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## Developing Presentation Competence in Business English Courses in Chinese EFL Context: A Practice-Based Approach

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### Abstract

This study reports on an investigation about the English major and non-English-majors' needs about making business English presentation, the effectiveness of the practice-based approach and the learning outcomes in developing presentation competence, and suggestions to better design business English presentation tasks and activities. The study found that both English-major and non-English-major participants needed to make English group presentations more frequently. Moreover, both groups needed to make more efforts in interacting with audience, making speeches orally and using visual aids, including charts and tables. In addition, English major participants faced challenges in oral expressions as well as psychological and material preparation. Non-English major participants faced more psychological challenges, as well as challenges in preparation of presentation content. Thereby, business English curriculum can address the challenges by providing more oral English input and presentation materials. Both English and non-English major participants also thought they needed more improvement in oral expressions and presentation content, though less than one third perceived that they did a good performance in business English presentations, which contributed to language improvement. The materials in the curriculum had positive effects on presentation competence development. Both groups suggested group activities, and oral activities, including simulation and role plays were helpful.

### Keywords

Presentation competence, business English courses, practice-based approach, English major, non-English major, Chinese university

### Introduction

Tong and Gao (2022, p.1) indicate that the business English graduate employability is multidimensional. This would include the dimensions of "professional knowledge, general competence and career management" and skills of "English language skills, foreign trade

competence, internet application competence, socializing skills, learning and development, personality, thinking, working ethics, professional identity planning and service awareness". Business English presentation competence is one of the core competences of business English graduates, which relies on practice-based approach as successful presenters need to cultivate presentation competence in the real practice context.

However, in the Chinese university context, Ling and Zhang (2016, p.27) in their observation comment that the current practice-based approach has many problems, including "relying on theories, old-fashioned methods, lacking funding, in and out of campus conditions constraints, lack of teaching professionals and assessment systems", though in the international contexts, efforts have been made to adapt the language courses to disciplinary needs (Abrudan and Sturza, 2025; Ouarniki and Boumediene, 2025).

This study would address the problems in the practice-based approach and focus on the pedagogical process of cultivating presentation competence in the business English courses for both English majors and non-English majors in the Chinese university context, based on empirical investigation. This study would address the following three objectives:

- To investigate the potential needs for learners to develop business English presentation competence in the Chinese university context;
- To investigate the effectiveness of the practice-based approach in developing business English presentation competence in the Chinese university context and the learning outcomes;
- To investigate how business English teachers effectively design business English presentation tasks and activities in the Chinese university context.

## **Literature Review**

### **Developing business English presentation competence in the international context**

In the business English theories, presentations refer to the "longer, more structured communications" of business messages. In performance, it is categorized as one type of "giving information" (Ellis and Johnson, 2002, p.95). There are different "functions and linguistic skills for organizing messages and signalling intentions" (Ellis and Johnson, 2002, p.96). Frendo (2005) also indicates that business English presentation can be faced with small or large audience. The business English teachers should focus on not only language improvement but also other aspects including "delivery, content, use of visual aids and body language" (p.70).

The international researchers have used innovation techniques to develop business English presentation competence. In Romania, Simona (2015) has developed students' skills of preparing and delivering presentations as well as understandings of presentation regulations. This has prepared students for their future career. In UK, Banister (2020) has developed the skills of giving correct feedback before and after academic English presentations. In Ukraine, Tkachenko (2014) has developed business English learners' business English presentation competence. Tkachenko (2014) has raised that it is necessary to give external assistance in structure, non-verbal communication, visual assistance and handling questions. However, there is limited research which focuses on business English competence development with both English-major and non-English-major students based on empirical investigation.

### **Review of relevant studies in the Chinese Context**

In the context of Hong Kong, China, Evans (2013) indicates that there has been little research on developing oral presentation competence in the business English curriculum. Evans' (2013) study addresses the frequencies and challenges of oral presentations in the Hong Kong

workplaces, using surveys, interviews and case studies. His study has indicated the major challenges of engaging the audience, dealing with questions, communicating in natural English and using Powerpoint in presentations.

In China in another context, on developing business English presentation competence, Xu et al. (2021) has discussed about the effectiveness of teacher feedback on online business English presentation improvement. This study shows that the teacher feedback focuses on content and presentation process. The teacher feedback should put more emphasis on time control, technology use and teamwork. The teacher feedback can positively improve students' business English presentation competence.

Moreover, the study of Li et al. (2016, p.307) reports the reform of business English public speaking competence development in the context of "educational informationization", where "Multimodal-Multimedia-Multienvironment-Multiresource" model has been adopted with 180 postgraduate students in a Chinese university. Students develop business English public speaking skills through different sources of guidance of teachers, multimedia resources, and speaking contests etc. The study reports positive learning outcomes. The study of Wang and Wang (2013, p.356) has explored the benefits of business English presentation competence development in cultivating the key competencies of "information synthesis, communication, planning and organizing, working in a team, problem solving, adopting technology and accepting cultural differences".

However, previous studies did not pay attention to the use of practice-based approach in developing business English presentation competence. The practice-based approach could include simulation and case studies (Frendo, 2005) as well as other models in the skills development fields.

### **Theoretical Framework: A Practice-based Approach**

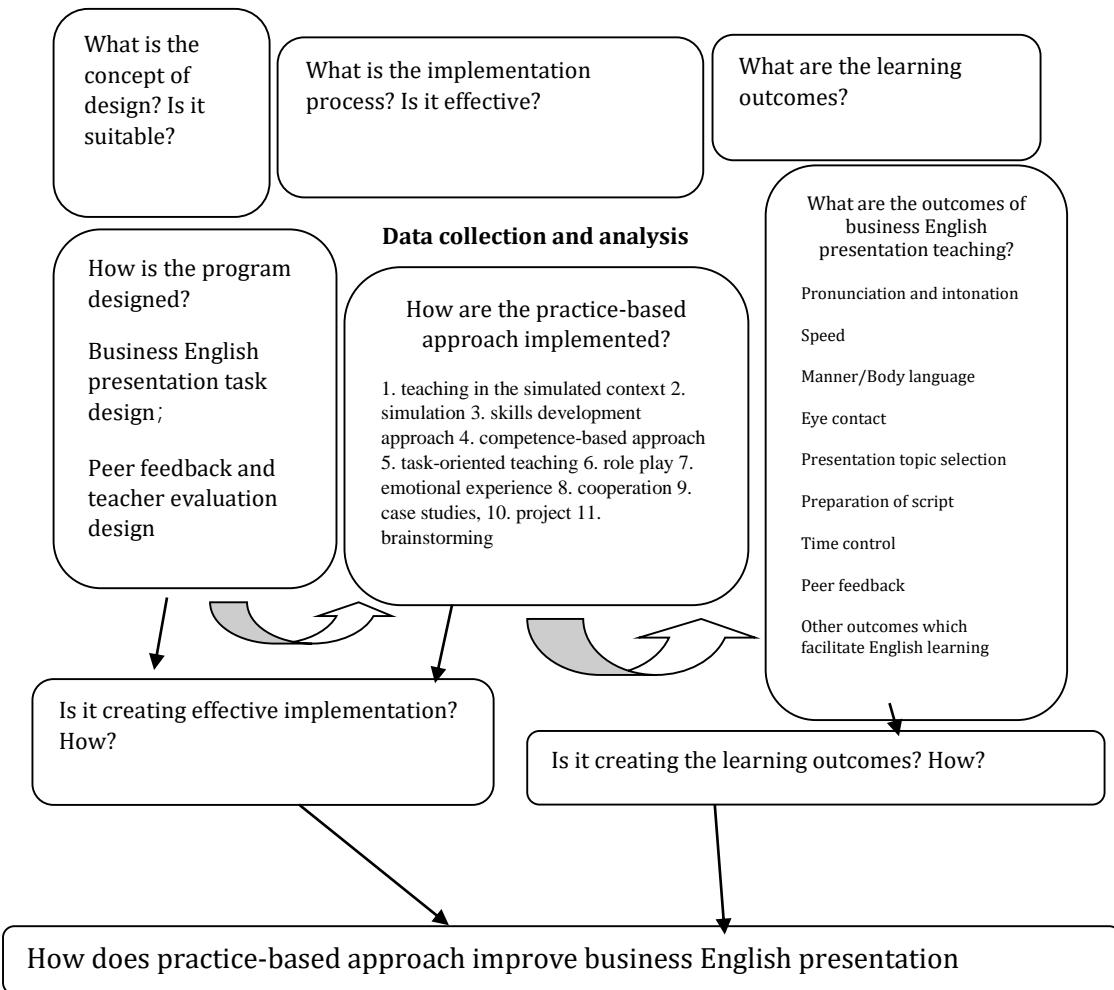
This study would focus on the use of practice-based approach in developing business English presentation competence. The conceptual framework is based on Figure 1, adapted from Xie (2016, p.74) and Adamson and Morris (2007, p. 277). The study would center on business English presentation task design, practice-based teaching strategies, and how to effectively develop business English presentation competence, which includes language use, manner/body language, non-verbal communication such as eye contact, presentation topic selection and preparation, time control, peer feedback and other positive outcomes.

The core of practice-based approach is to develop practice abilities. In the practice-based framework, Sp öttl (2009, p.1631) has raised practice-oriented curriculum development. The practice-based approach could include teaching in the simulated context (Dehnboestel, 2008), simulation (Straka, 2008), skills development approach (Unwin, 2008), competence-based approach (Merki, 2008), task-oriented teaching (Howe, 2008) etc. Xie and Wang (2017) also raise that the practice-based approach should center around the methods of role play, emotional experience, cooperation, case studies, project and brainstorming etc.

This study would discuss the use of practice-based approach in developing learners' business English presentation competence, the learning outcomes and the suggested pedagogical improvement.

Figure 1

*Conceptual Framework of Using Practice-based Approach to Develop Business English Presentation Competence.*



### Research Questions

- 1) What are the potential needs for learners to develop business English presentation competence in the Chinese university context?
- 2) How effective is the practice-based approach in developing business English presentation competence in the Chinese university context and what are the learning outcomes?
- 3) How can business English teachers effectively design business English presentation tasks and activities in the Chinese university context?

### Methodology

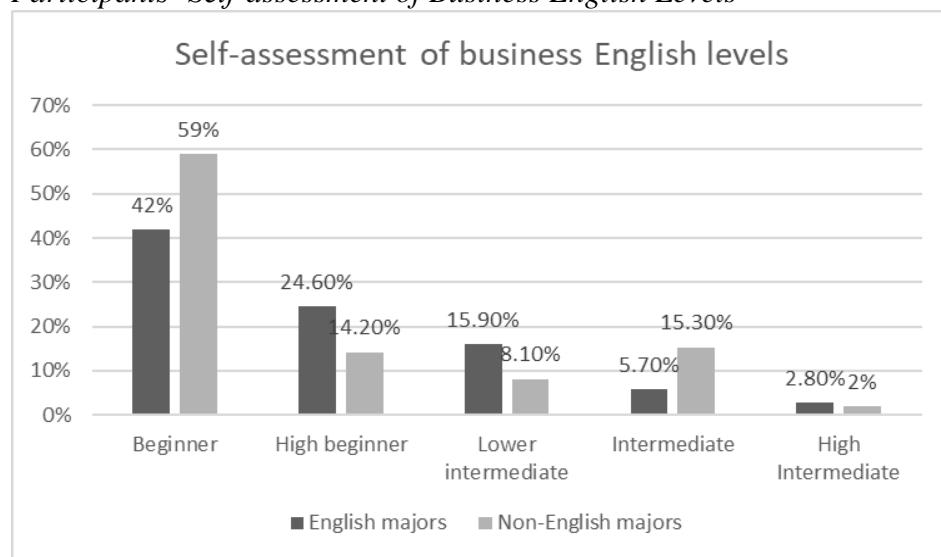
To understand learners' business English presentation needs, whether practice-based approach can effectively facilitate business English presentation competence development and how to effectively design business English presentation tasks and activities need both numerical and non-numerical information. This project follows both qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The data collection methods include two-stage surveys, teacher reflection and classroom observation.

## Participants

There were 69 (male=1, female=68) English-major participants and 98 (male=41, female=57) non-English-major participants, who all enrolled in business English courses in the 2024 Spring semester in a public university in the east China, with double top disciplines. English major participants' average age was 20.84 years old, with age range from 20 to 22 years old. Non-English-major participants' average age was 19.77, with age range from 19 to 22 years old. English-major participants were in their third year English language and literature learning while most non-English-major participants were in their second year of academic learning, in the programs of law, industrial design, finance, artificial intelligence, social work, digital media, ideological and political education, big data, business administration, accounting, micro-electronics, automation, except for one male participant in his first year study in the food science and technology program.

English major and non-English major participants' self-assessment of business English levels is shown in Figure 2. More than half of non-English-major participants reported at beginner level while only over 40% of English-major participants were perceived at beginner level. More English-major participants self-assessed at high beginner levels than non-English major participants. There were over 15% English-major participants self-assessed at lower intermediate level while only around 8% non-English majors were perceived at this level. Moreover, more non-English-major participants at over 15% were perceived at the intermediate level than English-major participants. Both English-major and non-English-major participants had around 2% of participants self-assessed at the high intermediate level.

Figure 2  
*Participants' Self-assessment of Business English Levels*



For the previous tests, more than 86% of English-major participants passed Test for English Majors-Band 4 (TEM-4) with passing or excellent grades. Over 60% English-major participants also passed College English Test (CET Band-4) while over 44% of English majors also passed College English Test (CET Band-6). There were also three English-major participants obtained good grades in International English Language Test Systems (IELTS) while two English-major participants passed China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters (CATTI). For non-English-major participants, more than 73% passed CET-4 with good grades. More than 64% also passed CET-6 with good grades. Six non-English-major participants passed IELTS with good grades while one non-English-major participant also

obtained accreditation from Duolingo tests. It can be seen that the majority of English-major and non-English-major participants had intermediate levels of English proficiency.

### **Data collection**

**Pre-course surveys:** The pre-course survey was administered to both English and non-English major participants at the beginning week of business English courses, in late February, 2024. The pre-course survey contains ten rating and open-ended questions. The questions were adapted from Evans (2013, p.200, 202, 203). The survey questions were about the frequencies of business English presentation, the self-assessment of planning, structuring, delivering, using visual aid and support materials in business English presentation, the challenges in planning, organizing and delivering of presentations and how business English courses could help improve presentation competence.

**Post-course surveys:** The post-course survey was administered also to both English and non-English major participants at the last week of business English courses, in early June 2024. The post-course survey contains eight rating or open-ended questions. The survey was adapted from Chan (2018, p.44) and Mu and Yu (2023, p.11). The questions were about evaluation of presentation performance, difficulties, contributions of English presentation to language improvement, how to improve business English presentations, how to evaluate the relevant learning materials and activities, the content which should be added and further improvement suggestions, and their favourite business English presentation topics.

As the survey questions were used in previous studies, this guaranteed the reliability and validity of the survey instruments. Though in the research context in the Chinese university, ethical review was waived for survey-based studies, this study followed second language research ethics. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants and they were ensured that the study would bring benefits to business English presentation competence development.

**Teacher reflection and classroom observation:** The teacher, who is also the researcher, reflects on different steps and procedures in business English presentation competence development process and provides insightful classroom observations on participants' business English presentation performance.

### **The intervention of practice-based business English presentation task**

Within the business English courses, English major participants were assigned in groups of eight or nine. Each group should have experienced international trade practice and prepare PowerPoint slides to record the correspondence they have prepared, following the guidelines. This task would enable participants to identify the ways to find customers, mainly through online platforms. It would help to improve the information search, gathering and synthesis competence. Information sources can include internet, newspaper, chamber of commerce and trade exhibitions. Based on the potential customers' needs and the business development requirements, participants would prepare relation building letters and understand the writing guidelines. Oral presentation would be one of the assessment tasks, containing the importer and exporter introduction, and explanations of the international trade correspondence.

Throughout the business English courses, non-English major participants were assigned in groups of 2 or 3. They were required to design business English presentation about Chinese companies, brands or Chinese business leaders, in three to five minutes, with one-minute question and answer session. The themes of the business English presentation would be in line

with the curricula. The sources of the business English presentation include China Daily, CGTN, Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, The Economist, BBC or CNN.

The dimensions of business English presentation standards include presentation content, language expressions, fluency, presentation tactics, time control etc.

### **Data analysis**

For rating questions, means and standard deviations were calculated and shown in different tables. To compare the differences in means between English major and non-English-major participants, independent samples T-tests were conducted based on SPSS 21. For open ended questions, the responses were mostly in Chinese and translated by the researcher. The main themes were identified. The frequencies of the themes, and their percentages of participants were also calculated and shown in different figures. The typical quotes were selected, to demonstrate the insights of English-major and non-English-major participants about the development of business English presentation competence. To protect the confidentiality and identities of participants and their organizations, pseudonyms were used throughout the reporting of study results.

### **Results**

#### **The potential needs for learners to develop business English presentation competence in the Chinese university context**

In the first stage survey, English major and non-English-major participants' frequencies of doing presentations in curriculum are shown in Table 1. Participants indicated the frequencies in a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is never and 6 is almost every day. For English-majors, the mean of English group presentations as an assigned task had the highest mean at 2.95, with standard deviation at 0.90. Presentations on daily topic followed with the mean at 2.59, with standard deviation at 0.69. Presentations on business topics had the lowest mean at 1.42 with standard deviation around 0.69.

For non-English major participants, English group presentations as an assigned task also stood at the highest mean of 2.39, with standard deviation at 0.88. This was also followed by Chinese group presentations as an assigned task at 2.38, with standard deviation at 1.12. Presentations on business topics was the lowest at 1.92, with standard deviation at 1.02.

Overall, the means of English-major and non-English major participants were all over 1 in all the categories, which means once or twice a year. Both groups recognized that English group presentations had the highest frequencies. Both groups also indicated the lowest frequencies in presentations on business topics.

An independent samples T-test was conducted between English-major and non-English-major participants' frequencies of presentations in the curriculum. Sig. (2-tailed) was 0.645, much higher than 0.05, which means there were no significant difference between English-major and non-English major participants in the frequencies of presentations in the curricula.

English major and non-English major participants' self-assessment results of planning of presentation are shown in Table 2. Participants rated their planning ability in a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is very easy and 6 is very difficult. For English-major participants, engaging the interest of audience had the highest mean of 4.16, with standard deviation at 1.22, which was the most difficult. This was followed by writing the presentation script at 3.61, with standard

deviation at 1.15. Getting the timing right had the lowest mean at 3.08, with standard deviation at 1.06, which was considered the easiest.

Table 1

*Frequencies of Doing Presentations in Curriculum*

<b>Frequencies of presentations in the curriculum</b>		<b>Mean of English majors</b>	<b>Standard deviations of English majors</b>	<b>Mean of non-English majors</b>	<b>Standard deviations of non-English majors</b>
English presentations as an assigned task	group	2.95	0.90	2.39	0.88
Chinese presentations as an assigned task	group	2.40	1.01	2.38	1.12
Individual presentations as a part of final assessment	English	2.33	0.71	2.00	0.95
Individual presentations as a part of final assessment	Chinese	1.86	0.77	1.95	0.96
Presentations on business topics	on	1.42	0.69	1.92	1.02
Presentations on daily topics		2.59	0.97	2.23	0.99

For non-English major participants, they also considered engaging the interest of audience as the most difficult, as the mean was the highest at 4.07, with standard deviation at 1.08. The second highest mean was presentation with the right pronunciation and intonation at 3.65 ( $SD=1.19$ ), which was the second most difficult task. Peer assessment ability had the lowest mean of 3.30 ( $SD=1.21$ ), which was considered the easiest. It can be seen that both English-major and non-English-major participants found engaging the audience as the most difficult presentation task.

An independent samples T-test was also conducted between English-major and non-English major participants on their self-assessment of planning of presentation. The Sig. (2-tailed) was 0.908, much higher than 0.05, which showed that there were no significant differences between English major and non-English-major participants in the self-assessed presentation planning competence.

Participants' self-assessment results of structuring of presentation are shown in Table 3. Participants reported their structuring abilities in a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is very easy and 6 is very difficult. For English-major participants, handling audience's questions had the highest mean of 4.28 ( $SD=1.09$ ), which was considered the most difficult. This was followed by developing ideas in the body of presentation at 3.97 ( $SD=1.21$ ). Introducing a presentation had the lowest mean at 3.27 ( $SD=1.03$ ), which was perceived as the easiest.

Table 2  
*Self-assessment of Planning of Presentation*

Self-assessment of planning presentation	of English majors	Mean of English majors	Standard deviations of English majors	Mean of non-English majors	Standard deviations of non-English majors
Understanding the needs of your audience	3.38	0.97	3.64	1.15	
Planning a presentation	3.56	1.07	3.43	1.11	
Getting the timing right	3.08	1.06	3.18	1.29	
Engaging the interest of your audience	4.16	1.22	4.07	1.08	
Presentation with the right pronunciation and intonation	3.61	1.16	3.65	1.19	
Presentation topic selection	3.47	1.17	3.36	1.23	
Writing the presentation script	3.61	1.15	3.38	1.19	
Peer assessment ability	3.28	0.98	3.30	1.21	

For non-English major participants, they also considered handling audience's question as the most difficult, with the mean at 4.21 (SD=1.18). This was also followed by developing ideas in the body of a presentation with the mean at 3.81 (SD=1.17). It was considered that concluding a presentation was the easiest, with the lowest mean at 3.36 (SD=1.15). It can be summarized that handling audience questions was considered the most difficult for both English major and non-English major participants, while introducing or concluding a presentation was considered the easiest.

An independent samples T-test was conducted between English-major and non-English-major participants on their self-assessment of structuring of presentation. The Sig. (2-tailed) was 0.771, much higher than 0.05, which means there were no significant differences between English major and non-English major participants on their self-assessment of presentation structuring competence.

English major and non-English major participants self-assessed their abilities of making a presentation, shown in Table 4. Participants rated their abilities of making a presentation in a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is very easy and 6 is very difficult. For English-major participants, speaking in a natural spoken style had the highest mean of 4.11 (SD=1.37), which was considered the most difficult. This was followed by putting thoughts/ideas into speech with the mean of 4.03 (SD=1.10). Presentation with the right manner was considered the easiest, with the mean at 3.27 (SD=1.14).

For non-English-major participants, putting thoughts / ideas into speech had the highest mean of 4.07 (SD=1.17), which was considered the most difficult. The second highest mean can be found in speaking in a natural spoken English at 3.93 (SD=1.23). Presentation with the right manner had also the lowest mean at 3.18 (SD=1.27), which was perceived as the easiest. It can be seen that English-major and non-English major participants had the similar perceptions, which highlighted the greatest difficulties in speaking in a natural spoken style and putting thoughts/ideas into speech and the lowest difficulties in manner in presentations.

Table 3

*Self-assessment of Structuring of Presentation*

<b>Self-assessment of structuring presentation</b>	<b>of Mean of English majors</b>	<b>Standard deviations of English majors</b>	<b>Mean of non-English majors</b>	<b>Standard deviations of non-English majors</b>
Introducing presentation	a 3.27	1.03	3.42	1.07
Concluding presentation	a 3.38	0.97	3.36	1.15
Organizing information/ideas logically	3.91	1.05	3.67	1.15
Developing ideas in the body of a presentation	3.97	1.21	3.81	1.17
Making smooth transitions from point to point	3.64	1.01	3.62	1.07
Handling the audience's questions	4.28	1.09	4.21	1.18

Table 4

*Self-assessment of Making a Presentation*

<b>Self-assessment of making a presentation</b>	<b>Mean of English majors</b>	<b>Standard deviations of English majors</b>	<b>Mean of non-English majors</b>	<b>Standard deviations of non-English majors</b>
Presentation with the right manner	3.27	1.14	3.18	1.27
Presentation with the right eye contact	3.70	1.29	3.47	1.24
Using appropriate body language	3.58	1.24	3.42	1.19
Speaking clearly (pronunciation)	3.36	1.04	3.54	1.15
Speaking at the right speed	3.36	0.98	3.46	1.08
Putting your thoughts /ideas into speech	4.03	1.10	4.07	1.17
Using appropriate stress and intonation	3.78	1.11	3.89	1.16
Speaking in a natural spoken style	4.11	1.37	3.93	1.23

An independent samples T-test was conducted to compare the self-assessment results of making presentations between English-major and non-English major participants. The Sig. (2-tailed) was 0.856, higher than 0.05, which means there were no significant differences between

English-major and non-English-major participants on their self-assessed competence of making presentations.

English major and non-English-major participants self-assessed their abilities of using aids and support materials in a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is very easy and 6 is very difficult. For English-major participants, presentation data in charts and tables had the highest mean at 3.45 (SD=1.02), which was the most difficult. Presentation with the help of notes/prompts had the lowest mean at 3.39 (SD=1.00), which was considered the easiest.

For non-English-major participants, using visual aids effectively had the highest mean at 3.34 (SD=1.14), which was the most difficult. Non-English major participants also considered presenting with the help of notes/prompts as the easiest, with the mean at 3.10 (SD=1.16). It can be found that English-major and non-English major participants had similar perceptions in the greatest difficulties of using visual aids or charts and table in presentations and the least difficulties in speaking with notes/prompts.

An independent samples T-test was conducted between English-major and non-English-major groups on using visual aids and support materials based on their self-assessment. The Sig. (2-tailed) was 0.07, slightly higher than 0.05, which means there was no significant difference between English-major and non-English-major participants' self-assessment results on using visual aids and support materials.

Table 5  
*Self-assessment of Using Visual Aids and Support Materials*

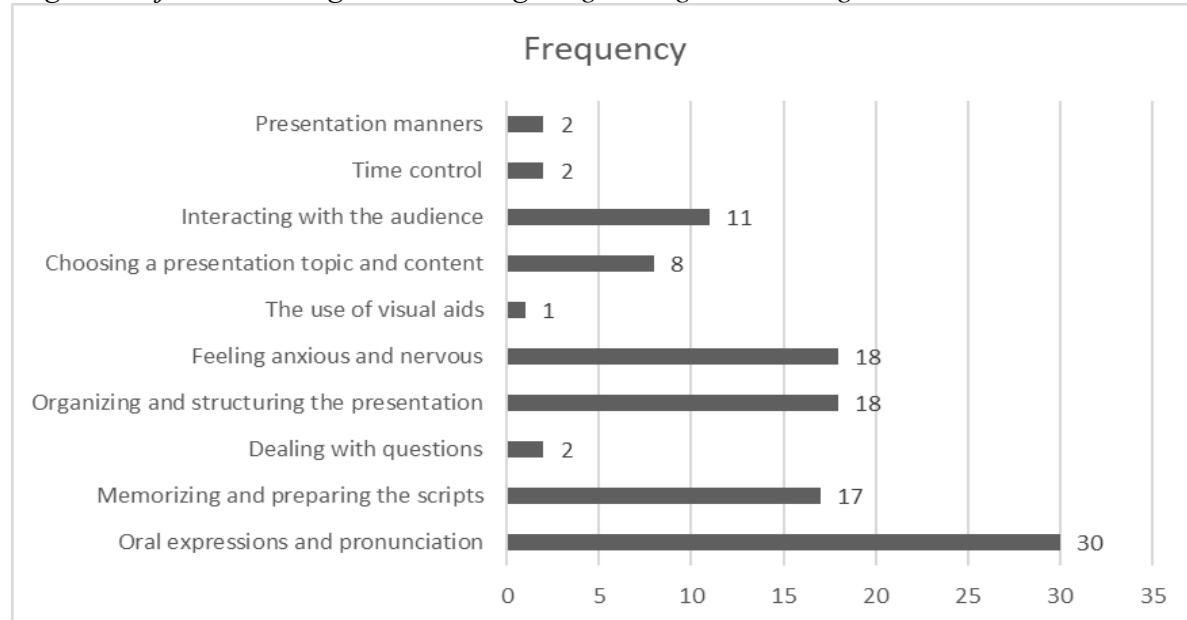
Self-assessment of using visual aids and support materials	Mean English majors	Standard deviations English majors	Mean of non-English majors	Standard deviations of non-English majors
Presenting data in charts and tables	3.45	1.02	3.27	1.12
Using visual aids effectively	3.41	1.14	3.34	1.14
Presenting with the help of notes/ prompts	3.39	1.00	3.10	1.16

English majors' challenges in planning, organizing and making presentations are shown in Figure 3. Over 43% mentioned oral expressions and pronunciation. English major participant 1 mentioned "she could not find the proper words to organize the language fluently. She had difficulties in finding oral expressions to interact with the audience" (Translation, Participant 1). More than 26% of the English major participants mentioned the challenges from feeling anxious and nervous as well as organizing and structuring the presentation. Participant 2 said "organizing the whole speech requires multiple rehearsals. Sometimes, organizing the speech might pause and needs the support of PPT. Her speech would sometimes blur" (Translation, Participant 2). More than 24% of the English-major participants mentioned the challenges in memorizing and preparing the scripts. English major participant 4 mentioned "she needed to search for rich materials to support her views. The presentation should be clear and coherent, with brief expressions, which could make the audience understand the thinking process" (Translation, Participant 4). Over 15% of the participants had challenges in interacting with the audience. English major participant 5 said "she may have difficulties in using the precise

language and would be nervous. She may lack the interaction in eye contact with the audience" (Translation, Participant 5). English majors' other challenges included presentation manners (2.8%), time control (2.8%), choosing a presentation topic and content (11.5%), the use of visual aids (1.4%), and dealing with questions (2.8%).

Figure 3

*English Majors' Challenges in Planning, Organizing and Making Presentations*



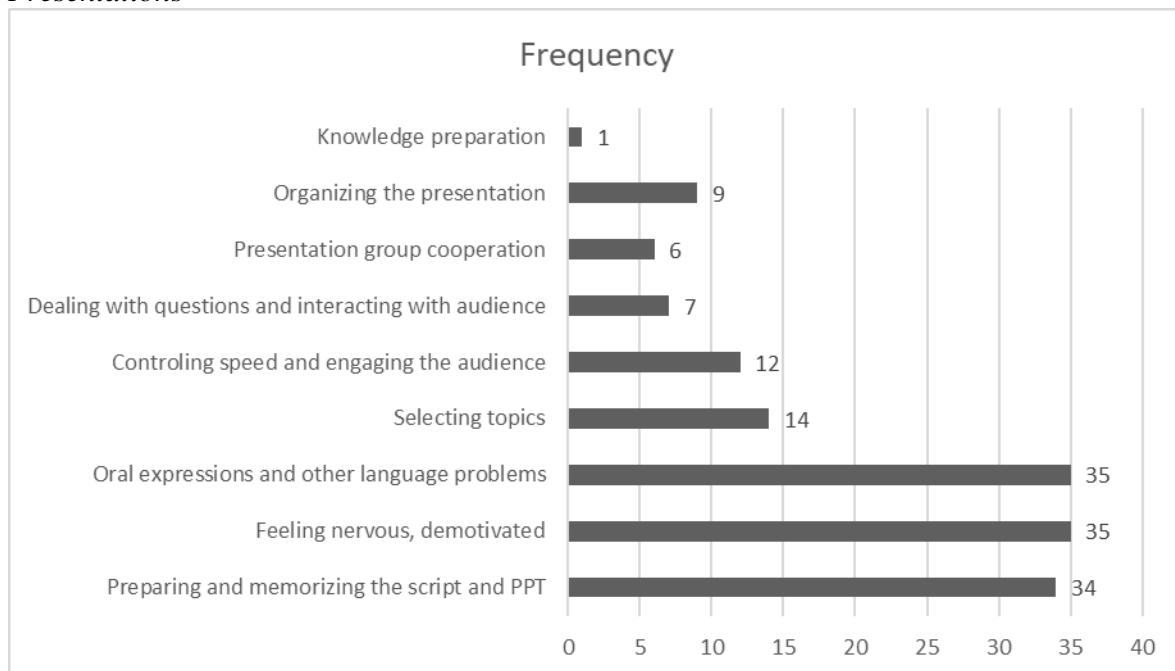
Non-English-major participants' challenges in planning, organizing and making presentations are shown in Figure 4. Over 35% non-English-major participants mentioned feeling nervous and demotivated. Non-English-major participant 6 said "she would feel nervous, particularly in interacting with audience. She could not speak spontaneously and would have difficulties without the scripts" (Translation, Participant 6). Another around 35% non-English majors mentioned oral expressions and language problems. Non-English major Participant 7 also said "it took her a lot of time to organize the script. She could not speak with standard pronunciation. She could not speak fluently and would feel nervous" (Translation, Participant 7).

More than 34% of non-English-major participants mentioned preparation and memorizing the script and PPT. Non-English-major participant 9 particularly mentioned that "she lacked experiences in making speech and could not get used to the speech context. She could not fully express her thinking coherently, and did not have reasoning and logic" (Translation, Participant 9).

Other non-English-major participants' challenges included knowledge preparation (1%), organizing the presentation (9.1%), presentation group cooperation (6.1%), dealing with questions and interacting with audience (7.1%), controlling speed and engaging the audience (12.2%) and selecting topics (14.2%).

It can be seen that English-major and non-English major participants' perceived challenges were similar to the self-assessment results, mostly related to oral English expressions, preparation of presentation materials and making psychological preparations.

Figure 4  
*Non-English Major Participants' Challenges in Planning, Organizing and Making Presentations*



Curriculum strategies to help English majors to cope with the challenges are summarized in Figure 5. More than 57% of English-major participants would improve language skills. English major participant 10 hoped to “learn original expressions and professional knowledge” (Translation, Participant 10). English major participant 11 “hoped to improve vocabulary and get in touch with original oral English” (Translation). More than 39% of English-major participants would learn business and trade knowledge. English major participant 11 said this included “business English knowledge, through extensive reading and writing practice” (Translation). English major participant 12 hoped to “understand the business and trade conditions and follow the current trends” (Translation). Over 17% of English-major participants would improve presentation skills. English major participant 14 would learn some presentation tactics, find the suitable speech styles and improve oral English. Other coping strategies included enhancing confidence and thinking skills and improving practice abilities. English major participant 14 said “classroom simulation could provide practice opportunities” (Translation).

Non-English majors' curriculum-based strategies to cope with the challenges in making presentations are shown in Figure 6. Over 62% of non-English-major participants would improve English language skills. Non-English-major participant 15 mentioned “creating good English atmosphere to improve English speaking skills, enrich vocabulary and sentence patterns” (Translation). More than 29% of non-English-major participants would improve presentation skills and increase presentation materials. Non-English-major participant 16 mentioned “topic selection, presentation logics and ways of giving examples on the basis of improved vocabulary” (Translation). Non-English-major participant 17 said “giving everyone a chance to make presentation is good while the presentation topics were all covered in the coursebooks” (Translation). More than 16% of non-English-major participants would enhance business knowledge. Non-English-major participant 18 said “she would learn some business-related scenarios and had basic concepts about business English” (Translation). Other coping

strategies included learning from other speakers (5.1%) and improving thinking and quick response skills (1.02%).

It can be seen that for English major and non-English major participants' challenges, the curriculum should be ready with both language and knowledge elements, as well as guidance on presentation tactics.

Figure 5

*English majors' Curriculum-based Strategies to Cope with the Challenges in Making Presentations*

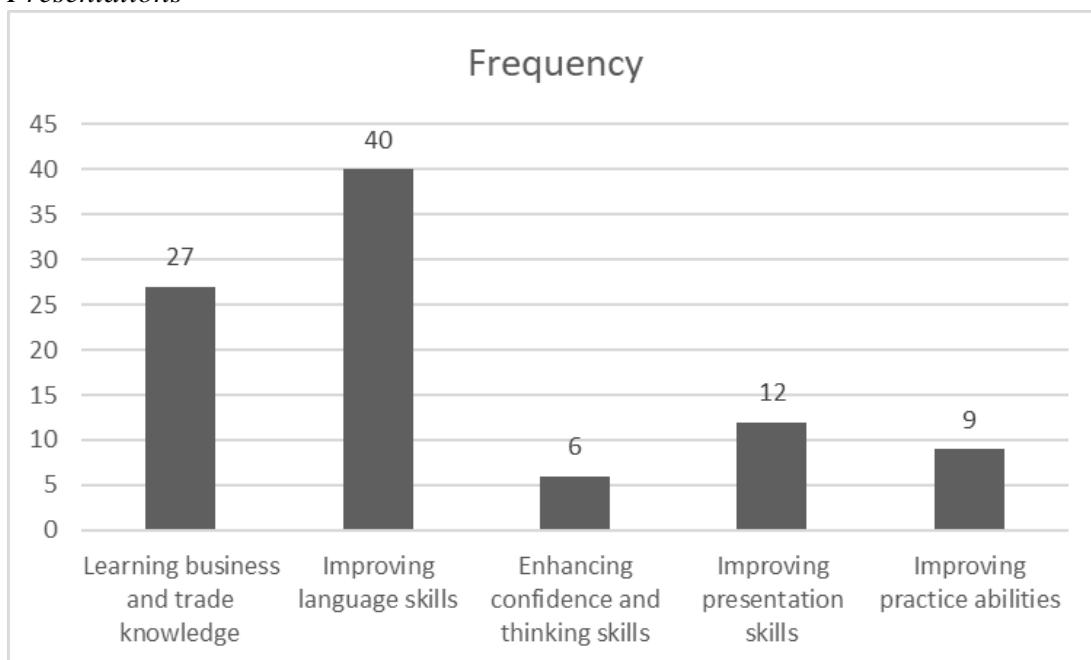
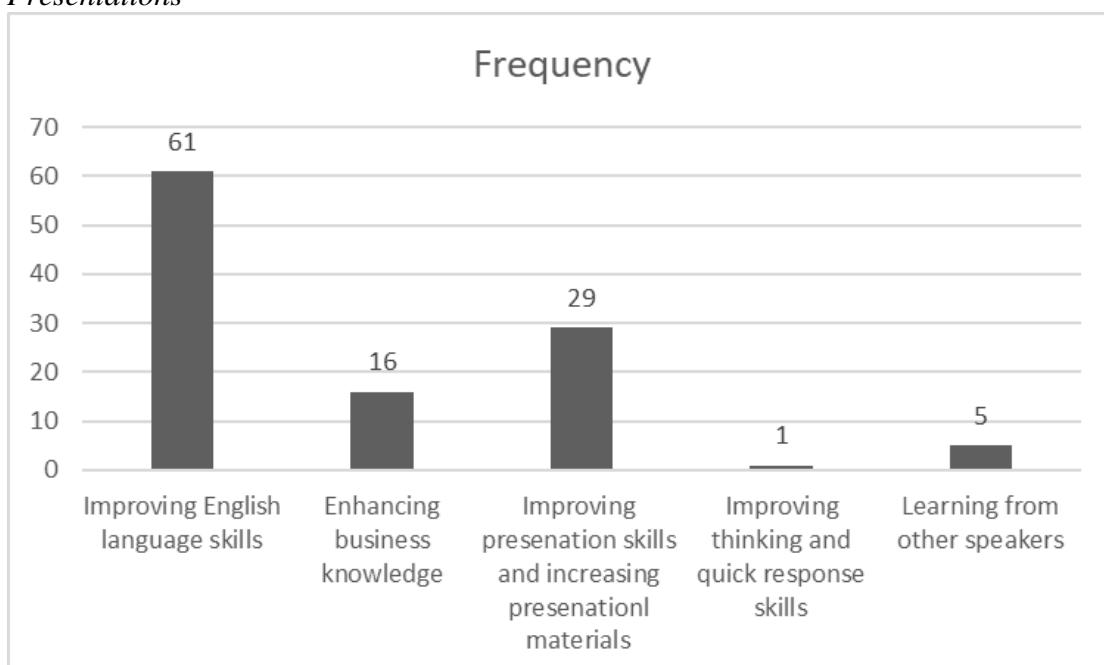


Figure 6

*Non-English Majors' Curriculum-based Strategies to Cope with the Challenges in Making Presentations*



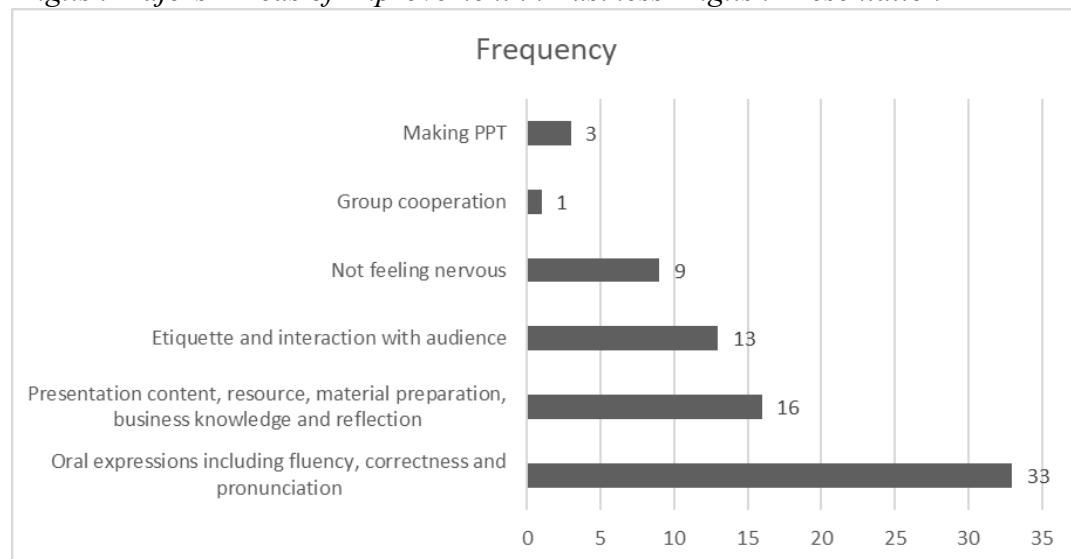
### The effectiveness of the practice-based approach in developing business English presentation competence and the learning outcomes in the Chinese university context

In the second stage survey, when evaluating the business English presentation performance themselves in the curricula, more than 18% of English-major participants perceived that they did a good performance. Over 11% of English-major participants thought that their performance was just average. One English-major participant was not satisfied with her performance. Most of the problems or difficulties were related to being nervous and not able to memorize all the scripts during presentation processes.

For non-English-major participants' evaluation of their own presentation performance, more than 26% mentioned average. Over 18% evaluated that their performance was good. Only two non-English-major participants evaluated that their performance was not good. Similar problems or difficulties could be identified as English-major participants, such as being nervous and lack of control of the time, as well as lack of fluency in English speech.

English majors' areas of improvement in business English presentation are shown in Figure 7. More than 47% of English-major participants considered that they needed to improve oral expressions, including fluency, correctness and pronunciation. English major participant 37 said "she hoped the oral expressions would not be too rigid and her presentation to be attractive" (Translation). More than 23% of English-major participants would improve presentation content, resource, material preparation, business knowledge and reflection. English major participant 39 said she would learn professional basic knowledge more solidly (Translation). Over 18% of English-major participants would improve etiquette and engagement with audience. English major participant 40 said "in the next presentation, she would make better preparations. She would have more interaction with audience and design more interesting activities" (Translation). Other areas of improvement for English-major participants included not feeling nervous (13%), group cooperation (1.4%) and making Powerpoint (PPT) (4.3%).

Figure 7  
*English Majors' Areas of Improvement in Business English Presentation*

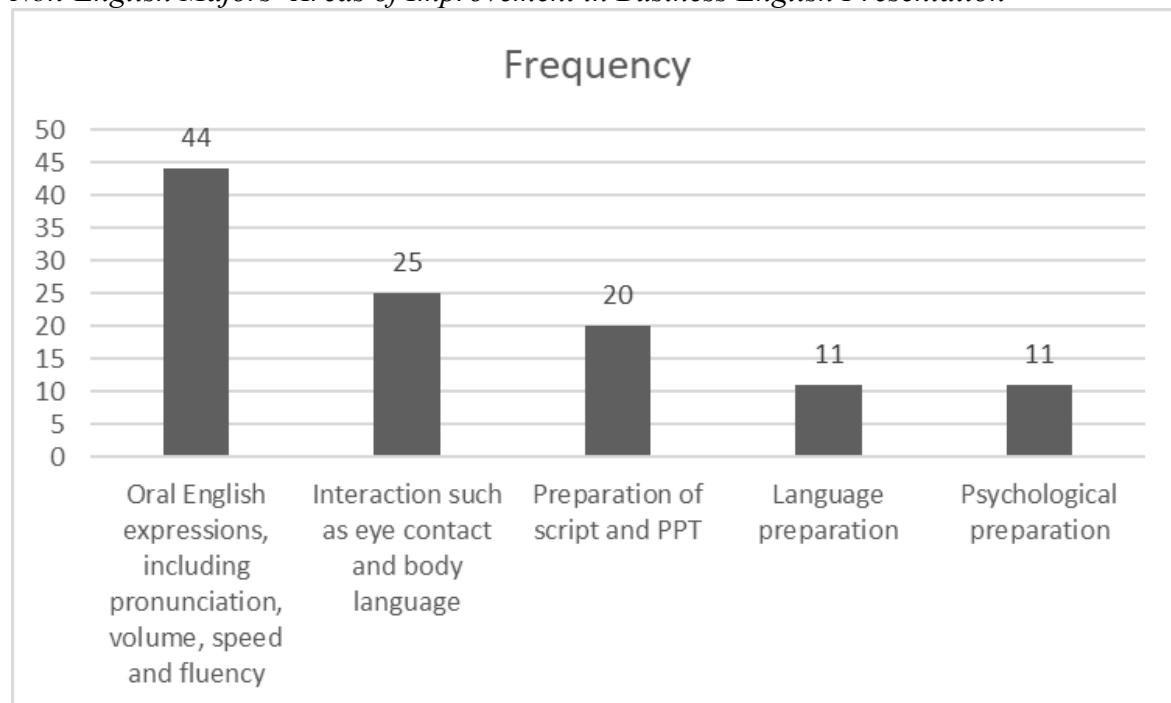


Non-English majors' areas of improvement in business English presentation are summarized in Figure 8. Similar to English major participants, more than 44% of non-English-major participants would improve their oral English expressions, including pronunciation, volume, speed and fluency. Non-English-major participant 41 said "she would improve oral English

practice and the standard of pronunciation. She would also improve language organization abilities, to make the expressions more original" (Translation).

Over 25% of non-English-major participants needed to improve interaction and engagement with audience, such as eye contact and body language. Non-English-major participant 42 said "she would improve the stage performance, have straight eye-sight, manage the facial expressions and enhance interaction" (Translation). Non-English-major 43 said "she would enhance interaction and communication with audience, not necessarily relying on the script" (Translation). More than 20% of non-English-major participants would enhance preparation of script and PPT. Non-English-major participant 44 mentioned that "he would choose a good topic, make presentation in an interesting way, with higher degrees of fluency and interaction" (Translation). Over 11% of non-English-major participants would make better language preparation. This could include enhancement in vocabulary, English reading, writing, speaking and listening skills development. Another 11% of non-English-major participants also would make psychological preparation, such as being more confident and not feeling anxious.

Figure 8  
*Non-English Majors' Areas of Improvement in Business English Presentation*

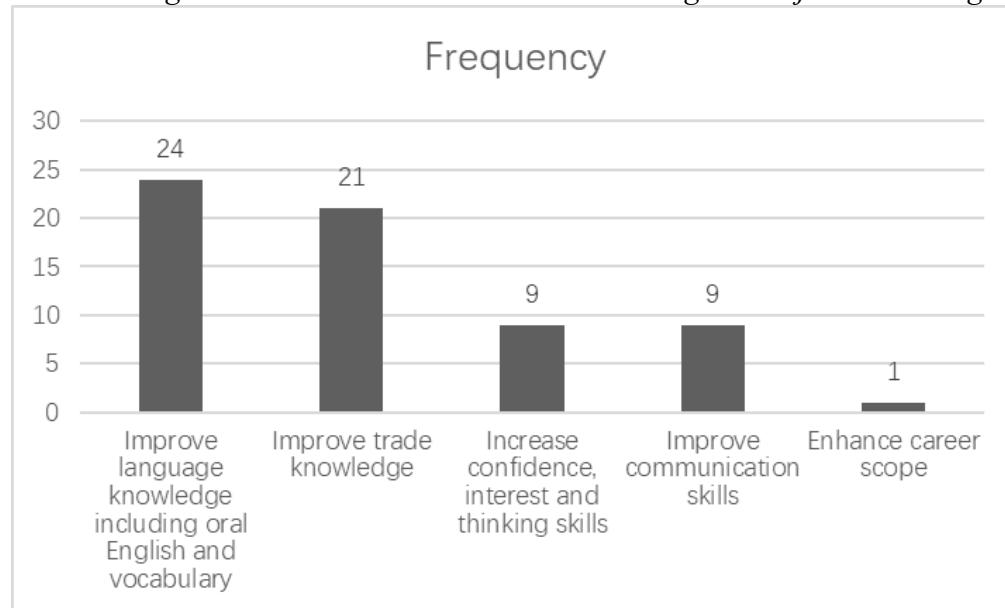


Business English presentation's contributions to English majors' learning are shown in Figure 9. More than 34% of English-major participants reported that they have improved language knowledge including oral English and professional vocabulary through business presentation practice. English-major participant 20 said "her oral fluency has improved" (Translation). English-major participant 21 mentioned "she learnt relevant expressions, particularly the expressions and format in inquiry letters" (Translation). English-major participant 22 said oral expressions as an output task could test her real language levels and helped with self-assessment. English-major participant 23 further commented that "business English presentation could be one integrated practice, in which learners needed to search for massive materials, which could also be language learning" (Translation).

Over 30% of English-major participants also improved their trade knowledge through business presentations. English-major participant 24 said “they learnt standard business formats and understood business situations” (Translation). English-major participant 25 said “they used knowledge to test in their output, which helped them understand the weaknesses and better improve their learning” (Translation). English-major participant 26 said “they could apply knowledge they learnt in after-class practice” (Translation). English-major participant 27 said “through project flow, they expanded their knowledge” (Translation). Other contributions included increasing confidence, interest and thinking skills (13%), improving communication skills (13%) and enhancing career scope (1.4%).

Figure 9

*Business English Presentation's Contributions to English Majors' Learning*

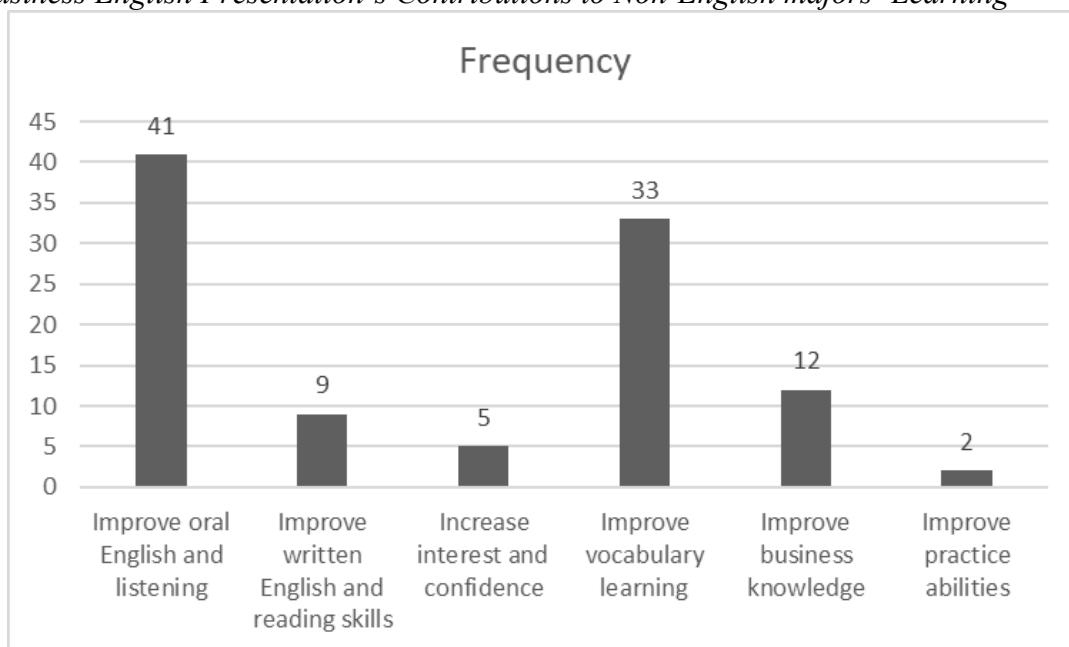


Business English presentation's contributions to non-English majors' learning are summarized in Figure 10. More than 41% of non-English-major participants improved their oral English and listening skills. Non-English-major participant 28 mentioned “he used to focus only on words and grammar. He now experienced the charm of oral English” (Translation). Non-English-major participant 29 mentioned “business English presentation developed the use of English in practical contexts and his oral English would become more fluent” (Translation). Moreover, over 33% of non-English-major participants improved their vocabulary learning through business English presentation practices. Other improvement can be found in written English and reading skills (9.1%), interest and confidence (5.1%), business knowledge (12.2%) and practice abilities (2.0%).

Over 65% of English-major participants recognized the positive effects of teaching materials on business English presentation. They considered that the course materials were rich. The text materials provided templates for making presentations. English major participants also indicated that more resources and real-world samples could be added to the teaching materials.

More than 81% of non-English-major participants evaluated that the teaching materials were good or excellent, which helped with their business English presentation. The teaching materials provided space for vocabulary learning and resources for preparation of business English presentations.

Figure 10  
*Business English Presentation's Contributions to Non-English majors' Learning*



### How business English teachers effectively design business English presentation tasks and activities in the Chinese university context

English major and non-English-major participants' perceptions about presentation topics are summarized in Table 6. Participants rated in a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is the easiest and 6 is the most difficult. Table 6 presents the means of participants' rating and the standard deviations. It can be seen that for English majors, money and finance had the highest mean of 4.51 ( $SD=1.10$ ), which was the most difficult. Money and finance were also the most difficult for non-English-majors ( $SD=1.41$ ). Chinese company introductions were considered the easiest for both English majors ( $M=2.78$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ) and non-English-majors ( $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=1.34$ ), with the lowest means.

Moreover, an independent samples T-test was conducted using SPSS 21. The test results showed that there were no significant differences between English-major and non-English-major participants, with  $Sig.$  (2-tailed) at 0.251, larger than 0.05.

Helpful teaching activities for English majors to prepare for business English presentations are shown in Figure 11. It can be seen that over 18% of English-major participants mentioned trade correspondence learning, including formats and translation-based learning. More than 11% of English-major participants mentioned group cooperation and simulation. English major participant 32 said "she needed a business English learning environment close to the real-world context, in which she could fully use business English knowledge and have the platform and opportunities to practice" (Translation). Over 10% of English-major participants also mentioned professional vocabulary and syntax learning. Over 5.7% of English-major participants needed video-based learning, which "could illustrate the business transactions vividly" (Translation, English major participant 33).

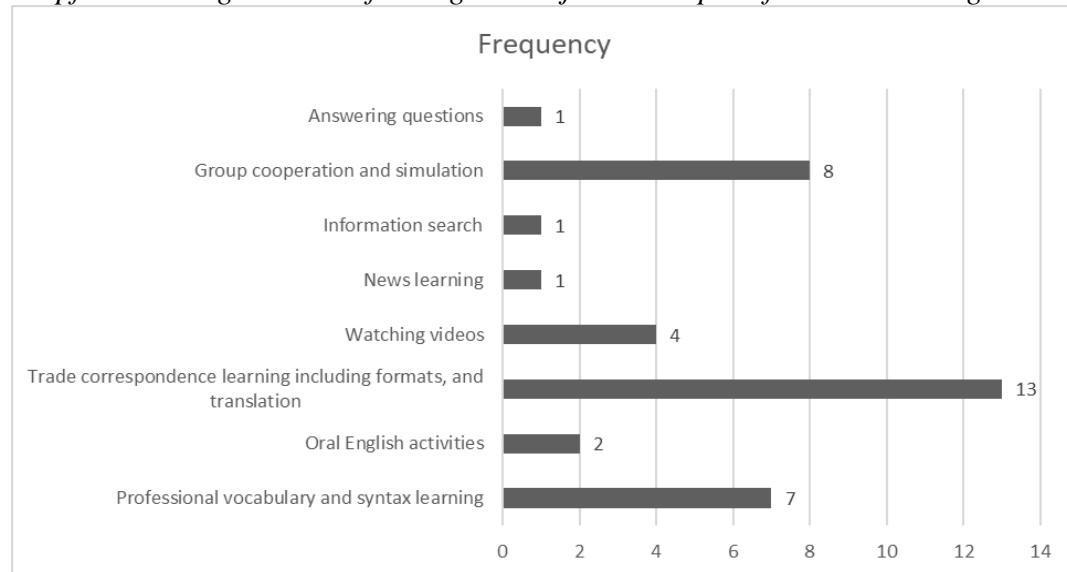
Other helpful teaching activities for English major participants included oral English activities (2.8%), answering questions (1.4%), information search (1.4%) and news learning (1.4%).

Table 6

*English-major and Non-English-major Participants' Perceptions of Presentation Topics*

<b>Presentation topics</b>	<b>English major</b>	<b>Standard deviations of English majors</b>	<b>Non-English major</b>	<b>Standard deviations of non-English majors</b>
Import and export	3.13	1.06	3.44	1.15
Brands and marketing	3.20	1.10	3.01	1.18
Human resources	3.70	0.98	3.48	1.18
Chinese company introduction	2.78	1.02	2.74	1.34
International company introduction	3.39	1.22	3.04	1.38
Money and finance	4.51	1.10	4.06	1.41
Business ethics	3.52	1.15	3.41	1.27
Leadership	3.55	1.09	2.99	1.21
Advertising	3.16	1.15	2.66	1.29
Organizations	3.49	1.12	3.28	1.14

Figure 11

*Helpful Teaching Activities for English Majors to Prepare for Business English Presentations*

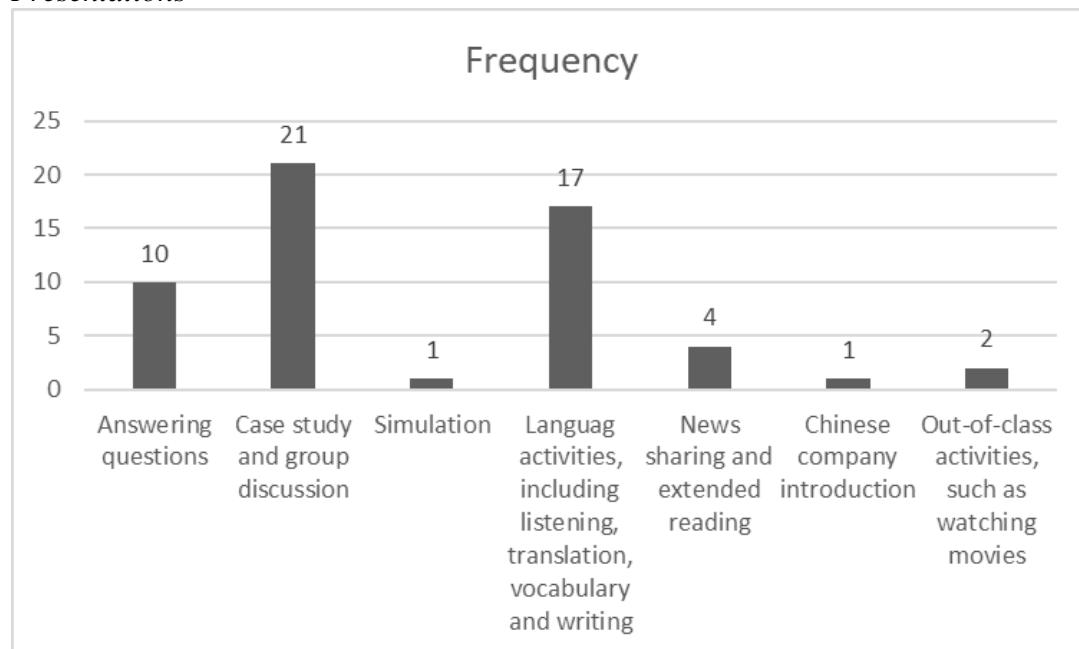
Helpful teaching activities for non-English majors to prepare for business English presentations are summarized in Figure 12. More than 21% of non-English-major participants mentioned the case study and group discussion, including the group writing tasks. Non-English-major participant 34 mentioned “the 200 words group writing tasks develop her writing abilities” (Translation).

More than 17% of non-English-major participants suggested various language activities, including listening, translation, vocabulary and writing. Non-English-major participant 35 said “the presentation related knowledge in the course” was particularly helpful. Non-English-major participant 36 said “writing practice, particularly expressing content after thinking and discussion was helpful. Additional vocabulary learning was also helpful” (Translation).

More than 10% of non-English-major participants considered that answering questions and interaction in class was particularly helpful. Other helpful activities included simulation (1.02%), news sharing and extended reading (4.08%), Chinese company introduction (1.02%) and out-of-class learning activities such as watching movies (2.04%).

It can be seen that both English-major and non-English-major valued group cooperation and simulation. Nevertheless, with the differentiation in the business English curricula, they have different preferences for the various presentation competence development activities.

**Figure 12**  
*Helpful Teaching Activities for Non-English majors to Prepare for Business English Presentations*

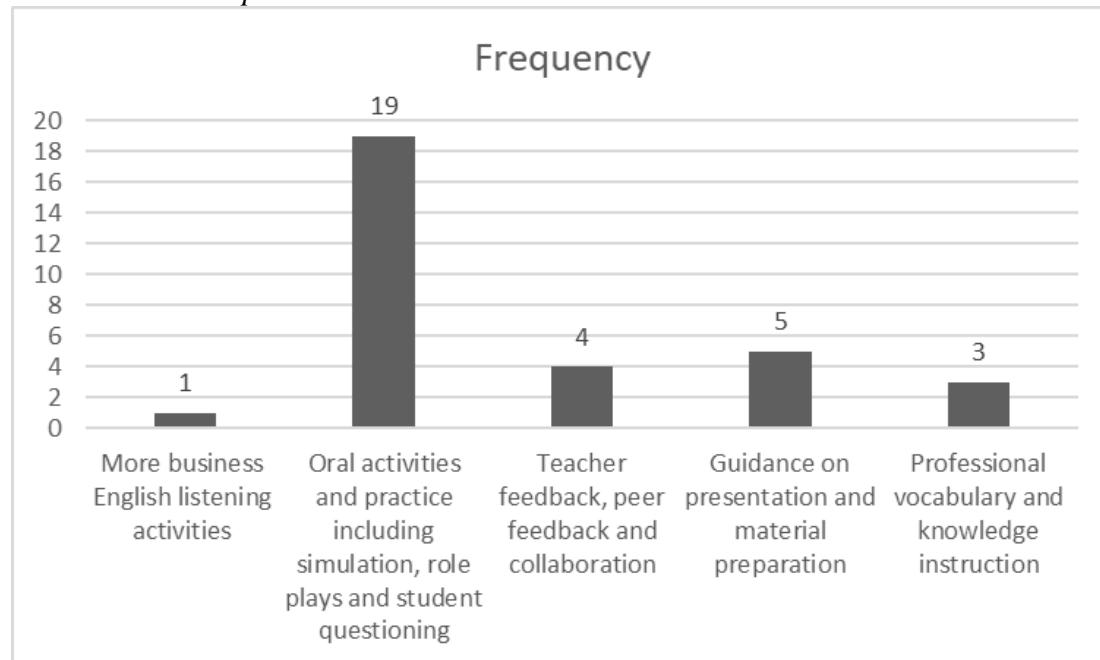


English major participants also suggested additional teaching activities to enhance business English presentation competence, shown in Figure 13. More than 27% English-major participants suggested to incorporate various oral activities and practice including simulation, role plays and student questioning. English major participant 45 said “she hoped to have more business negotiation simulation as the oral practices lacked in the curriculum” (Translation). English major participant 46 said “she hoped to have more knowledge about official product introduction before presentation, to avoid being seen as not professional” (Translation).

More than 7% English-major participants hoped to have more guidance on presentation and material preparation. English major participant 47 said “she should know the differences between business English presentation and daily presentation” (Translation). More than 5% English major participants hoped to have more teacher feedback, peer feedback and teacher collaboration. Over 4% English major participants mentioned more professional vocabulary

instruction. English major participant 48 said “she should know the meanings of terms, such as the bill of lading in reality and how these documents were used in international trade” (Translation). One English-major participant mentioned the needs for more business English listening activities, particularly news listening.

**Figure 13**  
*Additional Teaching Activities Suggested by English Majors to Enhance Business English Presentation Competence*

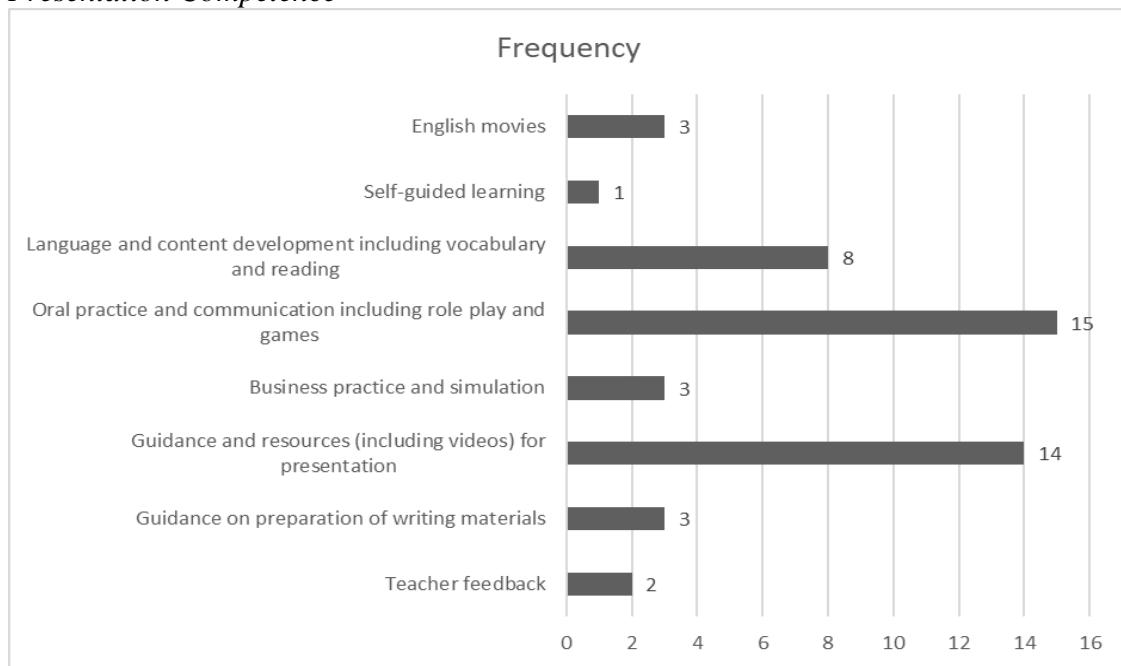


Additional teaching activities suggested by non-English major participants are shown in Figure 14. Over 13% of non-English major participants suggested that the business English curriculum was very comprehensive and complete for enhancing business English presentation competence. Non-English-major participant 49 said “he thought the curriculum was very complete, covering listening, reading, writing and speaking” (Translation).

More than 15% non-English-major participants hoped to have more oral practice and communication including role play and games. Non-English-major participant 50 said “you should shout a debate between students. I like it would be more of fun”. Non-English-major participant 51 said “due to time limitation, case discussion cannot be fully displayed” (Translation). More than 14% non-English-major participants needed guidance and resources (including Ted talks) for presentation. More than 8% of non-English-major participants hoped to have language and content development including vocabulary and reading. Non-English-major participant 52 said “extension on abilities is needed, as well expansion of knowledge scope out of class” (Translation).

Other activities needed included English movies or videos (3%), self-guided learning (1%), business practice and simulation (3%), guidance on preparation of writing materials (3%) and teacher feedback or reflection (2%). What is similar between English major and non-English major participants would be that they both needed various oral English related activities, in addition to the current comprehensive curricula.

Figure 14  
*Additional Teaching Activities Suggested by Non-English majors to Enhance Business English Presentation Competence*

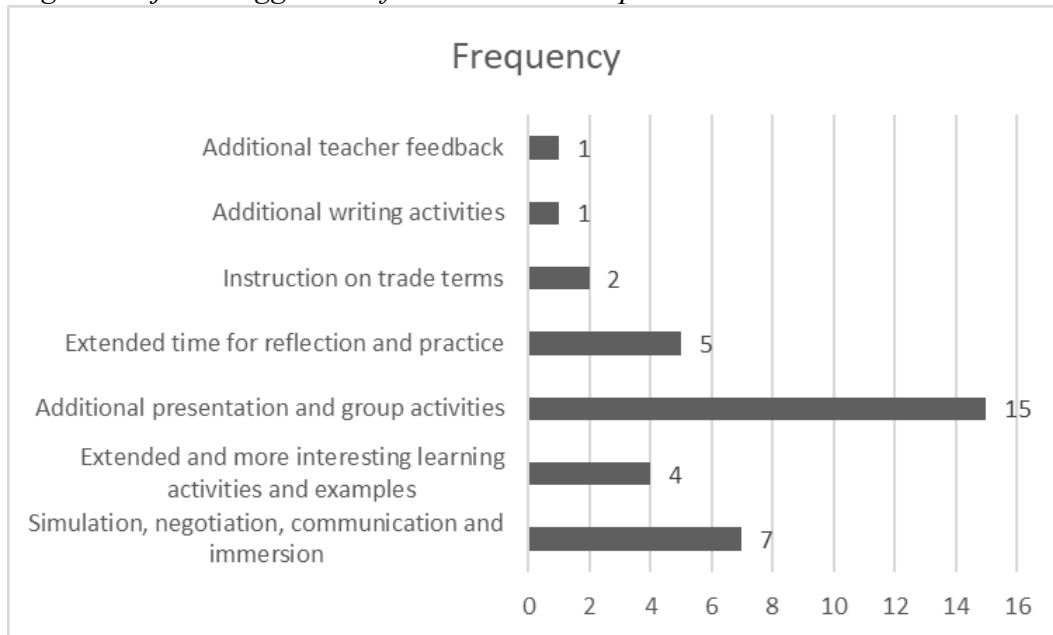


English major participants' suggestions for curriculum improvement are shown in Figure 15. More than 21% English-major participants suggested additional presentation and group activities. English-major participant 53 said "there could be more group activities, so that every student can have the chance to make presentations" (Translation). English-major participant 54 further commented that "individual presentations should be increased, as there were always fellow students who needed the chance to make presentations" (Translation). English-major participant 55 mentioned "the need to evaluate presentation content, so that participants would know how to improve on presentations" (Translation). More than 10% of English-major participants hoped to have more simulation, negotiation, communication and immersion activities. English-major participant 56 particularly mentioned the needs to join more practice and simulation. Over 7% English-major participants mentioned the needs for extended time for reflection and practice. English-major participant 56 said "there was too much input and there should be more digestions, particularly with strange topics" (Translation). Other suggestions included extended and more interesting learning activities and examples (5.7%), instruction on trade terms (2.8%), additional writing activities (1.4%), and additional teacher feedback (1.4%).

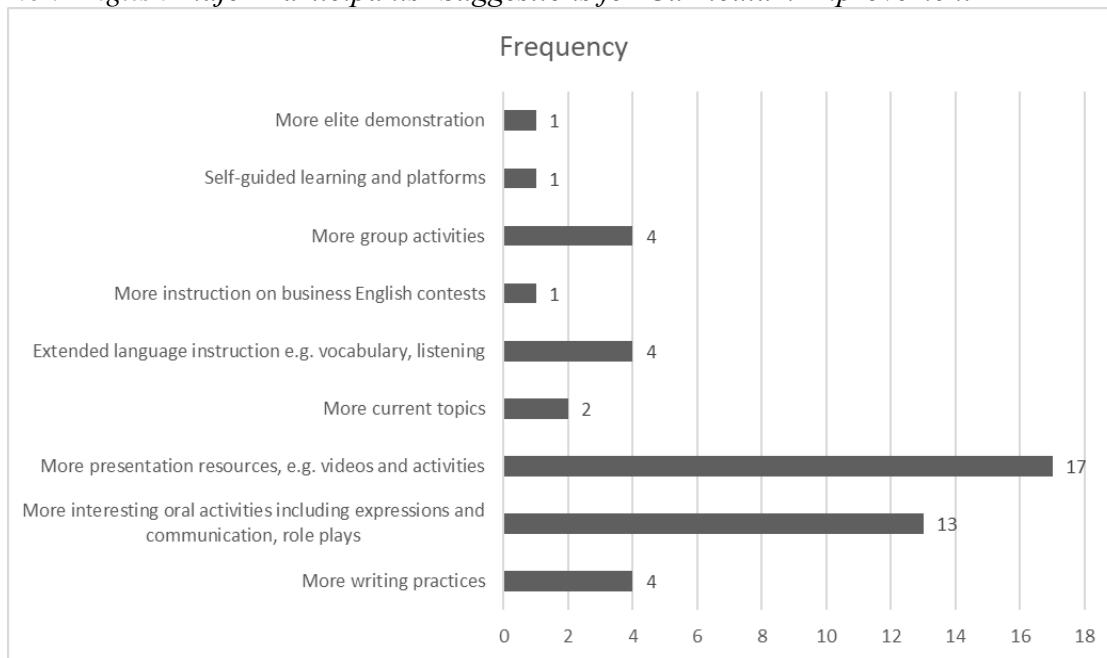
Non-English-major participants' suggestions for curriculum improvement are shown in Figure 16. More than 17% of non-English-major participants hoped to have more presentation resources, such as videos and activities. Non-English-major participant 57 suggested guidelines on presentation body language. Non-English-major participant 58 hoped to have more materials on "business English presentation vocabulary and techniques" (Translation). Over 13% non-English-major participants hoped to have more interesting oral activities including expressions, communication and role plays. Also around 4% non-English-major participant suggested more group discussion, extended language instruction, such as vocabulary and listening, and more writing practices respectively. Non-English-major participant 31 particularly suggested "more group discussion (let us know each other in the first few lectures), or we will be like strangers for the whole semester". Non-English-major participant 60 hoped "the calculation of grades can be by groups so that every group member would participate

actively, with more communication and improvement of presentation levels" (Translation). Moreover, non-English-major participant 61 said "she hoped to have more dictation, as her vocabulary was weak. She also hoped to have more writing instruction and templates" (Translation). Other suggestions included more elite demonstration (1%), self-guided learning and platforms (1%), instruction on business English contests (1%) and current and practical topics (2%).

**Figure 15**  
*English Majors' Suggestions for Curriculum Improvement*



**Figure 16**  
*Non-English-major Participants' Suggestions for Curriculum Improvement*



It can be summarized that both English-major and non-English-major participants needed more presentation activities and resources, oral activities including role plays, simulation and negotiation, as well as extended language related instruction.

From the teacher/researcher's perspective, both English major and non-English major participants prepared well for business English presentation, with diverse topics focusing on Chinese brands, Chinese businesses as well as import and export in the global context. The business English presentation became an important component of the curriculum, which enriched the course content.

## Discussion

### **The potential needs for learners to develop business English presentation competence in the Chinese university context**

For making presentations, both English major and non-English major participants reported more English group presentations with the highest frequencies than presentations on business topics with the lowest frequencies. Both groups found engaging the audience, handling the audience questions, speaking in a natural tone or putting thoughts or ideas into speech, speaking using visual aids, tables and charts as the most difficult. Both groups also found making introduction or concluding the presentations, speaking with the right manner, speaking with notes or prompts as the easiest. There were no significant differences found in both groups in the self-assessment of business English presentation competence. The results of the study with these English-major and non-English-major participants were different from those of Evans (2013). The participants for this study highlighted particularly the difficulties of using visual aids, including table and charts and putting thoughts into speech, which were not emphasized in Evans's (2013) study.

For challenges in planning, organizing and making presentations, less than half English major participants mentioned pronunciation and oral expressions. Other challenges included being anxious and nervous, memorizing and preparing the scripts, manner, time control, topic selection, using visual aids and dealing with questions. For non-English major participants, more than one third mentioned feeling nervous and demotivated, as well as preparing and memorizing the scripts, with higher proportions than English majors. Other challenges included knowledge preparation, organizing the presentation, presentation group cooperation, dealing with questions and interacting with audience, controlling speed and topic selection. Similar challenges can be found in both groups. Frendo (2005) particularly indicates that the preparations of business English presentations are comprehensive which cover the aspects of "aids including materials and visual aid, rapport including eye contact, body language, manner and humour, delivery including clarity, pronunciation, stress, pauses, volume, intonation and language including accuracy, vocabulary, appropriacy and simplicity" (p.73).

More than half English-major and non-English major participants thought that the business English curriculum can provide them with language skills to cope with the challenges in making presentations. Other support for English majors included business and trade knowledge, presentation skills, confidence, thinking skills, and practice abilities. Other areas for non-English majors included presentation skills and materials, business knowledge, learning from other speakers and thinking and quick response skills. The results of this study further enhance the findings from Li et al. (2016), which extend the benefits of business English curriculum in developing business English presentation competence.

### **The effectiveness of the practice-based approach in developing business English presentation competence and the learning outcomes in the Chinese university context**

For self-evaluation of business English presentations, less than 20% English major participants perceived themselves having good performance while more than 26% non-English major participants thought their performance was average. Both groups reported similar problems in the actual business English presentations, such as being nervous, lack of time control and lack of fluency in English speech.

For areas of improvement, both English major and non-English major participants needed further improvement in oral expressions, preparation of presentation content and psychological preparation. English-major participants also needed to improve group cooperation. Non-English-major participants needed to improve interaction and engagement with audience and language preparation. The results of this study agree with the findings from Tkachenko (2014), which indicate that both English major and non-English major participants require extensive assistance and guidance in preparing and making business English presentations

For contributions to language learning, English major participants credited language improvement, mainly in oral English and vocabulary through practice. They also improved trade knowledge, confidence and thinking skills, communication and career scope. Non-English major participants improved their oral English and listening skills. They also improved their written English and reading skills, interest and confidence, business knowledge and practice abilities. More than 60% English major participants and more than 80% non-English-major participants recognized the positive effects of the teaching materials on business English presentation competence development. The results of this study extend the previous research of Wang and Wang (2013) for additional competence and benefits related to business English presentation.

### **How business English teachers effectively design business English presentation tasks and activities in the Chinese university context**

For business English presentation topics, both English and non-English major participants considered that money and finance as the most difficult topic and Chinese company introductions as the easiest. These findings may be unique with the English major and non-English major undergraduates in this Chinese university while Evans (2013) in his study has generated more context specific preferences for business English presentations.

For helpful teaching activities, both English and non-English-major participants mentioned group cooperation and practice-based activities such as simulation. For English-major participants, they also valued correspondence, vocabulary and syntax learning. They also valued video-based learning, oral English activities, answering questions, information search and news learning. For non-English major participants, they also mentioned language activities, answering questions and interaction in class, news sharing and extended reading, Chinese company introduction and out-of-class learning activities. The findings of the study empirically support the effectiveness of integrating practice-based approach (Spötl, 2009) in developing business English presentation competence by incorporating various practice-based pedagogical elements.

For additional teaching activities, English major participants suggested more oral activities and practice, including simulation, role plays and student questioning. They also needed more guidance on presentation, vocabulary and teacher feedback. Non-English-major participants recognized the comprehensiveness of the curriculum for developing business English

presentation competence. They also needed more oral practice and communication, including role plays and games. Other activities included English movies or videos, self-guided learning, guidance on preparation of writing materials and teacher feedback or reflection. Frendo (2005) particularly indicates that for improving language skills for presentations, business English teachers should give guidance on “signposting, rhetorical language, emphasizing, rhetorical questions, metaphors, anecdotes, intonation, stress and chunking” (p.71).

For suggestions for curriculum improvement, both English-major and non-English-major participants needed more presentation activities and resources, oral activities and additional language-based instructions. Non-English-major participants also needed more elite demonstration, self-guided learning and platforms, instruction on business English contests, and current and practical topics. The presentation resource books of Luo and Shi (2010), Rueckert and Gu (2012), and Chihiko (2011) have provided such resources as examples, expressions, topics and sentence patterns in business English presentations for Chinese learners.

## Conclusion

This study reports on an investigation about the English major and non-English-majors' needs about making business English presentation, the effectiveness of the practice-based approach and the learning outcomes in developing presentation competence, and suggestions to better design business English presentation tasks and activities. The study found that both English-major and non-English-major participants needed to make English group presentations more frequently. Moreover, both groups needed to make more efforts in interacting with audience, making speeches orally and using visual aids, including charts and tables. In addition, English major participants faced challenges in oral expressions as well as psychological and material preparation. Non-English major participants faced more psychological challenges, as well as challenges in preparation of presentation content. Thereby, business English curriculum can address the challenges by providing more oral English input and presentation materials. Both English and non-English major participants also thought they needed more improvement in oral expressions and presentation content, though less than one third perceived that they did a good performance in business English presentations, which contributed to language improvement. The materials in the curriculum had positive effects on presentation competence development. Both groups had similar perceptions that they needed more efforts on the presentation topics of finance and money, and less efforts in Chinese company introductions. Both groups suggested group activities, and oral activities, including simulation and role plays were helpful. They also needed more presentation activities, guidance and practice-based activities, as well as teacher feedback to further enhance their presentation competence.

Theoretically, this study makes contributions to the pedagogical knowledge about business English presentation competence development based on empirical evidence. Practically, this study informs the design of tasks and activities of business English presentation in the overall business English curriculum in the Chinese university context. For policy, the results of the study inform curriculum standard development for business English presentation competence cultivation. Though the limitations of the study lie in that it was conducted in only one Chinese university context, the research process can be replicated in other cultural contexts. Future research can explore more diverse approaches for presentation competence development in diverse educational settings.

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