

Effects of WebQuest Learning to EFL Learners' Performance: Online Concordance to English Business Course

Hung-Chun Yang¹, Pi-Ching Chen²

¹ Instructor, Department of International Business, Chang Jung Christian University, Taiwan

² Professor, Department of International Business, Chang Jung Christian University, Taiwan

Abstract: *This paper aims to vitalize the marketing course for students with tertiary education, and the major method is the application of modern technology from search engines to social media. That means the learning process varies from textbooks to websites, and the role of the teacher turns from knowledge transmission to mental inspiration. The course for this research, Business Power-point Presentation by English, is offered at one university in southern Taiwan for one semester with 2-hour per week. Twenty-eight students of English as a foreign language (EFL) are divided into eight groups. The research adopts two perspectives, grouped and personal performance within four-stage of time, including Stage 1 (Week 1-7), Stage 2 (Week 8 for mid-term exam), Stage 3 (Week 9-17), and Stage 4 (Week 18 for final exam). The participants suffered a lot before Stage 3 since they hardly can achieve the goal to make complete power-point presentation with thorough conceptions to on-site missions caused by time limit. Dual burdens by time restriction and language obstructed students' performance; completing the jobs and manifesting English PPT on-time are unfamiliar to most of Taiwanese students. Most of them lack the similar training before the course; manipulating English, not their mother language, for finishing works in due time can frustrate these EFL learners. In fact, most of the students could not finish the tasks before Stage 3. Tense aura and English operation incite students' pressure, so they have to conquer these two burdens while selecting this course. The course and the pedagogy are new to teacher and students; the analysis and the results are based on teacher's personal observation with statistical data. Anyway, the relative data afford positive thinking to the application of the technology for the teaching since most of the students improve their abilities on marketing, PPT presentation, and English skill, and the teacher enhances perspectives through searched data and students' opinions and perceptions as well. WebQuest teaching not only stimulates students' potentials and teacher's capability but also can be considered as a possible method to build the connection between business field and tertiary education; which should strengthen students' competence and favour industry's manpower.*

Keywords: *Marketing, Tertiary education, Technology, EFL learners, WebQuest*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the teaching of business courses for the tertiary education is still same as the past but with something different: the same goal to enhance students' competence for future competition but with more intricate and

advanced methods to improve the training. The dramatic renovation and invention of modern science and technology trigger the tremendous change on the pedagogic mode from traditional textbook and visit; except teachers can shift the actual scenarios from exterior to interior in few seconds, “all participants considered social network including WebQuest to be very efficient ... for improving the academic performance.” [1] The mobile convenience should be contributed to the popularity of websites as well as consumer electronics since which enable us with feasibility and shorter time to access diverse resources without high expense comparing to the past. Regarding this new model of teaching, we always entitle it as the WebQuest learning mode; which is considered as “an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information used by learners is drawn from the Web.” [3] The WebQuest has emerged as a prime meaning of engaging students in constructive web-based learning activities. The more involved a student is in the teaching learning process, the more knowledge he or she will obtain.

The WebQuest-based flipped classrooms with modern assistance overwhelm teachers’ job from knowledge transmission to idea inspiration. The 21st Century is an age of “Edutainment” where students want to be entertained when obtaining knowledge. [7] The WebQuest, happens to fit into the Edutainment Age, motivates students and can be on any subject and any topic. In spite of some disadvantages while conducting WebQuest instruction for education, Rhynard summarized five advantages: (i) students are directed to web sites whose primary focus is information to be used in the WebQuest, (ii) the objective of the research is in constant view, (iii) the amount of information is limited, (iv) information is reliable or interesting, and (v) students may start or stop at will and always locate the information sites. [8]

Although the WebQuest style dominates the business courses, the style also favors some other courses with the demand of changeable data. According to some literature review and data, many courses, especially the linguistic acquisition, often obtain remarkable achievements by WebQuest. But since the main purpose of this paper is seeking better pattern for upgrading students’ enthusiasm, ability, and creativity on business activities for future job application, this research only focuses on the practices and results on one business course by WebQuest in one Taiwan southern university in the 2016 semester with a total of twenty-eight enrollments; this course is eligible to all of the students of the faculty. The results can manifest the features of the learning as well as the performances and students’ reactions.

1.1 Source of Students

Due to the request of full practices by English in classroom, all the students come from the program of International Finance and Business Management (IFBM) of this university; IFBM students are in obligatory to develop the learning sole by English for their complete study career in this university. All the participants are freshmen and/or sophomores with one or two semesters’ learning on some so-called core and/or fundamental courses relevant to business field; they are not newcomers and with comprehensive minds to engage with virtual activities for their

learning in academy. Their familiarity, or perception, is beneficial to the course learning; therefore, all the IFBM students are eligible for selecting this course.

1.2 English Proficiency and Subgroup

Even though each student is obligated to extend courses by English, the proficiency ranges differently among students. This problem can obstruct the development of classes but without affecting the process seriously; which can be ascribed to the subgroup design. Considering of grades and peer pressure, most of the students try to collaborate with group members by asking help or spending more time on self-learning.

1.3 Computer Laboratory

Weekly group discussion with implementation of team-based assignment is one of the important features of this course; both of teacher and students rely on the assistance of computer to present and share data and/or works. Except one computer for each group, students can also utilize their mobile phones, laptop, Tablet PC, and/or other consumer electronics for searching data; these scientific products are indispensable in this classroom by the factor of academic research.

1.4 Scheme and Pedagogy

Considering of actual demand of business market, the styles of PPT for learning are divided into two fields: one for commercial and one for business articles. The differences between these two types are quite different; the former one requires attention on the developments, reasons, and slogans for the commercial, the later one cares more on the trend and the prediction unspecified from the reports. The distinct gap of the two modes can be concluded that the PPT of commercials concerns with the marketing effect, and the PPT of articles concerns with the scholar and analysis. But, of course, the audiences of these PPTs should be regarded as the board and/or the customers of the companies; this implies that the convinced skill is one of the talents to be observed and instructed by the teacher.

All the commercials and articles were selected and provided by the teacher right at weekly class time, Thursday morning, since which should be able to trigger students' fast response with thinking for real business preparations; time pressure is common in business field. Viewing the commercials in the classroom from each group's computer, they only had 25 minutes to discuss the content by PPT from the brief introduction of weekly products, the plots of the modified or innovative commercials, the slogan, the effects or the reasons for the revised commercials, the conclusion, and even the music for the commercials. They must learn to determine directions for development and arguments to persuade within the limited time; this not only rely on English proficiency but also the teamwork through brainstorming process

Assuring of well-trained and well-organized talent on research and analysis to business trends, the PPT for articles was at personal disposal and uploaded before PM20:00 each Sunday night instead of rush conclusion soon after reading; which means that students had three days for reading, seeking, and reviewing all the background and

relevant data before mounting their own PPT with prudential and refined structures. The teacher, therefore, has to select diverse topics which might affect future business types and/or situations; this can broaden students' thinking with sharp observation on business for conducting decent proposals in the future.

There's no standard answer to weekly assignments, no matter the commercial or the article, since business world is changeable and can be varied in an instant. Thus, students must articulate their advantages of commercials or grounds of analysis; the pedagogy opens up a creative door with demand to defend their works and ideas. Variety is typical in business world; the workable explanations govern the availability of business ideas and methods.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Business faculties always encounter the dilemma about the integration of academy and reality for those relevant courses, and obviously, the interrelationship between the two fields has to be connected through identical origins. In the real world, the information technology plays the role "as Information Technology Outsourcing (ITO) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)," [2] for entrepreneurs, consumer electronics and search engines access diversified creativities through different perspectives; academy can also apply the same pattern for monitoring and stimulating students' potential without gap from actual business world. The course, *Business Power-point Presentation by English*, aims to build the curriculum with diverse subjects through multimedia technology; which ensures the simultaneous process for essential business activities as well as more involvement "in a hands-on training" [10] for students, so the practical maneuver with better achievements can be expected through the multimedia technology.

Achieving the performance expected, the course should be characterized by scheme, integrity, assessment and efficacy. Thus, weekly search by teacher with the information-bias technology must be done beforehand for updating supply of information; which means the teacher must select different and refreshing subjects for not to fatigue and entertaining students with renewal issues and knowledge each week. The process is similar to the WebQuest Writing Instruction that teacher has to provide weekly topics with tasks or problems introduced for participants' thinking and modifying. This requires the browse of data on commercials and news reports; the selections from them can expand the visions with independent, creative, and even evolutionary thinking disregarding of existed versions of commercials and ideas. The teacher has to play the role of mentor, not only a teacher, so the advanced data collection with sophisticated realization and thinking is required; the teacher must equip with business ideas and experiences while applying technologies for enhancing students' competitiveness with practical suggestions.

The WebQuest pattern can access the "important student-based information about their interface with the learning process," [6] and establish the crucial database as references for further teaching of similar business courses as well as draft workable process for further teaching of similar business courses for students with tertiary education. The

application of outsourcing electronics and academy website seems to be a good method to provoke students' autonomy on learning, which is an important index for observation. Dodge claims that WebQuests should contain six parts at least [4] as follows:

1. An introduction that sets the stage and provides some background information.
2. A task that is doable and interesting.
3. A set of information sources needed to complete the task.
4. A description of the process the learners should go through in accomplishing the task.
5. Some guidance on how to organize the information acquired.
6. A conclusion that brings closure to the quest, reminds the learners about what they've learned, and perhaps encourages them to extend the experience into other domains.

The scheme of the course for this research coordinates with the idea:

1. The teacher encourages students to utilize computer, communication, and consumer electronics since modern businesses also rely on modern science.
2. Contemporary students are always interesting in motion pictures with sound, and this course allows the vivid process in classroom.
3. The teacher selects the weekly commercial and article for re-edition or modification with the instruction of demand with relevant database for students.
4. The teacher informs the necessary elements for the assignments, and with corrections or suggestions of unqualified assignments.
5. The teacher, also a businessman, articulates and adjusts the assignments on content and order of PPTs for monitoring the realistic scenarios in business field.
6. The teacher always informs the skills taught in the classroom through virtual practices, including elements of PPT, convinced talents, brainstorming process, creative thinking, slogans, can be applied to business industry directly. The teacher also recommends the style to apply for other business courses, especially those ones relevant to organization, implementation, advertisement, Research and Development (R&D), and marketing.

This course can be regarded as a practical business battlefield; business firms are not academies and without the patience and obligation to train the new employees. Considering of business demand, this course focuses on activities more than theories; WebQuest learning mode favours the enhancement of this course.

3. METHODOLOGY

Assuring of students' autonomic learning and team-based assistance, the assignments can be divided into grouped and personal jobs weekly. During the first stage (Stage 1), from Week 1 to Week 8, both kinds of assignments should be discussed in the classroom but only the grouped assignment has to be delivered to some campus interaction

website and with presentation in the classroom soon after discussing for twenty-five minutes. The assignments are based on YouTube and/or Website business news reports; academic computers and personal tools from laptop, communication, to consumer electronics can be utilized for searching data within limited time.

If any groups fail to deliver the PPT to the designated channel on academy website, then they won't obtain scores for this part. Achieving the goal to train each student and ensuring personal effort during discussion for the grouped assignments, each one must be on the stage together with their own members and responsible for partial presentation each time no matter with or without successful delivery of PPT up to the website. The personal assignments must be delivered onto the academy website before PM20:00 each Sunday night.

At Stage 1, most of the students are unable to finish the job alone; some groups even cannot upload their PPT on-time and with unqualified contents, from grammar, form, to slogan. Encouraging students' wills on learning, each student can earn one point from grouped and personal assignments, respectively, disregarding of the quality of their works. The criteria on this stage cannot be too rigid since most of the students are still unable to grasp the correct development of presentations for commercials and business articles. Steering away from wrong style, teacher has to instruct how to make the correct presentation as well as indicate the errors in their works; teacher has to demonstrate the wrong points on commercials soon after presentations while displaying the incorrect ones on homework, the PPT for articles, right at the start of each class. Guiding to better jobs with training, teacher can afford some proposals to immature or hasty content; if students offer great arguments to defend, extra one score can be marked as encouragement. Both Table 1 with Chart 1 and Table 2 with Chart 2 show the learning scenarios in the first learning stage (Stage 1).

Table 1: Personal Performance at Stage 1

	Qualified	Unqualified	Failed	Invalid
Week 1	4	18	0	6
Week 2	4	20	0	4
Week 3	5	15	5	3
Week 4	5	8	11	4
Week 5	6	19	0	3
Week 6	6	15	4	3
Week 7	6	16	0	6

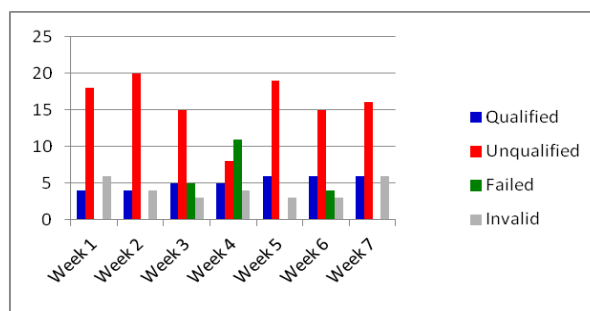


Chart-1: Personal Performance at Stage 1

Blue color means the content of assignments are qualified with demand, red color are unqualified ones even though uploaded on-time, green color means failed to upload, gray color are students without acknowledgement to upload caused by absence. Table 2 and Chart 2 indicate that most of the students failed to adjust content even though with correct instructions during each class.

Table 2: Group Performance at Stage 1

	Qualified	Unqualified	Failed
Week 1	1	4	3
Week 2	1	5	2
Week 3	1	7	0
Week 4	3	3	2
Week 5	3	2	3
Week 6	3	5	0
Week 7	3	3	2

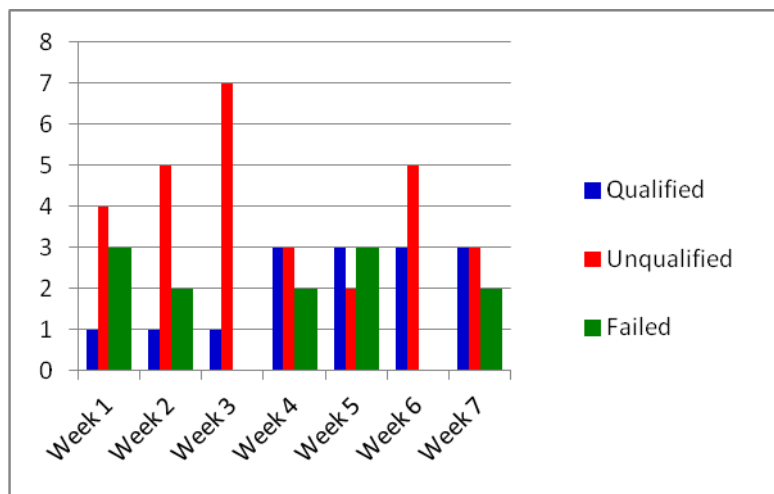


Chart-2: Group Performance at Stage 1

The subgroup model affords students the chance to develop their jobs with diverse perspectives and creations within the limited time. And even though there had few absent students, each group still can develop their works; which makes this chart without the groups marked “invalid”. Most of those groups, who failed to upload the PPT, were the ones with more absent and/or later-arrival students; the scenario corresponds with the conclusion about the positive interrelationship between presence and performance after learning.

Since most of the participants failed to output qualified ones at Stage 1, the frustration and stress reigned over them; which worried the teacher that they might flee since this is an optional not obligatory course. But, maybe acquainting with the involvement between the course and future business career, they stayed and strived to

conquer problems and inconsistency. According to observation, their major problem is that they were not craving enough to improve own abilities from faults and insufficiency indicated; the shortage of autonomic learning troubled and worried the teacher. Once if most of the students could not obtain sufficient knowledge and skills, the processes of the presentation, deserved to learn from this class, the effort would become vain and the pedagogy would result in unsuccessful achievement. Avoiding the dreadful destiny, the adjustment of the course, especially the scoring system, must be done right away.

Before dramatic change on the course learning, participants were required to join the mid-term exam. The teacher expected better, not satisfied, performances since students could repeat practices with well preparation; all the topics for the exam were from the assignments at stage 1, they obtained individual subjects by lucky drawing. But, it seemed that they were not ambitious enough to review all the topics with mastery presentations, or the time was too short for them to think and finish the work. Anyway, their mid-term performances were not good. Chart 3 shows that personal performance in Mid-term exam week (Stage 2).

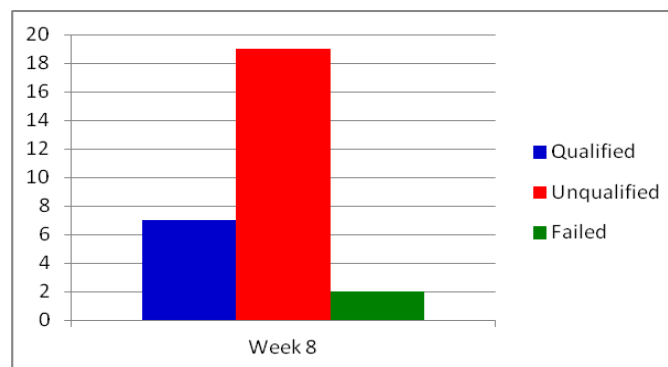


Chart-3: Personal Performance at Stage 2

Due to the time consideration, the mid-term exam shrunk the time limit to ten minutes with requirement of personal presentation; even though the topics are not new to them, most of them failed to upload qualified content. The result enforced the teacher's stamina to amend the criteria of the score for heightening these EFL learners' impetus and performances.

The teacher adopted strict regulations to assignments for provoking sense of danger. First, the unqualified content would lead to 0.5 point minus. Second, failed to upload assignment would get one point minus. Third, failed to join group discussion would not get the score for grouped assignment no matter with or without presence in the classroom.

The unqualified performance for the mid-term exam and the above methods drove most of them to active learning with amendments from errors and ask aid. The distinct gap between Week 9 and 10 can be seen from Table 3 and Chart 4; which manifests the fact that those students still can be upgraded within very short term once if with very strong impact and motivation.

Table 3: Personal Performance at Stage 3

	Qualified	Unqualified	Failed	Invalid
Week 9	7	19	1	1
Week 10	15	12	0	1
Week 11	15	8	4	1
Week 12	15	8	5	0
Week 13	17	6	5	1
Week 14	18	5	5	0
Week 15	20	5	3	0
Week 16	20	6	2	0
Week 17	20	6	2	0

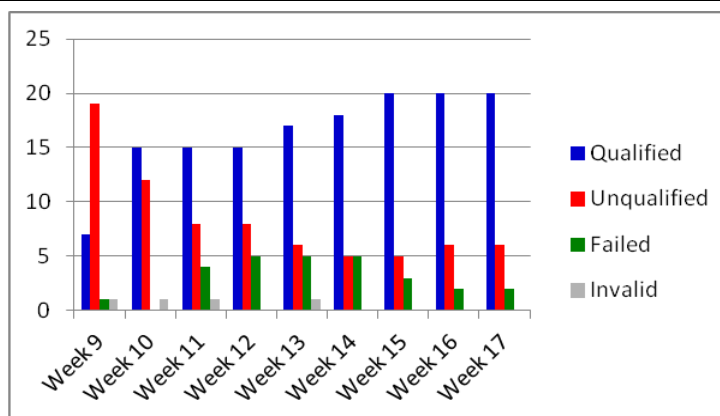


Chart-4: Personal Performance at Stage 3

Except Week 9, the qualified assignments occupy the majority of each week’s performance; the overwhelming result articulates the influence and crucial effect of autonomy. It is a pity that not all the participants understood that, or we can say that they didn’t enjoy the learning process. That is another issue we should concern since the WebQuest does not mean the panacea.

The similar condition can be seen from the start of Week 9; the qualified presentation from each group can be seen easily. Although some students were not qualified enough, they still could contribute effort to build better performance, from PPT to on-stage presentation, with the aid of the rest members of the group. Stage 3 clarify and identify the practical functions of the subgroup model; when some participants were still unable to finish the assignment with satisfaction, they could learn and improve themselves through the assistance of group members. Emphasizing time limit and quality requirement, none of the group members can be away from participation during the classroom time; discussion with data searching are necessary steps for all of them. Besides, none of them wanted to leave the sweet fruits to those ones who wouldn’t join discussion.

Table 4: Group Performance at Stage 3

	Qualified	Unqualified	Failed
Week 9	6	2	0
Week 10	6	2	0
Week 11	5	2	1
Week 12	7	1	0
Week 13	7	1	0
Week 14	5	0	3
Week 15	8	0	0
Week 16	8	0	0
Week 17	7	0	1

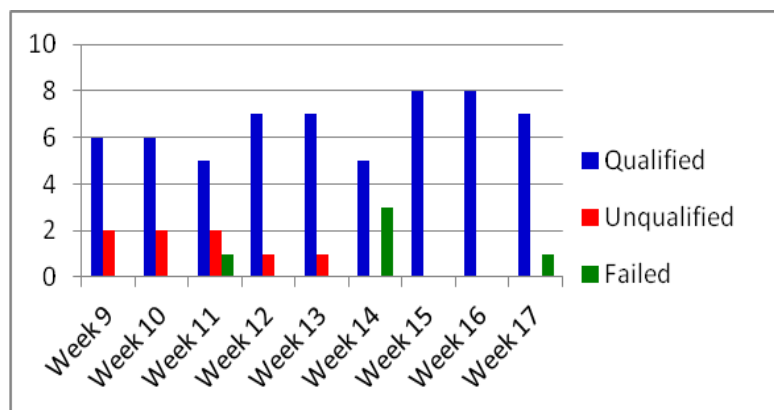


Chart-5: Group Performance at Stage 3

Students started to access the knacks of the presentation and the creation, 25-minute limit was no more a barrier to most of the participants most of the time. But, sometimes when they insist on displaying the best work, they didn't pay sufficient attention to the time limit. The reverse result on their performance can be seen from Table 4 and Chart 5, which comforts the teacher and sticks on the same modified method on the scoring criteria.

From Chart 5, we can also understand why “the flipped classroom suggests that multimedia lectures be recorded” [5] since students would like to put much effort to review their own works after unsuccessful performance during mid-term exam. Although the teacher didn't ask students to take films for their own presentations, some would like to ask others to record for them, including the critics from the teacher to their grouped presentation. The effective achievements by the recording trigger the teacher's idea about the necessity of weekly recording for the similar business courses; except recording, the transmission of their presentation onto popular social networks, like YouTube or Facebook, may be able to encourage them to have better performance while the films can be seen publicly. Chart 6 shows personal performance in final exam week (Stage 4).

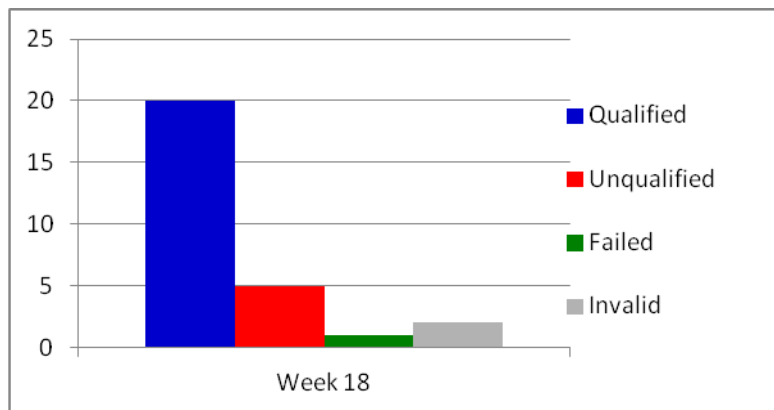


Chart-6: Personal Performance at Stage 4

Even though most of the participants realize the importance of the skill, and the teachers' stamina as well, some students still don't want to pay attention to the course. To the teacher's surprise is that two students failed to join the final-exam caused by some neglect. These two students belong to the "invalid" category in Chart 6. It is also frustrated to learn that few students still failed to engage their ability to the course; they don't appreciate the chance of learning.

4. CONCLUSION

The research exhibits the useful effects of the WebQuest learning; or we should clarify that mode is workable to most of the students since "Computer and internet have encouraging and authentic effects on learning" [9] through vivid and even interactive illustrations and sound. No matter we accept or not, we must admit that modern consumer electronics have strong effect and attraction to most of the students comparing to the lectures by teachers. In fact, teachers do not have to compete with those modern entertainments since they can also play the principal roles of the classes after schemes by teachers. These electronics should be considered as partial of contemporary business world; their identical contribution to the consumption incites more manufacturers to have strong will to cooperate with or to utilize them. While transmitting modern knowledge for business, the social media and relevant technology cannot be neglected.

The WebQuest style, especially the application for business courses, makes teachers be more like the managers or consultants of companies; this means that teachers have to provide critical thinking with real linkage to modern business. Assuring of better development, business courses should consider the participation of some businessmen and businesswomen. The teacher for the above research is a businessman, so there's no involvement of others from business world.

Due to the time, energy, and some other reasons, this research doesn't consider the English proficiency and the personal autonomy while developing the methodology; this should be revised once if with the similar research by others in the future. Of course that if with many parameters for research, some useful software, like SPSS (Statistical

Product and Service Solutions), and scientific method, like ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), should be applied for more rigid database.

But, regarding the practical paradigm about the development of future researches, more strict plans with discussions on perspectives and methods should be drafted.

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