

# Research Status and Frontier Evolution of Domestic Business Discourse Between 2000 and 2020

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**Abstract:** With the increasing of international business activities, studies of business discourse have attracted more and more scholars' attention, many papers about business discourse have been published in the past two decades, and the research topic of business discourse shows an interdisciplinary development trend. In order to figure out the research status and frontier evolution of domestic research about business discourse, 312 research papers collected in CNKI are selected as the research object in this paper. Since the research object is relatively large, a visualized analysis software CiteSpace is used in this paper to analyze these published papers by drawing knowledge maps in several aspects including authors, institutions, keyword clusters, hot words, etc. Through these maps, the research status including quantity of published papers in each year, authors and organizations of published papers, research hotspot, as well as the frontier evolution in three periods can be summarized. Finally, some suggestions are given for the future business discourse research at home according to both the research status and frontier evolution. (1) The research of business discourse should be more interdisciplinary in the future. (2) The research on Business English should be further strengthened. (3) The text types of business discourse are more abundant.

**Keywords:** Business Discourse, Research Status, Frontier Evolution

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## 1. Introduction

Business Discourse is all about how people communicate using talk or writing in commercial organizations in order to get their work done [1].

Although in recent years, research on business discourse has attracted much more scholars' attention in China, there is still a gap both in quality and quantity of published papers between China and foreign countries. Chinese scholars mainly focus on two forms of studies: one is teaching-related business discourse studies and the other is business discourse analysis based on linguistic theories. Although some Chinese scholars have conducted literature review study of business discourse before, there are still some limitations since their research purposes and research perspectives are different, some scholars focus on the research of business discourse analysis methods, while others focus on the research of a specific branch of business discourse. In general, literature review study of business discourse research in China is

relatively lack.

Since business discourse is an interdisciplinary study that involves linguistics, English teaching, cross-cultural communication, management and so on, it is necessary to analyze the research of business discourse in China by doing literature review. In order to sort out the development of business discourse studies in the past 20 years more efficiently and intuitively, CiteSpace will be used in this paper to fully present the research status, hotspots and frontier evolution of business discourse research in China from 2000 to 2020.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1. Research Object

Papers about business discourse analysis collected by CNKI from 2000 to 2020 are selected as the research objectives in this paper. In CNKI, advanced search is conducted with "business discourse" as the key word, the

document retrieval time interval is set to be 2000-2020, and the search language is Chinese. After removing all irrelevant papers, a total of 312 business discourse-related papers were obtained as research objectives.

## 2.2. Analysis Method

Since the research object in this paper is relatively huge, it is both difficult and not accurate to analyze all these papers by ourselves. As a result, CiteSpace will be used in this paper to analyze the above 312 papers from the CNKI. CiteSpace is a software researched and developed by Dr. Chen Chaomei, which is applied to various fields such as science and information technology. Through the intuitive knowledge map, it shows readers the hot spots, research progress and cutting-edge direction in this field [2]. It can generate graphs such as author co-occurrence knowledge graph, institutional co-occurrence knowledge graph, keyword clustering knowledge graph, keyword co-occurrence network clustering table and keyword emergence node vocabulary graph which is useful for research status and frontier evolution analysis.

## 3. Research Status

### 3.1. Quantity of Published Papers in Each Year

Business discourse related-papers published in CNKI from 2000 to 2020 were accounted in this paper. Figure 1 shows the number of published papers in each year. Since the first paper published in 2002, a total number of 312 literatures on domestic business discourse research have been retrieved by 2020, of which 47 are CSSCI, and 53 are published in the core journals of Peking University. After 2011, the growth momentum was more obvious, from less than 10 articles

before 2011 to 21 articles in 2011, the number of published articles in 2015 and 2016 reached the peak, and then showed a slight tortuous downward trend. This trend reflects the positive development trend of the research on business discourse in the past decade, indicating that it has gradually attracted the attention of Chinese experts and scholars.

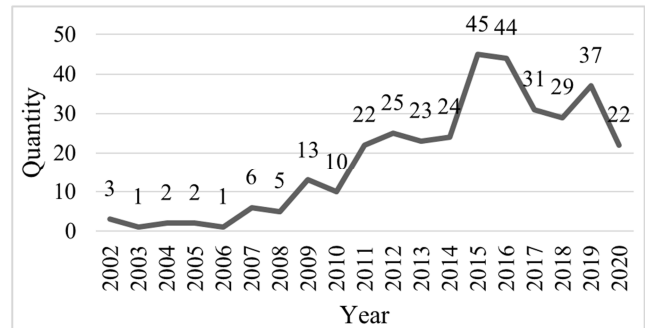


Figure 1. Quantity of Published Papers in Each Year.

### 3.2. Author and Organization of Published Papers

By setting the Node types to Author, the time span to 2000-2020 and the time slice to 1 year in CiteSpace, the business discourse research author co-occurrence knowledge graph is shown in figure 2. It is found that the number of nodes is 273, the number of connections is 88, and the density is 0.0024, which shows a relatively scattered graph network, and the connections between author nodes are mainly concentrated in the area centered on Lifei Wang, indicating that the authors cooperate closely in a small area, but there is less cooperation between authors in the whole field, and many authors still conduct research by their own.

CiteSpace, v. 5.7.R3 (64-bit)  
February 23, 2021 8:07:07 AM CST  
WoS: C:\Users\Administrator\Desktop\商务话语2000-2020\data  
Timespan: 2002-2020 (Slice Length=1)  
Selection Criteria: g-index (k=25), LRF=3.0, LBY=8, e=2.0  
Network: N=273, E=88 (Density=0.0024)  
Largest CC: 12 (4%)  
Nodes Labeled: 1.0%  
Pruning: Pathfinder  
Harmonic Mean(Q, S)=0



Figure 2. Author Co-occurrence Knowledge Map.

By setting the Node types to institution, the time span to 2000-2020 and the time slice to 1 year in and running CiteSpace, a co-occurrence knowledge map of business discourse research institutions with 219 nodes, 45

connections, and a density of 0.0019 is obtained (Figure 3). According to the map, there is a relatively scattered cooperation between different institutions. Only a few institutions have cooperation, such as the cooperation among

University of International Business and Economics, Beijing International Studies University, and Shanghai University of Finance and Economics. In addition, there are also

cooperative relationships within the same university, such as the cooperation between different colleges within the University of International Business and Economics.

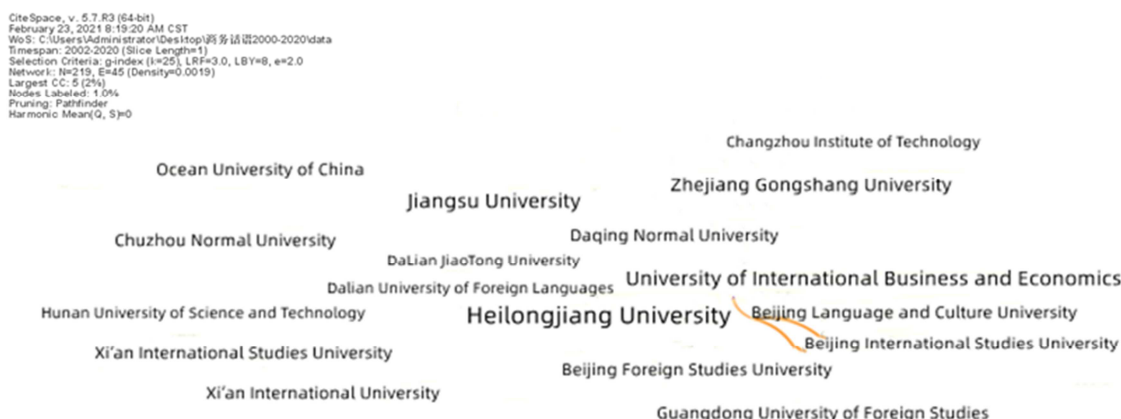


Figure 3. Institution Co-occurrence Knowledge Map.

### 3.3. Research Hotspot

Research hotspots are research issues or topics discussed by a relatively large group of papers with internal connections within a certain period of time. Keywords and noun phrases with high frequency are usually used to represent hotspots in a certain research field.

Figure 4 shows the keyword clustering knowledge map of business discourse research. From the parameters of the atlas,

the Modularity (Q) value is 0.3739, and the Mean Silhouette value is 0.9451, both of which are within a reasonable range, indicating that the clustering effect of this study is significant. The keyword clustering knowledge map in Figure 4 reflects the hot topics of business discourse research in China, including 'Business English', 'business discourse', 'compliance', 'business negotiation', 'meta-discourse', 'discourse analysis', 'modal', 'image construction', 'second person pronoun', 'discourse markers' and 'CEO'.

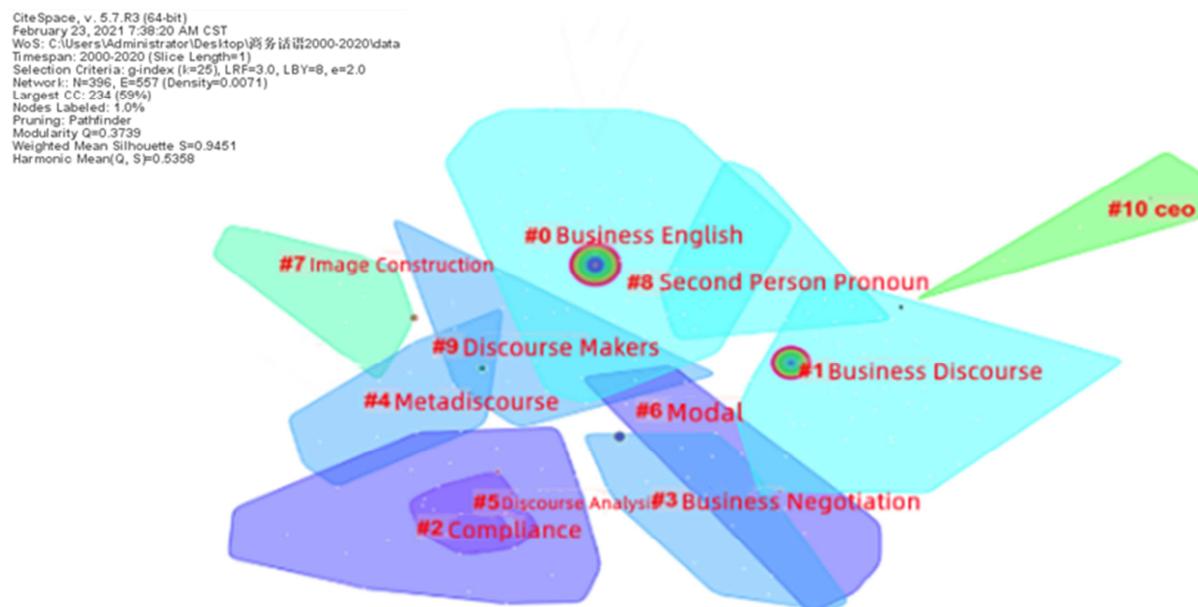


Figure 4. Keyword Clustering Knowledge Map.

Based on the keyword clustering knowledge graph, select 'Summarization of Clusters' in the 'Clustern' menu bar to obtain the keyword co-occurrence network clustering table. Combined with the keyword clustering knowledge map in Figure 4 and the keyword co-occurrence network clustering table, it can be found that some clustering contents have

overlapping phenomenon. Therefore, the research hotspots of business discourse in my country from 2000 to 2020 should be summarized into four categories:

(1) Hot spot 1: Research on Business English teaching

The co-occurrence markers of hotspot 1 include business foreign language, public English, special English, etc. In 2006,

the Ministry of education opened the undergraduate major of Business English, which promoted the discussion and research of experts and scholars on Business English. Under the hot spot of Business English research, scholars mostly study Business English major, Business English teaching methods, curriculum, Business English talent training and so on. In terms of discipline construction of Business English, Lifei Wang and Can Cui pointed out that researchers should have interdisciplinary thinking and the study of Business English will be further integrated with other disciplines in the future based on the interdisciplinary nature of Business English [3]. In addition, researchers should look for the intersection and entrance between linguistics and other disciplines, and strive to integrate the views of different disciplines. Lifei Wang, Hailing Ge and Qingran Wang put forward the necessity of constructing the theoretical system of Business English Linguistics in 'on the construction of the theoretical system of business discourse linguistics', and constructed this theoretical system from four aspects: definition, theoretical framework, core theoretical viewpoints and research focus [4]. The construction of this theoretical system is of great significance for the construction of Business English discipline and the cultivation of Business English talents. Lingli Duan and Yaling Xu analyzed the pragmatic basis of Business English from four aspects: the origin and development of Business English, speech act research, politeness and face theory research and pragmatic competence research, and predicted the pragmatic research trend of Business English [5]. Xiaoguang Li built corpus by himself, which provides support for the construction of Business English professional discourse and the cultivation of Business English professional discourse practice ability by analyzing the lexical features in the Business English corpus [6]. In terms of Business English talent training, Xingsong Shi pointed out the cross-cultural communication skills that international business people need to have by using cross-cultural communication theory, and put forward suggestions on the optimization of Business English talent training mode [7]. In terms of teaching and curriculum exploration, Wenchao Su, Defeng Li and Yuanjian He found that although many universities have offered the course of Business English translation and there are many Business English translation textbooks, they have not reached an agreement on the definition of Business English, they sorted out the connotation and extension of Business English translation by collecting and sorting out 31 Business English translation textbooks, so as to provide help for the curriculum and textbook development of Business English translation [8].

#### (2) Hot spot 2: Research on cross-cultural business communication

The co-occurrence markers of hotspot 2 include business negotiation, business communication, business letter, business translation and so on. Research under this hot spot focuses on business communication and communication studies in different cultural and linguistic contexts. Qun Xie and Yue Zhan believe that the process of business negotiation is an

interactive process to achieve economic goals [9]. They combed the research process of foreign business negotiation discourse in detail, and looked forward to the research trend of domestic business discourse. Although the current research on domestic business negotiation discourse is lagging behind domestically, with the increasing frequency of international business exchanges, the research on domestic business negotiation discourse will further develop in quantity and quality, and the research results will be more applied to business practice. Hongwan Shao qualitatively analyzes the real corpus of business negotiations and explores how better recognize and use different discourse strategies to achieve different communicative purposes from the perspective of Martin's positive discourse analysis theory [10]. Libo Wu analyzed the discourse in business negotiation from three aspects: contact, social distance and attitude in business negotiation under the framework of multimodal discourse analysis to help negotiators better use multimodal discourse to conduct business negotiation [11]. Good business communication is inseparable from the translation of business texts, and the quality of translation directly affects the economic interests of all parties. Therefore, many business translation understandings and related scholars in the translation community have conducted heated discussions on the translation standards of business texts. Huijuan Ma pointed out that due to the complexity of business texts, the traditional translation theories of 'faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance' are not specific enough to guide the practice of business text translation, and their translation standards are diversified [12]. Wen Bao found out by reviewing the research results of business translation in my country in recent years, although western translation theories provide references for the translation of business texts in my country, because most western translation theories serve literary translation, which cannot directly guide the translation [13].

#### (3) Hotspot 3: Research on the Linguistic Characteristics of Business Discourse

The co-occurrence markers of hotspot 3 include meta-discourse, modal words, second-person pronouns, discourse markers, and rhetoric. The characteristic of this type of research is to use linguistic theories or frameworks to analyze the textual features of business discourses. Lin Li took the functional linguistics evaluation system as the theoretical framework in 'Corps-based Business Discourse Evaluation Modeling Research' by selecting a self-built corpus of enterprise risk discourse, and extracting the evaluation markers used by CEOs [14]. A structural equation model is established to examine whether different types of evaluation markers can directly and effectively reflect the risk perception of corporate CEOs. Hui Li built two corpora by selecting American corporate Business English speeches and Chinese student Business English speeches, and used a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis to analyze the similarities and differences in the use of discourse markers in the two corpora, which provides guidance for business speech course design and learners' Business English speech [15]. By using the Wmatrix tool for EPC, Lifei Wang and Daorong Wen

annotated and summarized the distribution characteristics of its semantic category in 'A Corpus Investigation of the Semantic Category and Part-of-Speech Distribution Characteristics of Business English Contracts' [16].

#### (4) Hotspot 4: Research on Business Discourse and Enterprise Economic Value

The co-occurrence identifiers of hotspot 4 include risk cognition, enterprise performance, image construction, win-win and so on. The focus of this type of research is to unearth the function and role of discourse in economic activity and corporate governance. This type of research mainly analyzes business texts using different theories and perspectives, such as genre analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis. Multimodal business discourse analysis is an important hot spot in business discourse analysis in recent years. Its theoretical basis is mainly Halliday's systemic functional linguistics and Kress and Leeuwen's visual modality and auditory modality theoretical framework. In recent years, there has been an endless stream of studies using multimodal theory to analyze business texts. Yinyan Yao and Xiaoyan Chen conducted a multimodal analysis of an enterprise's image TV advertisement, and discussed how a company uses visual and auditory modalities to build its corporate image [17]. In terms of genre analysis, Lifei Wang and Fang Han selected 40 annual reports of listed companies in China and the United States to build two corpora, and used the method of language wheel analysis to analyze the realization of discourse in Chinese and English annual reports [18]. Critical discourse analysis is also widely used in the analysis of business texts. In terms of critical discourse analysis, Juyuan Li first introduced Bakhtin's theory of intertextuality, and used the theory of critical discourse analysis to analyze the hegemonic

relationship implied by intertextuality by analyzing drug advertisements [19]. In 'Critical Cognitive Analysis of Enterprise Development Reports in China', Li Lin established a critical cognitive analysis framework including critical metaphor analysis theory, concept synthesis theory and approximation theory. Wei Feng and Dongying Wu compared the discourse anti-construction effect of the Sina official blog fans of the state-owned Bank of China and the joint-stock China Merchants Bank on the bank's corporate identity, and came to the conclusion: the language of enterprises in the context of new media. The use of identity construction should pay special attention to the anti-construction effect of dialogue audiences [20]. The analysis of business text based on corpus is also favored by many experts and scholars. In the paper 'Exploring the Cross-cultural Adaptation Level of Chinese Enterprise English Websites Based on Corpus', Xingsong Shi and Xiaohui Shan took the business discourse of Chinese and American financial enterprises' English websites as the research object, and used corpus tools to conduct quantitative statistics and business discourse analysis to compare the cross-cultural common characteristics of different languages and the possible cultural differences between the homepage websites of financial enterprises in different countries, and discussed the cross-cultural adaptation level of Chinese enterprises' English websites [21].

## 4. Frontier Evolution

Frontier evolution refers to the emerging theoretical trends and emerging topics of research. Since the samples in this study were all from CNKI, only the emergent words were analyzed, and the CiteSpace software was run to obtain 18 node emergent words with high emergent values (as shown in Figure 5).

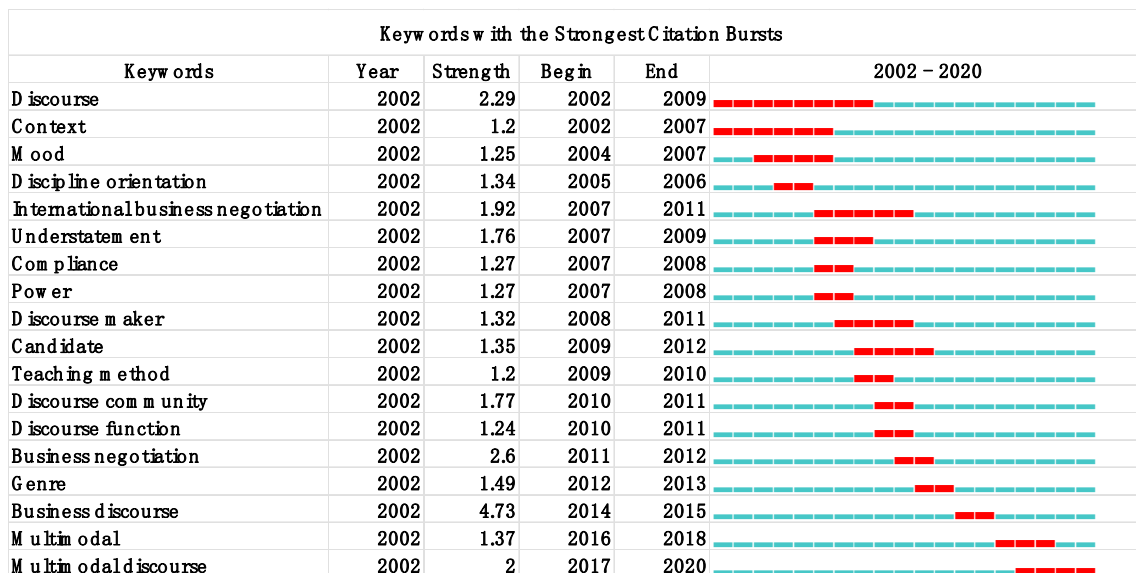


Figure 5. Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts.

#### (1) Early research frontier

The early fronts emerged from 2002 to 2006, and the research fronts in the field of business discourse at this stage

mainly focused on 'discourse', 'context', 'tone' and 'discipline orientation'. Early research on business discourse mainly focused on linguistics and teaching. University of



International Business and Economics has a leading position in the teaching of Business English, and its Business English theory research group defines Business English as the subject of English teaching activities carried out under the guidance of English for Specific Purposes theory. They affirmed that this subject with applied and interdisciplinary significance has existed for a long time and will be further developed. At the same time, they also clearly pointed out that the core concepts and basic viewpoint systems in Business English classroom teaching still need to be exploratively refined and summarized. Zuo Cheng Zhang and Yan Wang once proposed in the article 'Definition of Business English' that the study of Business English cannot be completely separated from business activities and simply talk about language, and must comprehensively consider the basic knowledge of business-related disciplines, English language, business operations management knowledge and practical skills, cross-cultural coping with various factors [22]. In this way, Business English has a clearer definition. Scholars from various other institutions have also begun to attach great importance to the construction of related disciplines of Business English. Luya Xu (2005: 83-87) pointed out that the current Business English classroom of Minzu University of China The teaching of Business English is still in its infancy [23]. From the perspective of register, he has carried out multi-faceted research and analysis on the connotation and scope of Business English, and proposed that Business English is a comprehensive interaction of three fields, tenor and mode. At this stage, many experts and scholars realized that Business English is a complex, interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary major, and also affirmed the importance of business discourse theory and business discourse practice, but the research focused on the theoretical exploration stage and the discipline construction stage, the exploration of business discourse practice, especially the lack of analysis of business texts.

## (2) Frontiers of mid-term research

The emergence of the mid-term fronts was from 2007 to 2010, and the research fronts in the field of business discourse at this stage mainly focused on 'international business negotiation', 'low-key presentation', 'compliance', 'power', 'discourse markers', 'test takers' and 'teaching model'. In the mid-term, business discourse research in China has expanded to the business research field on the basis of the early linguistic research field, and gradually reflected the characteristics of business discourse practice and discipline integration. In the field of linguistics, research mainly focuses on Business English teaching, discourse analysis and so on. In the field of business, scholars mostly use discourse theory and real discourse analysis methods to deeply analyze the real words and materials that appear in the business environment of enterprises. Most of these studies are widely used in enterprise management, business communication and human resources. Its purpose is to help enterprises better realize business communication and the survival and development of enterprises through the study of discourse. In addition, due to the development of foreign trade, more and more enterprises

are going out, so cross-cultural business communication and negotiation has become a hot research topic at that time. Experts and scholars are actively conducting research on business negotiations, business communication, business letters, business translation, etc., in order to better help companies to go abroad. In the field of teaching, scholars are actively exploring new teaching models and applying them to business discourse-related teaching, trying to cultivate talents with strong Business English pragmatic and practical abilities.

## (3) Latest research frontiers

The latest frontier emerged from 2010 to 2020. The research frontiers in the field of business discourse at this stage mainly focus on 'discourse community', 'pragmatic function', 'business negotiation', 'genre', 'business discourse', 'multiple modalities' and 'multimodal discourse'. From the emergence of keywords in the latest research fronts, it can be seen that in the past ten years, the research on business discourse in China has become more and more interdisciplinary and complex. In addition, the analytical perspective is also constantly innovating. Its perspective is no longer limited in vocabulary, syntax, and rhetoric, multimodality, genre analysis, critical discourse analysis, and corpus also provide new perspectives for the application and research of business discourse. The selection of business texts is not limited to business contracts, business speeches, business negotiations, etc. The annual reports of listed companies, social responsibility reports and business, advertising, president reports, business letters and government business outreach have also become the focus of analysis by many scholars.

Throughout the latest research frontiers in the past ten years, the breadth and depth of business discourse research in China have made great progress, and its development is of great significance to the teaching of Business English, talent training, corporate image construction and cross-cultural communication. In the field of teaching, the study of business discourse is of great significance to the development of Business English. In the future, the discipline orientation of Business English, the exploration of teaching modes and talent training will still be one of the focuses of scholars' research. In the field of business, the study of business discourse provides a reference for the internal operation management of enterprises and external communication with stakeholders, thereby helping enterprises to better build their image and realize economic interests.

## 5. Discussion and Suggestion

312 literatures selected from CNKI from 2000 to 2020 are analyzed in this paper. Great progress has been made in both quantity and quality of published articles in the past five years. By sorting out and analyzing the research on business discourse in China from 2000 to 2020, some suggestions can be made in this paper for the future research on business discourse:

- (1) In China, the interdisciplinary nature of business discourse research will be further revealed. The

research is inseparable from linguistic theory and management knowledge. On the one hand, researchers need to be proficient in business management, business communication, human resource management and other professional knowledge, on the other hand, researchers also need to have the ability to analyze business discourse using linguistic theories. At the same time, interdisciplinarity is reflected in the research results not only applied in business situations, but also in Business English teaching, cross-cultural communication and other fields.

- (2) The research on Business English will be further strengthened. This kind of research includes Business English subject construction, Business English talent training, Business English curriculum setting, Business English textbook development, etc. With the further in-depth study of business discourse by experts and scholars in the future, the construction of the Business English subject will be more perfect, which is reflected in the integration of interdisciplinary theoretical courses in the curriculum and the systematization of personnel training.
- (3) The text types of business discourse are more abundant. Traditional business discourse is mainly based on oral discourse and written text. With the advancement of modern technology, digital business discourse such as WeChat, Weibo, Twitter will gradually replace traditional emails, business letters, business speeches, etc. new direction.

## 6. Conclusion

With the help of CiteSpace, this paper makes a visual analysis of the relevant papers of business discourse collected in CNKI in China in the past 2 decades (2000-2020), so as to analyze the current situation of business discourse research in China from three aspects: the quantity of papers published in each year, the distribution of authors and institutions, and research hot topics. By analyzing the keyword emergence node vocabulary map of business discourse research, the frontier evolution of business discourse research in China is revealed.

Compared with western countries, China's business discourse research started late, but great progress has been made in China in recent years both in the quality and quantity of papers published. The study of business discourse in China originated from traditional linguistics and later extended to economics, management, cross-cultural and other fields, showing the characteristics of interdisciplinary and diversity, and great progress has been made in research methods and perspectives. However, generally speaking, the study of business discourse in China is still in the exploratory stage, and there is still a long way to go. How to better integrate the linguistic theory with the professional theory of business discipline is one of the key points of business discourse research in the future. This kind of interdisciplinary research not only helps to improve the talent training quality of

Business English majors in China, but also plays an important role in promoting the development of international trade in China.

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