

Construction of Chinese Translation Major in the Context of the New Liberal Arts

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Abstract:

The new liberal arts promote innovation, integration, and development of discipline construction, offering an opportunity for educational reform in the field of translation studies in China. This paper explores the essence and characteristics of the new liberal arts, examines the positioning of translation studies within this framework, outlines the core principles for reform in translation education in the context of the new liberal arts, and proposes strategies for nurturing translation talents by implementing reforms in the talent development program, emphasizing interdisciplinary education, and incorporating technology.

Keywords:

The New Liberal Arts, Translation Education, Interdisciplinary Education

1. Introduction

From the inception of “Building China’s ‘Golden Lessons’” in 2018 to the “Six Excellence and One Top” Program 2.0 and the “Four New” Construction in 2019, and further to the “Declaration on the Construction of New Liberal Arts” in 2020, the evolving opportunities and requirements of the modern era continually shape the essence and objectives of foreign language education reform and development. The year 2023 marked a significant moment when Wu Shixing, the deputy director of the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, emphasized during the Seventh High-end Forum on the Reform and Development of Foreign Language Education in National Higher Education Institutions that the focus of foreign language education reform in the new era should align with the aim of developing a knowledge-oriented nation. Emphasizing the advancement towards this national goal, the reform and development of foreign language education entails dedicated efforts in areas such as educational innovation, core curriculum system improvement, and digital advancements to comprehensively enhance the quality of talent development. The objective is to facilitate higher education reform and nurture new talents that resonate with national strategic requirements and societal developmental needs.

With the wide application of science and technology across various domains, the knowledge and competencies required to accomplish tasks have become immensely diversified, frequently spanning across multiple disciplines. *The Global Translation*

Industry Development Report of 2024 highlights that customer service skills (30%), artificial intelligence, and big data proficiency (34%) are identified as crucial skills for professionals in the translation industry in the upcoming three years. The pervasive utilization of artificial intelligence technology continues to influence the landscape of the translation industry significantly. Surveys conducted by the American Association of Language Companies and Sator reveal that 58% of translation agencies incorporate machine translation technology into their operations. Moreover, in the UK, there is a substantial demand for translators specializing in the legal (72%), life sciences (69%), and finance (49%) sectors. Undoubtedly, contemporary society necessitates versatile talents who possess expertise in multiple domains. Given the realities of the new era characterized by China's rapid economic and social progression alongside increased international engagements, there is an urgent call for a substantial number of high-caliber interdisciplinary English professionals. The translation education plays a pivotal role in serving the objective of cultivating proficient talents and enhancing students' English language proficiency and practical application skills.

2. Positioning of Translation Education in the Context of New Liberal Arts

2.1. Connotation and Characteristics of “New Liberal Arts”

The concept of “new liberal arts” was initially introduced by Hiram College in the United States in 2017. Its fundamental principle involves restructuring conventional liberal arts education, promoting the convergence of arts and sciences, and focusing on incorporating cutting-edge technologies into the academic frameworks of humanities and social sciences such as philosophy, literature, and linguistics. This approach aims to provide students with holistic, interdisciplinary education to nurture diverse and innovative talents. In 2018, China officially adopted the term “new liberal arts” for the first time. In August of the same year, a governmental directive explicitly emphasized the necessity to foster new disciplines in engineering, medicine, agriculture, and liberal arts, aiming to further enhance the capacity and contribution of education. While our traditional curriculum is discipline-specific, with minimal overlap between subjects, the trend towards interdisciplinary studies is gaining more attention in the field of education. The new liberal arts seek to achieve organic “integration”, distinguishing themselves significantly from conventional methods of training translation professionals. One of the key challenges in constructing the new liberal arts is to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration, not only among different branches of the liberal arts but also between liberal arts and scientific, engineering, medical, and other fields. This necessitates extensive collaboration and deep integration across multiple disciplines, aiming at cultivating professionals with a integrated focus.

The New Liberal Arts transcend being a mere new concept; they embody an interdisciplinary approach and mindset. The “new” in “New Liberal Arts” denotes novel concepts, technologies, requirements, and models. Its inherent spiritual essence can be encapsulated as follows: firstly, providing students with a comprehensive interdisciplinary learning experience by merging arts and sciences; secondly, transforming the pedagogy and research methodologies within the liberal arts domain through information technology to drive change in the humanities realm; thirdly, meeting the demands of contemporary developments and societal progress to nurture

practical talents in the liberal arts suited to the modern era; and fourthly, at a cultural level, constructing a “School of Liberal Arts” marked by Chinese characteristics. This initiative seeks to establish a discipline uniquely tailored to Chinese traditions and styles.

2.2. Positioning Translation Education in the Context of New Liberal Arts

On September 13, 2022, the Ministry of Education published an updated version of the *Graduate Education Disciplines and Specialties Catalog*. In this release, translation was classified under the professional degree category of the literature discipline, labeled as 0551, and is eligible for the attainment of master’s and doctoral degrees. Within the context of the new liberal arts, China’s fresh discipline arrangement places translation and foreign language and literature in the forefront as first-level disciplines, highlighting the significance of the translation discipline in this modern era. Traditionally viewed as a tool for teaching foreign languages, translation has evolved into an independent discipline from the perspective of the new liberal arts. As stated by Li Ruilin, professor at the Advanced Translation Institute of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, translation naturally merges with humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The interdisciplinary nature of translation studies allows for integration and collaboration across various fields of knowledge, with future development prospects encompassing the following aspects:

- Breaking down disciplinary boundaries and enhancing interdisciplinary integration between translation and fields such as artificial intelligence, big data, humanities, natural sciences, and technology disciplines to provide students with a comprehensive core literacy.
- Overcoming temporal and spatial limitations through the digital age, leveraging new science and technology to revolutionize traditional teaching and learning methods, including online education, MOOC, smart boards, blended learning, and flipped classrooms.
- Embracing the role of promoting national cultural communication in the new era, guiding students in enhancing their understanding of national culture, developing skills in cultural communication with foreign nations, and fostering talent for cultural exchanges abroad.
- Showcasing Chinese characteristics, undertaking the responsibility of international communication work, boosting the influence of the dissemination of Chinese civilization, and advancing Chinese culture globally.

3. Fundamental Principles of Translation Education Reform under the Construction of New Liberal Studies

First, translation education should revolve around responding to the national strategies and the societal progress of the current era. Translation education must integrate ideological and political education throughout the talent development system and course delivery. An essential objective of higher education in China is the cultivation of ethical values, which in this new era aligns with the fundamental requisites of cultivating talents of global vision. Moreover, translation education should incorporate socialist core values, aiming not only to enhance students’ English proficiency but also to instill positive values, ethical refinement, diverse cultural awareness, strong patriotism, and cultural self-assurance. The establishment of the

new liberal studies connects liberal arts education with the realization of the grand Chinese dream of national prosperity, rejuvenation, and societal well-being. This linkage holds monumental importance for the advancement of humanities and social sciences in China. [1]

Furthermore, translation education should center on the transmission of Chinese language and culture. Within the context of the new liberal arts, translation education should stay true to the essence of English teaching, bolstering students' English competency and practical skills, fostering linguistic abilities, fortifying practical application skills, broadening knowledge, nurturing global perspectives, and enhancing core competitiveness. The objective of educating translation specialists extends beyond linguistic proficiency to prioritizing the cultivation of critical thinking and humanistic spirit. [2] It is essential to embrace the instrumental value of diverse natural language processing technologies and actively integrate and apply these technologies, while remaining alert to the potential risks posed by the tools. Students should be equipped with critical thinking and self-control, bearing clearly in mind the value of professional education and training. The evolution of the language service sector necessitate translators to develop into language engineers. Deep specialization, encompassing skills, knowledge, and data, cannot be replicated or replaced easily by any AI system.

Thirdly, translation education should actively pursue deep and organic integration across disciplines. In the context of the new liberal arts, the focus is on the interdisciplinary advantage of blending “humanities and social sciences+” and incorporating new technologies like the Internet, artificial intelligence, and big data into the humanities. It underscores the complementarity between traditional liberal arts and traditional science and technology, aiming to address the humanities' limitations in technology and scientific thinking. By fostering a seamless connection between translation and other fields, establishing a highly dynamic dual-cycle talent development mechanism, and harmonizing translation studies with other disciplines, we can realize the goal of nurturing innovative professionals with a robust foundation in language and expertise, exceptional practical skills, and high comprehensive quality. This approach aligns with national strategy and socio-economic development needs, enhances international communication capabilities, and contributes to shaping global narrative of telling China's stories.

4. Strategies for Cultivating Translation Talents in the Context of New Liberal Arts

4.1. Reform of Talent Cultivation Program

The current scenario calls for a reform in the talent cultivation program. The rapid advancements in translation technology have triggered a significant transformation in the translation industry. Consequently, the cultivation objectives for translation majors demand further enhancement. The essential competencies and qualities required in the age of AI are not distinctly outlined; the existing curriculum and course materials are unable to adequately support the professional development and graduation standards of the students. Moreover, the existing barriers between various disciplines and majors hinder the fostering of cross-disciplinary innovative talents, impeding the cultivation of talents aligned with societal needs. The establishment of the new liberal arts seeks to revolutionize the current education model, so as to promote reform in the mode of talent training and the organization of education.

Therefore, the primary focus of the talent cultivation reform lies in the implementation of interdisciplinary curriculum, creating a curriculum framework that transcends the boundaries between arts and sciences, integrates multiple disciplines, and complements other liberal arts studies. The curriculum reform can be carried out through two main ways: Firstly, the incorporation of engineering courses encompassing cutting-edge technologies such as big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and computer network technology. As the world witnesses a surge in scientific and technological advancements, it becomes imperative to integrate these innovations into the curriculum. Additionally, subjects like philosophy, history, law, and aesthetics should be added to help language students adopt appropriate socialist core values, enhance their critical thinking skills, refine their aesthetic sensibilities, and nurture fundamental humanistic qualities. Secondly, obsolete or redundant courses should be removed to streamline the curriculum so as to enhance the overall structure, and craft a foreign language teaching program that aligns with the objectives of the New Liberal Arts.

The quality of nurturing talent serves as a crucial indicator for assessing the efficacy of establishing new liberal arts programs. Curriculum reform and construction is the focal point of the talent cultivation model. It is imperative to devise an appropriate talent cultivation approach that aligns with the evolving needs of student growth. Initially, it is essential to grasp the educational quality benchmarks in liberal arts. By referring the recently issued national standards for teaching quality across different disciplines and conducting comparative analyses of relevant international professional certification criteria, school of translation studies should refine and adapt professional training schemes to shape a comprehensive quality standard and monitoring system that mirrors contemporary advancements and embodies the institution's characteristics. Secondly, it is crucial to establish a composite interdisciplinary curriculum. Conventional curricula often emphasize knowledge compartmentalization within disciplines and its logical system, overlooking the holistic nature of knowledge systems and the overall development of human beings. The composite interdisciplinary curriculum are oriented towards thematic knowledge exploration, transcending disciplinary boundaries to cultivate students with a distinctive interdisciplinary knowledge perspective and a diverse range of expertise. Lastly, it is essential to explore the open course teaching model. Schools of translation studies should restructure curriculum based on knowledge points, utilize cutting-edge scientific and technological innovations and pedagogical tools to address the constraints associated with outdated and rigid traditional educational practices. It should implement outcome-driven and problem-oriented course system revisions, and actively promote collaborative educational mechanisms that integrate industry and academia, fuse scientific principles with educational practices, facilitate partnerships between educational institutions and enterprises, and promote international academic exchanges.

4.2. Disciplinary Crossing and Integration

According to statistics from *The China Language Services Development Report* (2020), predominant sectors engaging language service providers include information technology, education and training, intellectual property rights, equipment manufacturing, international engineering, government outreach, film and television culture, among others, all of which are interconnected with translation services. [3]

Therefore, the incorporation of translation with related disciplines is a fundamental aspect that the new liberal arts should tackle in the beginning.

Promoting extensive cross-fertilization among disciplines is not only crucial for nurturing sophisticated high-level professionals aligned with the requirements of national economic and social progress, but also serves as a pivotal measure in addressing significant national development challenges through disciplinary advancement. To establish the new liberal arts paradigm, the primary step involves dismantling disciplinary boundaries and introducing new academic programs or advancing existing ones through disciplinary intersections and interdisciplinary integration. The construction of new liberal arts should not solely revolve around interdisciplinary interactions between arts and sciences but should also encompass the amalgamation of arts and sciences with arts and engineering in the contemporary era. Cross-specialization goes beyond merely combining courses from two different majors; it involves the integration of diverse disciplines. Presently, the fusion of linguistics with science and technology in cutting-edge research areas is a common practice, evident in subjects like “Linguistics + Artificial Intelligence”, “Linguistics + Big Data”, and Linguistic Pathology. As China continues to enhance its international communication capabilities, interdisciplinary collaborations such as “language service + intellectual property”, “language service + foreign propaganda”, “language service + law”, and “language service + Chinese medicine” have become prominent topics. However, achieving deep integration with professional studies remains challenging, let alone establishing a widely applicable professional education model. Only by establishing a cross-disciplinary framework encompassing liberal arts, sciences, and engineering, and ensuring thorough integration, can we surmount the problem of “homogenization”, which is criticized harshly for a long time, effectively resolve the issue of “two skins” in cultivation of composite talents, and stimulate the development of disciplinary distinctiveness. To achieve this, it is imperative to upgrade existing subjects or introduce new specialties, and explore innovative research directions based on the current foundation provided by educational institutions. At present, numerous Chinese universities have initiated preliminary endeavors in the realm of literature and interdisciplinary studies. For instance, Peking University has introduced an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in “foreign language and history” across departments, while Beijing Foreign Studies University has established an integrated talent cultivation model focusing on “multilingualism + regional studies”. The cross-disciplinary integration primarily revolves around areas such as “foreign language + national strategy” and “language proficiency + national condition study”, predominantly observed in comprehensive universities and foreign language institutions.

Language departments of comprehensive university should leverage institutional strengths, concentrate on issues related to national strategies and cutting-edge theories, and enhance the training of students in literary and cultural studies, regional studies, neglected branches of learning, and more. Foreign language universities need to strategically plan the development of disciplines for promoting the global dissemination of Chinese culture. The key challenge facing these institutions is the implementation of interdisciplinary and inter-faculty course selections. It is crucial to begin at the undergraduate level, establishing diverse interdisciplinary platforms to encourage students to explore various disciplines within humanities and social sciences comprehensively.

4.3. Enhancing Integration with Technology

In the era of “Internet+”, it is crucial to consistently enhance the curriculum by expanding courses on technological applications such as intelligent translation. This entails advancing teaching methodologies, fostering the establishment of smart classrooms and campuses, and emphasizing the integration of artificial intelligence technology in course instruction.

By continuously acquiring and adapting to new technologies and tools, students can elevate their intelligence and professionalism levels to align with evolving translation methods and market demands. Translators must possess the awareness and ability for ongoing learning, actively engage in diverse training and educational activities, and continually enhance their expertise and knowledge. Emphasizing the fusion of artificial intelligence and human translation is essential to leverage the strengths of both and enhance translation efficiency and quality. Translators need to possess competent computer and translation skills to proficiently utilize various translation software and tools, while also conducting manual proofreading to ensure translation accuracy and fluency. The adoption of corpus and language intelligence technologies can facilitate the data-driven and visualized approach to translation and foreign language classroom teaching. By basing teaching content explanation and analysis on data analysis and extensive corpus observations, teaching becomes more directly perceived and objective, ultimately enhancing the quality of talent development in the foreign language industry.

Integrating language education with technology involves combining educational technology software and hardware throughout the language teaching process. This includes utilizing tools such as intelligent conferencing terminals, voice-enabled smart rooms, and automated recording platforms to optimize teaching activities and aid teachers in curriculum design. Additionally, applying language intelligence technology to language training supports activities like personalized learning content recommendations, automatic correction of listening, reading, and writing assignments, and analysis of learning behaviors through big data.

The synergy between specialization and technology is imperative in the modern liberal arts landscape. Language service talent development must leverage technological advancements to cultivate language professionals compatible with the artificial intelligence-driven era. The objective of professional training is not solely to foster skilled specialists but to nurture language experts knowledgeable in various fields. Therefore, the training of language service professionals should integrate technology without solely focusing on technical skill development.

Generally, there are two ways of integrating language education with technology. Firstly, it involves the incorporation of educational technology tools such as intelligent conference terminals, voice rooms, recording platforms, etc., into the language teaching process to enhance teaching activities and aid teachers in teaching planning. Secondly, it entails utilizing language intelligence technology in language training by offering adaptive learning content, listening, reading, writing exercises, automated assignment corrections, and analysis of learning behavior. The fusion of specialization and technology in the new liberal arts framework is crucial for nurturing language service professionals who are adept at leveraging technological advancements, particularly in the era of artificial intelligence.

5. Conclusions

The establishment of new liberal arts not only enriches the discipline itself but also contributes to societal progress. It signifies a comprehensive innovation in discipline orientation, program design, and evaluation mechanisms. Within the realm of new liberal arts construction, translation education needs to keep pace with contemporary trends and revamp talent cultivation efforts by prioritizing ethical values, promoting collaboration between language studies and other disciplines, creating interdisciplinary courses, fostering new academic focal points, and adopting diverse, integrated strategies to develop innovative, versatile professionals aligned with the demands of the modern era and society's needs. By embracing a varied, integrated talent development strategy tailored to societal requirements, we can foster creative and adaptive professionals suited to the evolving landscape of the new age.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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