

Probing University Foreign Language Teacher Development in the New Liberal Arts Era

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Abstract: *The development of the new liberal arts in the new era has led to increased demands on university English teachers and courses, posing new issues and difficulties. University English teachers must first concentrate on the objectives of the new liberal arts construction as well as the new positioning and development direction of university English courses in order to effectively address these problems and challenges. Only by doing so can they improve their professional attributes and core competencies. This article addresses how to promote the professional quality and core competencies of English teachers by addressing challenges in four areas: professional knowledge, information technology ability, academic capability, and improvement of self-awareness against the backdrop of new liberal arts. The study begins with the actual situation of English teachers in universities, and it offers some support for teachers' professional and personal development and establishes a strong basis for the advancement of the English language and the development of exceptional composite skills.*

Keywords: University English teacher, Teacher development, Teacher abilities, New liberal arts.

1. Introduction

In recent years, educational scholars in China have paid widespread attention to the ideological and political literacy of teachers; as essential practitioners of moral education, teachers' ideology influences the basic issue of 'for whom to cultivate people'. There are many studies on improving teachers' teaching abilities in China. The primary quality of teachers is a vital basis for education, determining the teaching quality of universities. Domestic scholars' research on the fundamental attributes of university teachers mainly focuses on teaching ability, learning ability, research ability, ethical literacy, etc. According to Sun Zhongjing (2023), there are a few issues with university teachers' ability to educate, including inadequate knowledge bases, a lack of excitement for the subject matter, a failure to take into account the needs of the students during instruction, and a lackluster system for evaluating instructional outcomes. Additionally, he suggested that university instructors should have a positive teaching attitude, consistently strengthen their professional basis, and develop their teaching skills. Furthermore, Qiao Yingying (2021) suggested that teachers' Internet teaching level be enhanced, the integration of technology and teaching knowledge be reinforced, and the path of teachers' professional development be expanded. This was based on research on the state of teachers' professional development following COVID-19.

International research on teacher professional development precedes that conducted in China. First of all, a number of academics had a tendency to concentrate on qualitative study, which included the thought of the theory, influencing variables, and other studies. For instance, according to Hoyle, a researcher specializing in the theoretical aspects of teacher professional development, teachers should acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for the professional practice process at every level of their teaching careers (Hoyle, 1980). Furthermore, a few international researchers carried out empirical studies on the existing state of teacher development and related teacher professional development tactics. For instance, Christofridou and Kyriakides examined practical ways to further promote teachers' professional development

and discovered that dynamic approaches could aid teachers in improving students' learning outcomes and strengthening their assessment abilities (Christofridou & Kyriakides, 2021). Subsequently, Moore et al. (2021) investigated the function of curriculum materials in the professional growth of teachers. They noted that curriculum materials (lesson plans, homework assignments, etc.) were an intricate and vital part of teaching and learning and that developing and adapting curriculum materials was frequently a component of teacher professional development initiatives. Furthermore, Adarkwah et al. (2021) examined the professional development of teachers in China, and they came to the conclusion that the hierarchical structure of China has benefited the university's teacher professional development programs because of China's customs and culture. The development of distinct and well-defined policies was a critical first step in putting the theme plan into action. The sustainability of teacher professional development was known to include attending academic conferences and other incentive techniques. When it comes to the use of electronic instruments to support professional growth for teachers in classroom research, however, renowned foreign scholar Stefan Hrastinski has come to the following conclusions: examining teacher videos in the classroom, examining external video resources, producing fictional animations as video supplements, organizing digital classroom learning activities, blending collaboration between teachers, and digital teacher collaboration were the six themes that should be engaged (Stefan, 2021).

The new liberal arts are being developed in response to societal demands, as opposed to previous disciplinary structures. Consequently, in order to study and address new problems and difficulties brought about by social development and reform, discipline growth must consider the characteristics of the current phase of social development and make use of cutting-edge concepts, methodologies, and theories. Applying the educational research achievements of the new liberal arts construction to national objectives and socio-economic needs may enhance higher education's capacity to produce students' comprehensive, innovative, and composite abilities. Given the current situation, the

foundation of foreign language education in China ought to be the creation of new liberal arts and the vigorous pursuit of new language development. The generation of new liberal arts is closely related to the development of excellent composite talents and the building of a top-tier faculty. Therefore, university teachers of foreign languages should be knowledgeable, engaged in ongoing research, and daring, innovative, and fearless in their work.

The first characteristic of new liberal arts is integration. While constructing the new liberal arts, the discipline's excellent and distinctive fundamental knowledge and research methodologies should be preserved, with the students at the center of development and elements of the times incorporated into the foreign language teaching system. This included new experiences, developments in disciplinary development, and social demands imposed by the times, all while consolidating students' knowledge and improving their language abilities as the foundation. Instead of referring to a mechanical combination of disciplines, the term "integration" of the new liberal arts refers to a combination of design and optimization, which encompasses the integration of modern information technology and other liberal arts disciplines.

The integration of traditional disciplines beyond disciplinary borders has been achieved, leading to the formation of new fields such as legal English, corporate English, and cultural translation, etc. This encourages the development of compound skills, or talents that are proficient in both language and ability and go beyond the bounds of traditional arts and sciences. It is crucial to define the tasks and responsibilities of each separate discipline within the interdisciplinary framework and to recognize the careful planning and unspoken cooperation that go into multidisciplinary research.

The new liberal arts' emphasis on growth is another characteristic. In addition to promoting the survival of the fittest in liberal arts fields and replacing outmoded disciplines with more contemporary ones that meet the needs of modern development, the emergence of new liberal arts has also encouraged the growth of traditional liberal arts majors or disciplines, fully capturing the characteristics of liberal arts majors changing with the times. Due to the promotion of "the Belt and Road" initiative, Area Studies has emerged as a new discipline at a number of schools and institutions. Teachers teaching foreign languages, by using the target nation's language as a tool, could conduct a thorough analysis from the viewpoints of politics, economics, and linguistics of the political, economic, trade, religious, cultural, diplomatic, and other concerns of many or one nation in a specific region along "the Belt and Road". New challenges and expectations have emerged for the professional knowledge structure, research quality, and instructional effectiveness of teachers. Therefore, in the period of newly constructed liberal arts, foreign language teachers need to constantly enhance the caliber of their study, keep up with professional developments, and encourage the advancement of specialized fields.

2. Growth Route

The development of new liberal arts curricula has repositioned foreign language teachers in higher education and given new meanings to talent development and

instruction. This has created new demands for these educators as well as new issues and difficulties for foreign language teaching and disciplines.

In addition to professional knowledge, abilities, and academic standing, the idea of teachers' professional growth also highlights the ability to use artificial intelligence, the Internet, and other cutting-edge scientific and technical tools to support teachers' creativity. The five prerequisites for the professional development of teachers are educational literacy, knowledge structure, teaching ability, technological ability, and academic ability. These needs are set within the framework of the new liberal arts.

2.1 Professional Knowledge

In this age of new liberal arts, becoming a qualified teacher requires both the ability to use information flexibly and the constant acquisition of new knowledge. One aspect of this era is the speed at which information technology is developing, necessitating a team of teachers that are adaptable, independent, and creative thinkers. Consequently, teachers must stay up to speed with current events and ensure that their body of knowledge is updated on a regular basis.

Teachers can actively boost their ideological construction, expand their professional knowledge, learn from exceptional teachers, pursue intelligence as a teacher, and engage in training and learning at different levels as well as international and domestic conferences to keep their knowledge structure up to date. The goal is to impart fishing knowledge as well as fishing skills. In order to effectively assist students in acquiring and understanding knowledge, teachers must not only prepare professional theoretical knowledge but also comprehend the knowledge level and acceptance level of their students as well as the whole teaching environment. Furthermore, in the context of the emerging liberal arts, university English teachers must not only reinforce their already acquired professional expertise but also integrate it with information from adjacent fields.

First and foremost, encouraging the incorporation of foreign language studies with other highly specialized professions is essential to the development of new liberal arts. In addition to having a strong foundation in their own field, teachers must acquire expertise in other fields, be adept at interdisciplinary learning, and have the ability to modify their methods of instruction to meet the needs of newly established majors or disciplines. A foreign language teacher will soon become obsolete if they exclusively teach one language. Second, integrating their career with other areas might assist foreign language teachers in becoming better researchers. In foreign language disciplines, projects or funds pertaining to a particular language category have virtually never been included in the lists of projects or money at the school, municipal, provincial, or even national levels. A multidisciplinary approach and knowledge framework are necessary to investigate a range of subjects in foreign language studies. The only way to investigate different English-related topics from a global viewpoint is to integrate one's own knowledge system with that of other disciplines. In order to continually maximize their knowledge structure through collaboration, teachers must actively explore

development routes, interact with teachers from other disciplines, acquire information from other subjects, and suggest the formation of or membership in interdisciplinary teams or groups.

2.2 Information Technology Knowledge

Nowadays, topics such as network intelligence, artificial intelligence, and digitalization are considered technologies of the future due to the speed at which science and technology are developing. It presents a challenge as well as an opportunity for humanities and social science majors. Foreign language teachers must adapt to the new liberal arts paradigm by updating their information technology (IT) skills, utilizing these new tools to further their professional development, and transforming IT into a tool that supports and propels both teaching and research. Acquiring new sophisticated information technology abilities is a challenging task for liberal arts teachers, who must first have a more open-minded and willing attitude toward new and innovative ideas.

Students and teachers now benefit from a multitude of internet venues that are readily available. By assigning assignments via these venues, teachers may increase the efficacy and efficiency of their instruction in the classroom before, during, and after class. English teachers need to be up to date with current events, be proficient in the newest and most sophisticated information technology, pique students' curiosity, and encourage them to explore on their own. They also need to act as mentors and guides for their students. Therefore, university foreign language teachers should first understand that, as new liberal arts are developed, enhancing their own informational and technological knowledge can not only help them update their forms and methods of instruction and enrich the content they teach, but also significantly contribute to the advancement of their field.

2.3 Academic Capability

The creative evolution of liberal arts education is emphasized in the building of new liberal arts, and this needs the support of scientific research. The primary goal of education reform, against the backdrop of the development of new liberal arts, is to foster highly precise and creative skills, which necessitates the development of students' capacity for scientific inquiry. Teachers must therefore first understand scientific research methodologies and be conversant with scientific research procedures. University foreign language teachers may only introduce students to novel concepts by daringly pursuing scientific study. In addition to improving instruction, teachers' inventiveness and contributions to scientific research are crucial for their own professional growth.

Academic papers and research projects are the primary mediums via which educators produce scientific research output. University English teachers produce fewer academic papers, are less motivated to conduct research, and have an inadequate understanding of research as compared to their counterparts in science and engineering. As a result, university English teachers must become more aware of scientific research, develop their research literacy, and collaborate with others. If not, neither their personal growth nor the general enhancement of the caliber of the faculty nor

the establishment of discipline would benefit from it.

It is by strengthening university English teacher research and academic literacy skills, actively engaging in research, applying for grants and research projects, and producing scholarly articles that they are able to respond to the new liberal arts' construction, foster innovation and academic exchanges, and advance and develop the study of foreign languages. They can only respond to the construction of new liberal arts, support the growth of foreign language disciplines, and facilitate academic exchanges and innovation by strengthening their research skills and actively engaging in research as the primary source of academic papers written in foreign languages.

2.4 Improvement of Self-Awareness

University English teachers should identify their own areas of interest and research concentration, define their academic goals and research trajectories, actively participate in interdisciplinary research alongside the development of new liberal arts curricula, and fully utilize their research potential. The focus of English language teachers nowadays should no longer be on traditional and single research. Research project themes need to be integrated with language-related subjects specific to China's local or national contexts. As a result, English teachers must regularly consider their deficiencies in scientific research and look into new avenues for investigation. Big data, for instance, may be used to investigate how English language instruction has developed. One can lessen their fear and difficulty with science by actively engaging in academic research and scientific research exchanges. They can also gradually become more familiar with the procedures and content of science research, always stick to their own scientific research, fulfill their dreams of doing scientific research, and assist disciplinary growth.

3. Conclusion

The construction of new liberal arts poses new tasks for university English teachers, who shoulder new missions and face new problems and challenges. Teachers can enhance their own literacy to cope with the problems and challenges that arise. In terms of professional knowledge, teachers need to constantly update their expertise, broaden their professional scope, use theory to guide practice, and actively carry out teaching reform and innovation. At the same time, enhancing information technology literacy, utilizing advanced information technology to assist and promote English teaching, making the teaching process and methods more efficient, and improving teaching effectiveness and educational quality. Lastly, and most importantly, English teachers in universities must enhance their research capabilities. Only by enhancing their research abilities and output can they achieve self-improvement and disciplinary development and achieve self-transcendence.

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