

Training Model for Professional Language Service Competence: A Case Study with Sports English Service Talents

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Abstract. Language service competence is central to language service and is the basis of professional language service talents training. Although the demand for professional language service talents increases dramatically in various fields in China, studies on professional language service competence have been quite limited, thus affecting the training and supply of professional language service talents. In view of this, this study first discusses the definition and componential contents of professional language service competence, and on that basis, takes Sports English service talents as an example to design a training model for professional language service competence. This training model, combining on-campus education and off-campus practice, can promote the development of professional language service competence in an efficient and holistic way. The training effect shows that the training model works well and the students who have received training can meet the demands of various language services in sports field. It is hoped that this study can provide some enlightenment for further research and training of professional language service competence.

Keywords: professional language service competence; sports English service talents; training model; training effect

1. Introduction

In recent years, as cross-cultural communication between China and the world has been developing rapidly, the demand for language service talents has been increasing dramatically in various fields accordingly. The training of language service talents has drawn the attention of both education practitioners and industry professionals, and much research has been done on the training of professional language service talents. Liu H.P. [1] suggests that the cultivation of language service professionals in the new era needs the cooperation among administrative authorities, business, universities and research institutes, and can be implemented through cooperation with industry by inviting corporate experts into classroom and by reforming teaching content, pedagogy and assessment methods. Shao Z.M.Z., Sun H.Q. and Chai M.J. [2] analyze the situation of language service in foreign cultural trade, and propose a market-oriented model for language service talents training. Yu J.S. and Geng S.S. [3] study the methods of training practical talents for language services based on webpage localization competition for cross-border e-commerce. Although these studies provide useful information on the training of language service talents, language service competence - the core part of language service and the basis of professional language service talents training - has far from being investigated adequately. Besides, higher education institutions need to explore efficient training models for students' language service competence to meet demands in various fields. In view of this, this study, by referring to the need of professional language service talents in China, first discusses the definition and componential contents of professional language service competence, and on that basis, takes Sports English service talents as an example to design a training model for professional language service competence. It is hoped that this explorative study can provide some enlightenment for further research and training of professional language service talents.

2. Professional Language Service Competence

Wen Q.F., Su J. and Jian Y.H. [4] divide foreign language capacity into three layers: national foreign language capacity, citizens' overall foreign language capacity and citizens' individual foreign language capacity. Professional language service competence belongs to the third layer, namely, citizens' individual foreign language capacity. Professional language service competence is a competence related to the field it serves, such as law, medicine, aviation, sports, etc. Talents who provide professional language service need to receive education on language knowledge and skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating or interpreting as well as cross-cultural communicative knowledge and skills to develop their language competence, they also need to learn and acquire professional knowledge and skills to develop their comprehensive ability at the same time. In many Chinese higher education institutions offering foreign language education programs usually take advantage of the resources in their specialist fields, such as sport universities, petroleum universities, universities of political sciences and law, to offer students with courses on professional knowledge of a specific field in addition to foreign language courses. Foreign language students thus educated are called as foreign language talents with mixed abilities, interdisciplinary foreign language talents or compound foreign language talents. As compared with students with general language skills, students with mixed abilities would find it easier for them to meet the requirements of language services in specific fields.

As the demand for language services is becoming more complex in this changing world. The meaning of competence has long surpassed the mere combination of knowledge and skills, and is becoming more complex too. It is an "ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through the mobilization of psychological prerequisites (including cognitive and non-cognitive aspects) and as the internal mental structures in the sense of abilities, dispositions or resources embedded in the individual in interaction with a specific real world task or demand". [5] It is "more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills; it involves the mobilization of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet complex demands". [6] In addition to the psychological conditions, language service professionals should also have good physical conditions when providing services in certain contexts such as in sports events.

Based on the above analysis, professional language service competence can be defined as a competence to provide language service for information transmission in a specific field. This competence is composed of three core modules: "language competence, professional competence and psycho-physical competence. Language competence includes bilingual/multilingual knowledge, cross-cultural communicative competence, service domain-specific knowledge, language service skills; professional competence includes profession-specific knowledge, knowledge of professional norms, and ability to use technologies; psycho-physical competence includes problem-solving and interpersonal communicative ability, ability to manage emotion, concentration and creativity, and other related abilities". [7]

Training Model for Professional Language Service Competence of Sports English Service Talents

2.1 Professional Language Service Competence of Sports English Service Talents

Training of sports language service professionals has been a much-researched area since 2008 when Beijing won the bid to host the 29rd Olympic Games. In order to provide excellent language services for people and parties attending the Games, the Organizing Committee set up the Office of Language Services of International Relations Department to manage language services including the recruitment and training of translators and interpreters, and language service volunteers, the setup and operation of language call center, and the application of language service technologies, etc. [8] Since then, providing excellent language services for international sports events has been a standardized practice in China. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for higher education institutions. In response to the increasing demand of language service talents in sports field, programs dedicated to the training of sports foreign language (mainly English) talents have been

offered in some higher education institutions in China, such as Chengdu Sport University, Beijing Sport University, Shanghai Institute of Physical Education, and much research has been done on the training of language service talents. [9-11]

With the rapid development of sports industry in China, more language service professionals are needed for cross-cultural communication in sports business, sports recreation and tourism, sports culture, and sports events. The language services they provide usually include: bilingual/multilingual service including reception, sign-in service, translation of bidding documents for sports events, translation of completion manuals and rules, liaison interpretation, news press interpretation, and other miscellaneous tasks. To meet these job requirements, sports language service professionals need to be equipped with not only bilingual/multilingual knowledge, cross-cultural communicative competence, service domain-specific knowledge, language service skills, but also with knowledge specific to sports, knowledge of sports norms, and ability to use technologies as well as problem-solving and interpersonal communicative ability, ability to manage emotion, concentration and creativity, and good psycho-physical conditions as well.

2.2 Design of the Training Model

Sports English Major Program of Chengdu Sport University started in 2002, with the aim of training English language service talents for the rapidly developing sports industry by means of competence-based education. Combining the education of English language and sports knowledge, the program has the distinct feature of English + sports and has trained more than 1700 talents in the past 20 years. Many graduates work with government sports agencies, sports clubs, sports associations, etc., playing an important role in promoting cross-cultural communication in sports field between China and other countries. In September 2019, the “Opinions on Promoting National Fitness and Sports Consumption to Promote the High-Quality Development of the Sports Industry” issued by the Central government of China proposes the goal of developing sports into a pillar industry of the national economy. Sports tourism, sports events, and sports consumption are gaining new momentum of development. Correspondingly, the need for sports English service talents has presented new trend in both form and contents. In view of the changes, we started to reform the major program in 2019, aiming to improve the overall quality of language service talents by designing a on-campus education and off-campus practice coordinated training model and new curriculms.

Fig.1 illustrates the new training model for Sports language service competence. This model takes advantage of both on-campus education and off-campus practice, aiming to develop students' language service competence, thus enabling students to learn the most cutting-edge knowledge, skills and technologies for language services in sports field. Students' language competence, professional competence and psycho-physical competence develop step by step as the training runs continuously from primary level through intermediate level to advanced level. The training plan is implemented as the follows. In the first academic year, students receive only on-campus education, for at this stage, their main task is to acquire primary language knowledge and skills including English reading, listening, speaking and writing, and general sports knowledge, so as to lay a foundation for their further training in the following years. In the second and third academic year, on-campus education and off-campus practice run in parallel. On-campus education aims to develop students' comprehensive language knowledge and skills, especially translation and interpretation, cross-cultural communication to the intermediate level. Meanwhile they attend a series of courses specific to sports language services, such as English for Sports Events, Interpreting and Translation in Sports Events, and Viewing, Listening and Speaking for Sports English, etc. to acquire sports vocabulary, sports discourse knowledge and related skills as part of their preparation for both off-campus practice and professional competence. Off-campus practice is an extension of on-campus education, and operates in the form of project-based learning (PBL), in which students volunteer for real sports games such as 3X3 Basketball Games, World Dance Sports, the Chengdu 2021 University Games, or work as interns with sports enterprises or agencies. Off-campus practice

serves as a means to examine students' learning effect of on-campus education on the one hand, and integrate students' competences in different modules on the other hand, thus enabling them to develop professional language service competence in a more efficient way. This parallel operation mode runs until the 4th academic year, when students receive training for advanced language competence and professional competence including advanced translation and interpretation skills, sports language service project management, sports news writing and broadcast, etc. On average, each student participates in sports games or enterprise practice for 4-5 times every year (off-campus practice has been affected to some extent by Co-Vid19 pandemic in the past 2 years). In both on-campus education and off-campus practice, students' psycho-physical competence develops at the same time as instructions on work ethics and norms, interpersonal communicative skills are continuously given by teachers and off-campus practice assistants, thus making them become more mature and adaptable to professional language service demands.

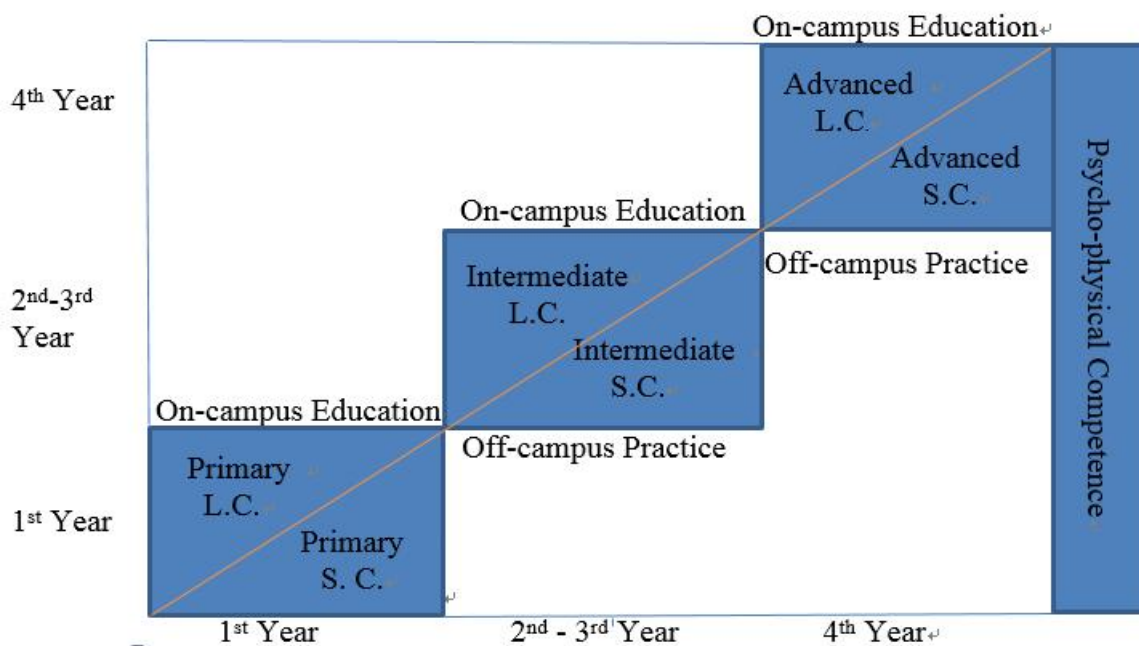


Fig. 1 Training model for professional language service competence of sports English service talents

(Note: L.C.=Language Competence, S.C.=Sports Competence)

2.3 Holistic Development of Sports Language Service Competence

In the above training model for professional language service competence of sports English service talents, students' language service competence is in constant progress. "progress" here has two meanings. First, each module in sports language service competence, namely, language competence, sports competence and psycho-physical competence, develops from lower level to higher level over time as the training continues throughout 4 academic years. Secondly, these competencies interact and integrate with each other in the training process, and eventually become students' overall language service competence.

To promote the integration of the competences in the three modules and make students develop professional language service competence in a more efficient way, teachers design sports-specific teaching contents and simulation activities in on-campus education with foci being on different aspects of sports language service for students of different levels, such as sign-in service, bilingual/multilingual liaison service for students of primary level, translation of competition manuals, translation and announcement of competition results, news writing and broadcast at competition arenas for students of intermediate level, and consecutive or simultaneous interpretation at news press for students of advanced level. All students attend language service activities from primary level through intermediate level to advanced level. By attending both

on-campus education and off-campus practice, students' language competence, sports competence and psycho-physical competence integrate continuously and develop in a holistic way. Eventually they become sports language service professionals. This process can be illustrated by Fig.2

3. Training Effect

The training model for language service competence of Sports English service talents started in Chengdu Sport University in 2019 and has been running smoothly. Three grades of students, namely, Grade 2019, Grade 2020 and Grade 2021 have received training from it. In order to provide students with more opportunities to take part in off-campus practice, we have established 28 off-campus practice bases, and signed a long-term contract with Chengdu Sports Administration to provide sports language service support for international sports events of various types to be held in Chengdu, which has set the goal of building itself into a world famous city for sports events. Students have so far provided language service for such games as 3X3 basketball games, World Dance Sports, Triathlon World Cup, World Taijiquan Elites Competition, the Chengdu 2021 University Games (which is postponed to 2023 due to the impact of Co-Vid19), etc. Assessment on the training effect is conducted in the middle and the end of each semester. Our analysis on students' language service performance based on collected data, students' feedback and enterprises feedback show that those students who have attended the training program have excellent performance at workplace, and can meet complex demand of various language services in sports field.

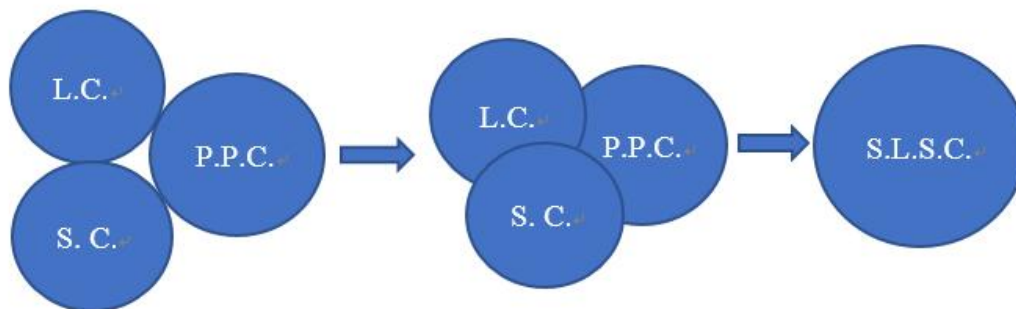


Fig. 2 Holistic development of sports language service competence in the training process.
(Note: L.C.=Language Competence, S.C.=Sports Competence, P.P.C=Psycho-physical Competence, S.L.S.C.=Sports Language Service Competence)

4. Conclusion

Offering competence-based education is the ever-lasting goal for higher education institutions. To meet this goal, higher education institutions should keep up with the times in this rapidly changing world. In this study, we have analyzed the definition of professional language service competence and its componential contents, and on that basis developed a training model for language service competence of Sports English talents, which can develop students' professional language service competence in an efficient and holistic way by combining on-campus education and off-campus practice. Students who have attended the program can meet the complex demands of various language services in sports field. We hope this study can provide some enlightenment on similar training programs for language service talents in other fields, who are increasingly needed for cross cultural communication in China as the All-round Opening Up and Reform policy, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Leading Sports Nation Construction strategy, etc. are advancing vigorously.

Acknowledgements

This study is supported by 2021 Chengdu Sport University Teaching Reform and Research Project Grant No. 2021YJG02.

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