform integrates simulation teaching and on-site teaching, which can fill up the deficiency of traditional practice teaching. Moreover, it is more conducive to cultivating the English competence and cross-cultural business communication skills of business English majors. This paper focuses on the value and application of virtual simulation technology in business English practice teaching, aiming to explore the innovation of teaching mode and means in business English practice teaching, and improve its teaching effect.

## **2. The Deficiency of Traditional Business English Practice Teaching**

### **2.1. Teaching Contents lack of Cross-Integration**

In the traditional practice teaching, each practice project is often independent from each other, lacking of interdisciplinary comprehensive practice. For example, Business English Translation courses focus on cultivating students' business English translation ability, while the courses of English Correspondence for International Trade lay emphasis on the writing ability training of foreign business Correspondence. The two are often separated from each other in practice training. However, in the real business environment, business workers should deal with the crossover of different tasks, and individual practical training is unfavorable for the cultivation of students' comprehensive ability.

### **2.2. There Are Limitations in Practice Bases**

Many colleges and universities have invested hugely to create training rooms or practice bases on-campus, but because of low level of informatization and outdated software students' learning experience is not good. In order to save operating costs, the opening time of the training base is limited, so the time and space for students to practice is limited. Moreover, many universities and off-campus enterprises jointly build off-campus practice teaching bases. However, the level of off-campus practice bases varies. Some bases either don't have enough teachers to guide students or they can't provide suitable positions which match students' abilities and interest.

### **2.3. Lacking of Real Cross-Cultural Business Context**

Traditional practice teaching takes "demonstration method" as the main teaching mode, and lacks of relatively real practical situations, so it weakens students' learning motivation. In some practical training classes, students can operate simple software with weak simulation effect, but because of lack of dynamic human-computer interaction, students easily lose interest. In addition, the setting of cross-cultural business communication situation is simple, which differs greatly from the actual work content.

## **3. The Application Value of Virtual Simulation Technology in Business English Practice Teaching**

According to Constructivism theory, context, collaboration, communication and meaning construction are the four basic elements of learning, and situation helps stimulate students' initiative<sup>[2]</sup>. In practice teaching, students are the subject of knowledge construction and meaning construction, while teacher is the guide and facilitator of students' practice. Virtual simulation technology creates a highly simulated learning situation and enables students to experience the multi-role situation, which is helpful for learners' meaning construction.

### **3.1. It Helps to Stimulate Students' Learning Motivation**

Virtual simulation technology creates an immersive learning environment for students. On the virtual training platform, students can enter the virtual simulation practice environment through the VR headset, and the plane figures present the real feelings of three dimensions in the students' vision. Students can choose different roles to establish identity of learners. They interact with people and environments in virtual scenes through vocal and body gestures and accomplish

business tasks according to the role as required. Virtual simulation teaching brings intuitive and living visual shock to students and it's highly interactive. When students are immersed in the simulation situation, students' interest, thirst for knowledge and spirit of inquiry will be quickly stimulated<sup>[3]</sup>. Such immersive experience also helps develop students' innovative spirit.

### **3.2. It Contributes to Cultivating Students' Comprehensive Ability in Business Situation**

Business English virtual simulation platform simulates various business processes of foreign trade activities, such as business negotiations, import and export, etc. It also presets various uncertain factors in the international business environment into practice scenes, such as simulating the working environment of suppliers and traders or unforeseen circumstances in communication. In this way, students can improve their ability to work flexibly and deepen their understanding of business English. The working process which is close to the real practice can comprehensively train students' international business professional skills, making their learning more autonomous, collaborative and innovative.

### **3.3. It Provides Support for the Innovation of Business English Practice Teaching**

Virtual platform can realize online learning, which is conducive to creating an online and offline blended teaching mode. Based on the characteristics of the virtual simulation platform, teachers can carry out blended teaching innovation in teaching organization, teaching design, teaching methods and other aspects, so as to realize personalized teaching. The virtual practice platform expands the practice space. Students can enter the virtual simulation platform at anytime and anywhere and freely switch roles for practice through multi-scene simulation operations. This practice teaching mode combined with virtuality and reality breaks the limitations of time, space, and region<sup>[4]</sup>, making practice more flexible, efficient, and convenient.

## **4. Application of Practice Platform in Teaching Business English Based on Virtual Simulation Technology**

### **4.1. Construction of Teaching Resources for Virtual Simulation Training**

At present, many universities are building virtual simulation teaching platforms through school-enterprise cooperation. Based on the principles of opening-up, sharing, and achieving mutual complementarity, universities and enterprises are taking the application-oriented talents training as the guidance and jointly participating in the construction of virtual platforms. According to the cultivation goal for business English majors, School of Foreign Languages shall set the theme of the practice teaching section, preset the communication scene and the text content of the business English dialogues, while the professional technicians of the relevant technology companies complete the construction of the virtual simulation platform. The company completes the scene construction of 3D images according to the content, and designs virtual international business scenarios that meet the teaching requirements. The university can also integrate the on-campus curriculum resources with the company's virtual simulation system, such as the virtual simulation teaching of spoken business English, international business negotiation, international business etiquette, etc., to complement each other's strengths and enrich the teaching content, so as to cultivate students' comprehensive ability and innovation ability.

## 4.2. Construction of the Online-to-Offline Teaching Model Combining the Real with the Virtual

Adhering to the new online-to-offline teaching concept, teachers shall utilize the simulation platform to explore the blended practical teaching mode combining virtuality and reality. Through the combination of students' independent learning on online platform and teacher-student in-depth interaction in the offline classrooms, students' learning engagement has been improved. Meanwhile, the combination of virtual simulation practice and real cases effectively cultivates their innovative spirit and practical ability. The blended teaching mode can be divided into three stages: before class, during class and after class. Before class, the teacher points out the content of practical training, the teaching focus and difficulties and defines the training tasks. The platform provides students with relevant preview content, which is presented in video or text form, such as vocabulary of relevant topics and background knowledge of cross-cultural communication in the practical training module of business English. With online resources, students can log in the platform and preview the course contents independently in order to have an overall understanding of the relevant knowledge and find their own weak points. In this way, they can preview the course purposefully to guide the virtual reality practice. Teachers can understand the completion of students' preview tasks through the background data on the teachers' side, which provides the basis for the next stage of practical training instruction.

Stage 2: Classroom simulation exercises to complete the practical training tasks. This stage is an important part of practical training. Teachers divides the practice content into several module tasks according to the teaching objectives and students enter the virtual simulation training platform for simulation exercises according to the module tasks. The platform provides a variety of business communication scenes such as office, factory, exhibition, airport, etc. The virtual simulation training rooms are equipped with VR helmets. Before training, teachers can firstly explain the relevant professional vocabulary, expressions or content background. Then, students put on the VR helmets for simulation practice and enter the virtual scenes to interact with virtual characters. The highly simulated environment, interactive objects and business processes, combined with fun and skill, bring students an immersive experience without the limit of time and space which not only improves their enthusiasm and initiative in practice, but also enhances the students' ability to adapt to the environment. Throughout the practice process, students are always in the center position, and teachers cannot arbitrarily interrupt their training practice, so that students are given free rein. After the completion of the students' practice training, teachers shall point out the typical problems and knowledge difficulties found in the practice and guide students to carry out inquiry-based learning, thus realizing the "precise instruction and learning" and finishing the complementation between the simulation and reality.

Stage 3: Consolidation and reinforcement after class. During students' practice in class, the platform can monitor, record and analyze the data of their practical training. Teachers can accurately understand the mastery of students' business English practical training skills based on the feedback data, find out their learning difficulties and weaknesses, and conduct personalized counselling and gap-filling through online communication. Through the online platform, students can make online review or practice in simulation on the theoretical knowledge and operational skills of business English they have learned in class.

The blended teaching mode based on virtual simulation technology can change the condition of single and unconnected teaching resources and meet the demands for scene authenticity in business English practical teaching. After three stages of learning, students' comprehensive abilities such as English language application ability, foreign trade practice ability, intercultural communication ability and professionalism will be effectively improved.

## 5. Conclusions

Virtual simulation technology is characterized by immersion, interactivity and conceptualization<sup>[5]</sup>. The application of business English virtual simulation teaching platform makes up for the shortcomings of traditional business English practice teaching, and the highly simulated business scene and human-computer interaction bring students an immersive learning experience, which can stimulate their learning enthusiasm and effectively improve the comprehensive application ability of business English. The business English practical training platform based on virtual simulation technology enriches the practical teaching resources of business English, helps teachers build the online-to-offline teaching mode of virtual-reality integration, and is of great practical significance in promoting the reform of business English practical teaching and improving the quality of talent cultivation.

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