

Research on the Cultivation of Interdisciplinary Talents for Foreign Language Majors Against the Background of "The Belt and Road"

Shuwen Tan^{1,*}

¹College of Foreign Studies, Shandong Technology and Business University, Yantai, Shandong 264005, China

*Corresponding author. Email: tanshu.wen@163.com

ABSTRACT

With the in-depth development of the "The Belt and Road", the economic and cultural exchanges between China and the countries along the routes become increasingly frequent, but at the same time, there are also many problems, one of which is the language problem. Countries along the "The Belt and Road" have different customs and traditions, and their languages are complex and diverse. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate a group of interdisciplinary talents who can not only speak several languages including the local language, but also have professional knowledge to accomplish the work. In this paper, the author has a thorough analysis of the cultivation of the foreign language interdisciplinary talents in colleges and universities. This paper presents the current situation of interdisciplinary talent training mode, pointing out the existing problems and shortcomings, and then based on this, the author makes several suggestions to reform the interdisciplinary talent training mode. Against the background of the "The Belt and Road", Chinese Education Ministry has put forward new requirements for foreign language talents, thus this paper will discuss this issue from the following four aspects: the setup of foreign language majors, course construction plan, teachers training program, and on-line and off-line blended teaching to promote the university cultivating all-rounded foreign language talents.

Keywords: "The Belt and Road", college foreign language major, interdisciplinary talents

I. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid change of the international economic and political situation, after the "The Belt and Road Initiative" was put forward, people come to realize the importance of cultural development. As early as 1998, the Ministry of Education formulated the "Opinions on the Reform of Undergraduate Education for Foreign Language Majors in the 21st Century" (hereinafter referred to as the Opinions). The Opinions require foreign language majors to change the cultivation mode of only learning language or literature, and vigorously develop the cultivation mode of interdisciplinary talents who are urgently needed by the country and society. When China started the market economy, the cultivation of foreign language professionals need to get rid of the bondage of planned economy, so Opinions clearly pointed out that "due to the social demand for foreign language talents has changed, only mastering a single foreign language can not adapt to the needs of the market economy. Market demand on graduates who

major in language and literature is gradually reduced. Therefore, foreign language majors must shift from the single-subject 'scholar-style' talent training mode to the 'wide-caliber, application-oriented and multi-disciplinary' talent training mode.

Since the "The Belt and Road Initiative" was put forward, many countries have joined the "The Belt and Road Initiative" for common development. Countries along the "The Belt and Road" have diverse languages, such as India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan, which are along the Southeast Asia, and the five central Asian countries, such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Each of these countries has its own language and culture. In order to strengthen the ties with these countries, it is necessary to carry out sufficient cultural exchanges and trade exchanges with these countries, so a large number of interdisciplinary talents with foreign language majors are needed to engage in relevant work. Interdisciplinary foreign language talents should not only be proficient in one language, but also have relevant professional knowledge background, so that they can better meet the needs of social and economic development. At present, many foreign language majors in colleges and

*Project: Shandong Technology and Business University Youth Project (2015QN021).

universities put forward specific requirements for the cultivation of interdisciplinary talents, for example, Liu Jing (2020) proposed to build a new curriculum system for English majors, update knowledge content, urge students to participate in practical activities, and coordinate talent cultivation with local economic development[1]. Wang Wei (2019) proposed that under the background of "The Belt and Road", talents with "Professional Knowledge + Foreign Language + Comprehensive quality" should be cultivated[2]. These ideas put forward a feasible plan for the cultivation of inter-disciplinary talents, but in the specific implementation, it needs to be further implemented. This paper intends to discuss the cultivation of interdisciplinary foreign language talents from four aspects, including major setup, course construction, teachers training and blended teaching, in the hope of providing some enlightenments for the cultivation of interdisciplinary foreign language talents in domestic universities.

II. CURRENT SITUATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TALENTS TRAINING IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

Though China had promulgated the Opinions, the compound talent training model has not been truly implemented in the schools of foreign languages. The foreign language education and talent training program in most colleges and universities still follow the single talent training mode. Due to this fact, in 2018, the Ministry of Education promulgated the new National Standard for Undergraduate Teaching Quality for English Majors (hereinafter referred to as the Standard), which declared the end of the implementation of the mode of cultivating compound talents. The proposal of the "Standard" has aroused extensive discussions among experts and scholars in the Field of English, among which Professor Cai Jigang (2020) published an article questioning the termination of the interdisciplinary talent training mode and the implementation of the new teaching quality standard. He pointed out that the reason why the training mode of interdisciplinary talents has not been carried out is that the academic circles misunderstand the training mode of interdisciplinary talents[3]. Wen Xu and Si Weiguo (2018) argue that the cultivation of interdisciplinary talents is harmful to humanistic education, because the cultivation of interdisciplinary talents takes foreign language as a tool while ignoring the humanistic nature of foreign language courses, which will aggravate the vocational tendency and utilitarian tendency of higher education[4].

Because it is difficult to break the original "humanistic education" and "free and useless" and other ideas, many colleges and universities have not really implemented the training plan of interdisciplinary

talents. The traditional single teaching mode is still in the dominant position, and English majors continue to study linguistics, literature, translation and other traditional branches according to the original subject classification. Many colleges and universities still focus on the "scholastic" training for English majors, ignoring students' practical ability and communication ability. English teaching is still a traditional way for teachers to play courseware, videos and explain the text. There is a lack of communication and interaction with students, and it rarely provides a language environment for students to actively communicate in English. English majors still regard basic skills, such as "listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating", as the main tasks of English learning, and seldom get in touch with knowledge of other majors. The textbooks for English majors are not updated fast enough to include some of the latest language contents into the classroom. Many college English textbooks have not been updated for more than ten years, which is quite out of line with the rapidly developing economy and society. On the whole, the curriculum setting of foreign language major is backward, the course repetition is high, the teaching content is single, the double-qualified teachers are in serious shortage, and the teaching ability need to be further improved.

Most colleges and universities in China have set up English majors, but many colleges and universities tend to cultivate English majors in a general way, without giving attention to their own advantages and characteristics. Colleges and universities are important places to train talents for the national and local governments at all levels. In terms of major setting, many colleges and universities show regional characteristics, which are in line with the local economic and social development. Although different universities have different dominant majors and disciplines, it is not difficult to combine them with dominant majors in the cultivation of foreign language talents. Of course, many colleges and universities are aware of the importance of cultivating interdisciplinary talents. Taking Shandong University of Business and Technology, where the author works, as an example, Shandong Technology and Business University is an institution focusing on economics and management, so it also combines the English major with economics and management major. In recent years, the School of Foreign Languages of Shandong Technology and Business University has replaced its original English major with English (cross-border e-commerce) major, and cooperated with enterprises to jointly cultivate English majors. In terms of curriculum, Business English, Introduction to Economics and other courses have also been added. Due to the quality of interdisciplinary talents of students, the employment rate of graduates majoring in English (cross-border e-

commerce) is relatively high, which greatly meets the needs of employers.

However, due to regional differences, the modes of foreign language talent training vary greatly in different regions. Because many colleges and universities have not well connected the talent training with the social needs, leading to the English major college students face greater employment pressure after graduation. In fact, not only English majors are hard to find jobs, other minor language majors are also facing the same dilemma. Due to the development of social economy, English majors are facing more and more competition. If they have no professional skills except foreign languages, it is difficult to find suitable positions in the job market. So in order to solve the problem that employment and professional talent training do not match, the colleges and universities should continue to adhere to cultivate interdisciplinary talents, thus this article will focus on why universities should cultivate inter-disciplinary talents, and how to cultivate interdisciplinary talents from the perspective of major setting, course construction, teachers training and blend teaching, and put forward the corresponding suggestions to the reform, promoting the innovation of the university foreign language interdisciplinary talents training.

III. EXPLORING A NEW WAY TO CULTIVATE INTERDISCIPLINARY FOREIGN LANGUAGE TALENTS

At an executive meeting of the State Council in 2014, Premier Li Keqiang called for the development of current vocational education, calling for a group of undergraduate universities to transform into technology-oriented universities. Application-oriented university and academic-oriented University are two development models of colleges and universities in China. Application-oriented university aims not to acquire academic knowledge but to cultivate application-oriented and multi-disciplinary talents. However, application-oriented universities are different from vocational and technical colleges. Application-oriented universities mainly focus on undergraduate education and cultivate application-oriented talents with more solid professional and theoretical knowledges and stronger learning and work adaptability[5]. Application-oriented universities, academic universities and vocational and technical colleges are distinct from each other and complementary to each other, and together constitute China's higher education system. Due to the different classifications and purposes of running a school, all types of colleges and universities have formulated reasonable personnel training objectives according to their own positioning, and are able to flexibly adjust their professional characteristics and training programs according to the changes of policies.

In the current "The Belt and Road" construction advocated in China, the demand for interdisciplinary talents increases sharply. Taking foreign language talents as an example, foreign language talents should not only master the official language of the local country, understand the local customs and habits, but also master a professional knowledge, such as law, marketing, foreign trade and so on. For the training of this kind of interdisciplinary talents, we can start from the following four aspects:

A. Major setting

In order to meet the needs of the state to build high-level universities, institutions of higher learning should take the initiative to adjust the major setting and curriculum requirements to meet the needs of the state and regional economic and social development. Colleges and universities can set up new majors according to the requirements of "The Belt and Road", evaluate and adjust existing majors, and eliminate some majors with poor employment prospects that do not meet the needs of social and economic development. In the respect of recruiting students, a lot of colleges and universities are recruiting students according to discipline category gradually. After students enter the school, they first have one or two years of general education, and then according to the students' interests, they choose their own major based on the principle of two-way choice. Take School of Foreign Language as an example, these schools can offer courses of economic management, such as economics, management, marketing, etc. Political and legal courses are also be offered, such as political science, law, religion, etc. So do social history courses, such as sociology, philosophy, history, etc. In line with the university's characters, the foreign language majors can learn a language as well as a second profession. Most of the colleges and universities have set up schools of foreign languages since 1950s, with the development of society and economy, the popularity of English has been increasing. Students who can master both a foreign language and a profession are in great demand, however, most of these interdisciplinary talents are not cultivated by the schools of foreign languages due to the lack of interdisciplinary talent training mode. In the early stage of reform and opening up, China needed a large number of foreign language talents, so many universities set up foreign language departments one after another, which produced a large number of talents proficient in certain languages and made great contribution to the economic development of the society. With the in-depth development of reform and opening up, foreign language majors in many schools have grown rapidly and the enrollment has been increasing year by year. English major has once become a hot major in China. However, as time went by, the foreign language majors are losing their momentum. In terms of talent training, there are many

problems, such as lack of international vision, general education and narrow range of employment. If we focus solely on the professional training of foreign language talents, these students may have great achievements in foreign languages, but seldom get involved in economic, legal, political and other areas. This is also one of the reasons why the employment situation of foreign language talents is grim in recent years. Under the background of "The Belt and Road", if a foreign language talents were asked to negotiate the project contract and other issues, he/she may have no understanding of the project cost, design and construction, etc., thus leading to a deadlock in the negotiation. Some employers, when recruiting talents, prefer to choose a graduate who has merely passed CET-4 but is proficient in a certain field rather than a graduate with TEM-8 but no relevant professional background[6]. Therefore, in the construction of "The Belt and Road" in China, interdisciplinary talents are urgently needed. Therefore, application-oriented colleges and universities need to make drastic professional adjustment, merge similar majors, and provide relevant professional courses according to students' interests.

B. Curriculum construction

In order to respond to the call of "The Belt and Road", application-oriented universities should also need to establish new training objectives. In order to cultivate multi-disciplinary talents in foreign languages, a talent training mode of "foreign language + major" should be established. The curriculum setting is the core part of talent training, which reflects the knowledge and skill that students should learn. Therefore, in terms of curriculum setting, each university should break down the barriers, change the single and traditional curriculum system, introduce new courses, and make the curriculum setting more diversified. Take English majors in domestic colleges and universities as an example, the curriculum is mostly set around elementary English and advanced English, etc. In the first and second years, the goal is to cultivate students' ability of "listening, speaking, reading and writing". In the third year, students begin to learn English and American literature, linguistics, translation and other professional knowledge, the purpose of which is still to cultivate students' English ability. Such a training mode enables students to have great achievements in English, but they know nothing about other professional fields. Therefore, the scope of knowledge of students is relatively narrow. Many students think that if they learn English well, they will be able to find a job successfully upon graduation. However, this is not the case in reality. Many employers only use English as a communication tool, rather than professional knowledge. Therefore, students' knowledge of British and American culture or linguistics is seldom applied to work, which runs

counter to the goal of talent training in application-oriented universities.

Application-oriented universities should focus on cultivating "interdisciplinary" and "application-oriented" talents. These talents do not need to be proficient in a certain field, but they should have solid basic knowledge of their own major as well as dab in other disciplines to expand their scope of knowledge. Colleges and universities should set up diversified course modules for students to choose from. Taking the business English major of Shandong University of Business and Technology as an example, in their cultivation program, students should not only have basic language skills and language application ability, but also have solid knowledge of international trade and relevant application ability. In their four years in the university, students should not only study advanced English, English audio-visual language courses, extensive reading, but also learn about international trade practice, international finance, e-commerce and other courses. After graduation, students can be engaged in economic, trade, management, finance and other work, possessing the strong ability of interpersonal communication and cross-cultural communication ability, being able to stand out in the competitive job market. Under the background of "The Belt and Road", the curriculum construction of foreign language major should be carried out closely around the mode of "diversification, high standard and specialization", so as to truly cultivate high-quality talents to meet the needs of national strategic development.

C. Teacher training

Teaching staff is an important indicator for evaluating the strength of an institution of higher learning, so each university extends an olive branch to high-level talents and offers relevant benefits, paving the way for teachers to implement teaching and research. Under the call of building "double first-class" universities in China, all universities and colleges are introducing overseas doctors or young doctors from famous universities in China to enrich the ranks of teachers. Some universities in the "985" and "211" project will pay more attention to overseas study experience when introducing talents, which also reflects that teachers with international vision are more popular. In terms of foreign languages and literature, doctoral students who have returned from overseas universities have higher language proficiency, and their scientific research accomplishment is directly in line with the international standards. Their teaching effect is good and they are welcomed by students. Take The English major as an example, in the early stage of reform and opening up, most of the English teachers in domestic colleges and universities were localized and had little experience of studying abroad. However, with the development of national economy, China Scholarship

Council sends English teachers abroad to study every year, which is of great help to the improvement of teachers' language skills and teaching method. After returning home, these teachers will pass on the latest development and changes in the UK and the US to their students, and it will also play a great role in promoting the improvement of their English ability. Colleges and universities can also recruit well-known foreign scholars and professors to give lectures in China by establishing expert database of foreign teachers, and adopt the employing mechanism of combining fixed and part-time employment, long-term employment and short-term employment, so as to inject fresh blood and increase vitality into the school.

In addition to improve the professional ability of teachers, colleges and universities should also combine the career development with the school development. The future development of colleges and universities should be subject-oriented, so teachers should be encouraged to actively participate in the construction of subjects. Schools should organize teachers to communicate with foreign teachers, make full use of various educational resources, provide more opportunities for ordinary teachers to communicate with experts and scholars, and encourage teachers to break their own professional constraints and conduct interdisciplinary research. For example, in the past, teacher only focus on the study of the foreign language and literature, such as linguistics, American literature and translation theory, but as the increasing exchange with other disciplines, linguistics can also be used in medicine, sociology, psychology and pedagogy, this greatly expanded the denotation and the scope of linguistics research, helping teachers promote scientific study and enlarge the research field.

D. Blended teaching

In recent years, with the rapid development of online massive open courses, a large number of excellent online quality courses have appeared. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, China's Ministry of Education has opened 22 online course education platforms free of charge, providing about 24,000 online courses for students and teachers. In the spring semester of 2020, almost all higher education institutions as well as primary and secondary schools have implemented online teaching, which have achieved the expected teaching purpose on the whole. Due to the strict epidemic prevention and control in China, the situation has improved significantly. Schools at all levels have resumed offline teaching, but online teaching is still recognized as a useful complementary to traditional classroom teaching by many teachers and students. Therefore, it is necessary to implement a mixed teaching mode combining online and offline teaching. There are realistic reasons and historical reasons for the implementation of blend teaching. First of all, modern

college students are a new generation that has grown up with the rapid development of information technology. They are very skillful at using various online Apps and accustomed to online teaching. Second, after decades of construction, online teaching resources have already developed mature, and more and more teachers upload their courses, classware and teaching materials to the online teaching platforms. During the period of the COVID-19 outbreak, many teachers made fun of themselves as being "web celebrities", but many teachers also realize that the advantages of online classes have become more and more obvious, such as teaching tools, teaching effect and teaching feedback, which are convenient and handy.

IV. CONCLUSION

Under the nation's "The Belt and Road" initiative, it follows the trend of the time to cultivate versatile and high-level foreign language talents. The cultivation of interdisciplinary foreign language talents in colleges and universities should speed up the reform, fully understand the new standards and requirements of national policies and social development for foreign language talents, seize the good opportunities of the international situation, and take the lead in finding a new way to cultivate foreign language talents. Taking the School of Foreign Languages of Shandong Technology and Business University as an example, this paper introduces the reform and innovation of Shandong Technology and Business University in the cultivation of foreign language talents from four aspects: major setting, curriculum construction, teacher training and blend teaching. Shandong Technology and Business University is a comprehensive university mainly engaged in business and administration, and it takes wealth management as its development characteristic. In order to highlight the university's characteristics, it manifests the application-oriented advantage in cultivating interdisciplinary foreign language talents, the university adhere to the "wide scope, interdisciplinary, application-oriented" principles, so as to cultivate a group of graduates who can work in the areas of finance, management, marketing and so on. In view of the current situation and existing problems in the cultivation of interdisciplinary foreign language talents, this paper puts forward some suggestions and reflections in the hope of enlightening the reform and innovation of interdisciplinary foreign language talents cultivation.

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