

Exploration on the Construction of Comprehensive English Courses Empowered by Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract: The cultivation of foreign language talent currently faces a paradoxical situation: a scarcity of highly skilled professionals coexists with an oversupply of individuals with limited proficiency. In light of external skepticism regarding the value of foreign language education, this paper explores pathways for the development of English majors—particularly translation specialists—in the age of artificial intelligence (AI). Comprehensive English, a core course for translation majors, aims to develop students' five core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, thereby laying a solid foundation for advanced professional study. This teaching reform experiment considers how to align classroom instruction with national development strategies, facilitating a harmonious integration of smart and traditional teaching. The instructional focus extends beyond vocabulary and grammar to incorporate cultural underpinnings, methodological awareness, conceptual depth, and affective dimensions—prioritizing national identity within a global vision to build a knowledgeable and empathetic learning environment.

Keywords: artificial intelligence(AI); ability training; teaching innovation; curriculum design

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1. Preface

With the continuous progress of artificial intelligence technology, its application in the field of education is increasingly extensive, which has brought profound changes to the traditional teaching mode. Under the background of education informatization, the application of artificial intelligence technology not only changes the way we obtain and process information but also greatly improves the personalized level of education, especially in the field of English education, its application potential is particularly significant^[1].

AI, evolving from the concept of “Internet+”, the core of Internet+ is connection. It is like an information highway, connecting all industries to the Internet and allowing data to flow. The core of artificial intelligence + is activation. On the basis of connection, it equips all industries with a cloud brain, allowing the flowing data to generate wisdom. Simply put, Internet+ solves the problem of connection, while AI+ solves the problems of wisdom and efficiency after the connection. It is not intended to replace all industries, but to empower all industries. The same is true in the field of education. AI is not intended to replace teachers, but to empower high-quality education. Big data and artificial intelligence are important forces for the future transformation of higher education. By integrating data-driven intelligent tools, students can benefit from diversified resources and personalized support, and large-scale personalized learning will become a reality.

2. Ability training

The AI era is coming. The purpose of education is to adapt to the future development of society. The AI era will not be about quality-oriented education or exam-oriented education. The AI era will be about efficiency education. The essence of efficiency education is actually the conversion of learning ability. Can you convert information into knowledge? Can you convert knowledge into ability? You need to enter into practice to solve problems. Can you convert ability into creativity and reconstruct creativity? University courses focus on cultivating students' abilities and accumulating many abilities so that they can face the uncertainties of the future.

What kind of talents do we need in the AI era? First, building a complete knowledge system remains a foundation. Human-machine collaboration will be the norm in the future, but without a solid foundation of knowledge, we will not be able to effectively filter and optimize AI output. Therefore, we still need to continuously accumulate experience and knowledge, and strengthen our logical thinking and in-depth analytical skills. Second, creative thinking and the ability to ask questions are crucial. While AI can handle various standardized tasks, humans' advantage lies in high-level innovation. Asking valuable questions is far more meaningful than simply answering them mechanically. Third, the ability to master AI tools is standard, and people must possess AI literacy. In the future, it will not be AI that will be more powerful than humans, but the new humans who have mastered AI. In this era of rapid technological advancement, we need a humanistic spirit even more. AI can generate answers, but it cannot ask the whys for you. Big data can predict trends, but it cannot predict your courage to challenge conventions. Smart devices can fill your time, but they cannot teach you how to maintain inner clarity and fortitude. Over the past 60 years, AI has been nurtured and developed by drawing on ideas, perspectives, and technologies from a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, mathematics, computer science, science, and linguistics. The human ability to think independently and gain deep insight is particularly important. In the construction of English courses, cross-cultural ability and critical thinking ability are particularly important.

2.1. Cross-cultural Competence

Culture is impartial to language learning and teaching as it interacts with language activities in meaning and context. Language and culture are inseparable, and cultural practices influence linguistic ones. Researchers have highlighted the importance of having cultural teaching objectives in language education^[2].

Cross-cultural competence is generally understood as the capacity to communicate both effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures, making it a core requirement for those learning additional languages. This ability demands more than mere language proficiency; it also requires an awareness of subtle cultural factors that shape how people interact. In an increasingly interconnected world, being able to operate smoothly across cultural divides—often described as intercultural competence—has turned into a key educational and professional asset. This is especially relevant for students specializing in English in contexts where it is not a first language, such as China, as achieving intercultural understanding can greatly influence their academic outcomes and long-term employment prospects. With globalization persistently reshaping educational priorities, there is a growing need for creative pedagogical methods to nurture these capabilities^[3].

2.2. Critical Thinking (CT) Ability

In the AI era, schools should focus on cultivating students' critical thinking ability. AI can do it, but it cannot think for students. Whether students have the ability to think critically, whether they can question, whether they can innovate, and whether they can solve complex problems, if students do not have the ability to think critically and innovate, they will not be able to control AI, and the value of human existence may be lost.

In China, on January 30, 2018, the Ministry of Education released the new National Standards (referred to as "National Standards" for short), which placed the cultivation of critical thinking skills in a prominent position. The National Standards defined critical thinking skills from three dimensions: quality, discourse, and cognition: being diligent and inquisitive, believing in reason, respecting facts, making cautious judgments, giving fair evaluations, being sensitive to

exploration, and persistently pursuing truth; being able to explain, analyze, evaluate, reason, and interpret elements such as evidence, concepts, methods, standards, and background; and being able to consciously reflect on and regulate one's own thinking process. Critical thinking skills are a core element in building first-class courses. Under the background of the new liberal arts, in combination with the requirements of national development for the cultivation of new foreign language talents, Professor Sun Youzhong from Beijing Foreign Studies University proposed the concept and method of "Cross-cultural Critical Thinking English Teaching", and led a research team to carry out years of teaching reform practices and theoretical explorations to guide the reform of foreign language education and teaching in China, and further cultivate cross-cultural communication talents with national identity and global awareness, who can spread the Chinese voice and present the real China. Critical thinking skills are a high-level thinking ability and cannot be achieved overnight; they require specialized training.

Advocates of Critical Thinking often claim this is a transferable discipline – indeed, its very *raison d'être* – in that CT skills can and should be transferred for use in other academic disciplines and other contexts. These transferable skills should enhance performance or create some advantage in other contexts.^[4] (Beth Black 2012)

2.3. Lifelong learning ability

Times are constantly changing, and anything we master will become obsolete in an instant or a very short time. As a school, it is crucial to enable students to have the ability to learn and make it a lifelong habit. Lifelong learning is no longer a slogan, but will become a part of real life. Colleges and universities will play a very important role in it. With the ability to lifelong learning, students will be able to adapt to different environments and remain resilient. A truly successful person is one who keeps learning and learns resiliently.

3. Teaching Innovation

Innovation in knowledge requires innovation in methods and concepts, including the latest research, cutting-edge and contemporary nature, advancement and interactivity. Teaching tasks should be challenging to a certain extent, and effective teaching evaluation should be used to enhance students' independent learning ability and improve teaching effectiveness. Diverse teaching activities are needed, for example: Constructing a personal system; With the empowerment of information skills, personalized training of students is achievable; to establish a systematic chain, you need to build scaffolding, and memorize and understand online before and during class, and internalize offline; after class, you need to strengthen knowledge, expand and transfer it, and connect practice with reality.

The application of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) in the teaching of English courses is one of the teaching innovation. Traditional English teaching methods often lack interactivity, diversity in resources, and timely feedback. To address these shortcomings, innovative teaching models that bridge the gap between language knowledge and practical application are needed. The POA framework, which integrates Motivating, Enabling, and Assessing,^[5] The application of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) in the teaching of English courses is one of the teaching innovation. Traditional English teaching methods often lack interactivity, diversity in resources, and timely feedback. To address these shortcomings, innovative teaching models that bridge the gap between language knowledge and practical application are needed. The POA framework, which integrates Motivating, Enabling, and Assessing^[6].

3.1. The Production-Oriented Approach (POA)

In English courses, the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) is a foreign language teaching theory with Chinese characteristics proposed by Professor Wen Qiufang. Since its formal proposal in 2014, it has attracted widespread attention and research in the field of English teaching. As of April 2024, the number of academic papers on the theme of "The Production-Oriented Approach" in CNKI is 1,763. The POA teaching process includes three steps: motivating, enabling and evaluating (Wen Qiufang 2015)^[7]. POA studies how to solve the problem of "separation of learning and application"

in foreign language teaching in China. This long-standing drawback seriously affects the effectiveness and efficiency of foreign language teaching. Solving this problem involves not only the concepts of teachers and students, but also classroom teaching methods, teaching materials and evaluation systems, and the influencing factors are numerous and complex (Gui Shichun 1994)^[8]; Wen Qiufang (2017a) detailed how researchers used the philosophical ideas in Mao Zedong's "On Contradiction" and "On Practice", drew on the educational ideas of the ancient Chinese treatise "Xue Ji", integrated Western second language acquisition theory and curriculum theory perspectives, and proposed POA to solve the systemic problem of "separation of learning and application" in foreign language teaching. (Qiu Lin 2019) Taking the "facilitation effectiveness standard" proposed by Wen Qiufang as a theoretical starting point, it explored the specific principles, practical plans, and mechanisms of "gradualness", "precision", and "diversity" enabling; in Production-Oriented teaching, designing and implementing enabling activities is a challenge to teachers' teaching ability; (Qiu Lin 2019) demonstrated how to effectively design and implement enabling activities through teaching cases^[9]; (Huo Wei and Deng Shiping 2023) used meta-analysis methods to conduct an integrative analysis of empirical research on "Production-Oriented " foreign language teaching^[10]. The research results have certain implications for optimizing "Production-Oriented " teaching and promoting "Production-Oriented " research. Domestic research mainly focuses on the application of theories, exploration of teaching models and evaluation of teaching effectiveness. These studies show that the Production-Oriented approach can effectively guide teaching practice and improve students' foreign language proficiency.

3.2. Experiential Education

In the AI era, hard skills are depreciating at an accelerated rate. AI will have two profound impacts on education. First, lifelong learning will become the new normal; second, colleges and universities need to turn to experiential education, and the cultivation of soft skills becomes crucial. Soft skills include critical thinking, communication and collaboration. Soft skills are the ability to interact with others, and experiential education is the most effective way to improve soft skills. Experiential education refers to structured, guided experiential activities initiated or established by higher education institutions with the explicit purpose of promoting student learning. The focus is on making learners truly the protagonists of the classroom by enabling them to fully participate in the learning process. The role of teachers is no longer to impart knowledge unilaterally. What is more important is to use the classroom as a stage, any media that can be contacted by the senses as props, and students as the main body to create language activities that are worth students' memories, allow students to feel something, and leave unforgettable impressions. Experiential learning opportunities include case studies and simulated internships, which can more meaningfully keep up with the pace of change without relying on the traditional teaching methods of the past.

Here are seven ways teachers can promote experiential education: 1. Choice and identification are fundamental, and understanding the specific details of the experiential context is crucial to assessing its educational value. Experiences should be stimulating, challenging, and stretching to engage students' intrinsic motivation. 2. The matching principle emphasizes individual differences and ensures that every student can grow in an appropriate environment. This means that the scenario design needs to be authentic and meaningful, avoiding superficiality, and students and teachers should jointly explore the experience that best suits the students' current state. 3. Goal setting and responsibility allocation are key to guided learning. Students and teachers need to work together to clearly define the learning outcomes of the experience and leave space for spontaneous learning. Clarity of purpose helps focus attention, and accountability, especially when collaborating with community partners, can significantly improve learning outcomes. 4. Preliminary guidance is an important part of the preparation stage, which involves anticipating possible phenomena, providing necessary background knowledge, cultivating skills, and predicting response strategies. The goal of this phase is for students to understand the potential outcomes of the experience and how to maximize their gains. 5. Continuous reflection is an integral part of the learning process. From the beginning of the experience, students should reflect deeply on the experience through records or journals. This not only records the event itself, but also touches on the deeper meaning of personal growth and experience. 6. Regular review is an important node in the experience process. Teachers should interact with students by

phone or online to discuss the learning process and next steps, and provide necessary support and feedback. 7. The final review marks the successful conclusion of the experience. Through experience reports, video articles or other forms of special topics, students can integrate their experiences, extract meaning, and connect them with past experiences and other learning outcomes, achieving deep integration of knowledge and comprehensive improvement of personal ability (Devis James 2014)^[11].

4. Summarize

There are methods for teaching, but no fixed rules. English courses can create a new hybrid teaching environment, starting with task-based, inquiry-based, and heuristic teaching where teachers are the leaders of teaching and students are the main body of learning. The course content advocates starting from real social problems, locking in core values, and making the three sounds of the classroom harmonious (applause, laughter, and debate). Effectively utilize information technology before, during and after class to integrate the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation into education, and innovate in educating people. In China, the application of artificial intelligence (AI), such as Tencent Zhiying's cloud-based intelligent video creation, is the icing on the cake. After class, students use iFlytek Spark for real-time human-computer dialogue and independent listening and speaking practice. The use of AI has greatly improved the efficiency and fun of students' learning; it helps teachers complete lesson preparation, scientific research and other tasks more efficiently, making education easier and smarter, nourishing more souls thirsty for knowledge.

Teaching English is for better mutual learning, communication and integration among civilizations. In simple terms, it is to learn from others and spread our good things. Professional teachers further strengthen their awareness of educating people, find the right angle of education, improve their ability to educate people, ensure the implementation of ideological and political construction of courses, enhance the concept of education, feed back scientific research into teaching, and make good use of information means.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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