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# Curriculum System Construction of English Majors in Local Science and Technology Universities from the Perspective of Connotative Development——Taking Inner Mongolia University of Technology as an Example

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**Abstract**

Curriculum system construction is the core of connotation construction of the English major. The innovative talent cultivation mode of English majors in Inner Mongolia University of Technology (IMUT) serves the Belt and Road Initiative, helps the construction of new liberal arts, and promotes the construction of national first-class majors. The new curriculum system reflects the distinctive features of technology universities and regional ethnic cultures, and provides a platform not only for cultivating innovative and inter-disciplinary talents with critical thinking ability, but also for guiding the teachers' research direction. The new curriculum system differentiate the English major in IMUT from other universities in China, which shows its distinctive features. The new curriculum system of IMUT sets an example for the similar English majors in technology universities to condense their own distinctive features; the new curriculum system of IMUT makes the English major show its irreplaceable value, display its own advantages in foreign language circles; the new curriculum system of IMUT contributes to the construction of new liberal arts, which is advocated by the Chinese Ministry of Education at present.

**Keywords**

Connotation Construction, Curriculum System Construction, Critical Thinking, Distinctive Features

## 1. Formulation of the Issue

Under the new situation, the connotation construction of English major is very important for the development of English major and the quality of talent cultivation in science and technology universities. In 2020, Inner Mongolia University of Technology (IMUT) was approved as a national first-class English major construction site, which is both an op-

portunity and a challenge (Bai Ye & Wang Zhiyin, 2020). In the process of construction of first-class English major, it is particularly important to strengthen the connotation construction of English major. Local science and technology universities need to build a curriculum system that is in line with professional development and talent quality improvement, that is to say, highlight its own characteristics, renew the concept of talent cultivation, strengthen connotation construction, and focus on professional characteristics. In terms of teaching reform, the connotation construction of English majors is carried out around the following three teaching problems:

- (1) How to construct curriculum system of English majors and highlight the English major's distinctive features in technology universities under the new situation;
- (2) How to cultivate students' critical thinking ability, cross-cultural communicative ability and innovative ability in the teaching process;
- (3) How to construct innovative talent cultivation mode of English majors.

## 2. The Concept and Practice of Connotation Construction of English Majors

As English majors in local science and technology university, it put forward the basic concepts of highlighting professional characteristics and enhancing innovative ability. The orientation of English majors in IMUT is to cultivate applied and compound talents with high humanistic quality, solid language ability, specialized professional knowledge, strong cross-cultural ability and practical ability; and to cultivate English professionals with preliminary research consciousness and ability; and to cultivate students who can use English to engage in translation or foreign-related work, and adapt to the needs of local economic development and social construction. In the connotation construction of English majors, the following practical work has been carried out.

### 2.1 Condensing the distinctive features of the English Major

English major in IMUT is located in ethnic minority area and the university is good at science and engineering. After repeated scientific demonstration, the characteristic features of English majors are determined. Scientific and technological characteristics are integrated with the cultivation of students' inter-disciplinary consciousness, meanwhile, the characteristics of regional ethnic culture are reflected. IMUT cultivates English professionals with technological knowledge and national culture, promoting Chinese culture in the world, and serving local economic and cultural construction.

### 2.2 Constructing a new curriculum system

English major students can select different series courses, such as translation, culture, literature and linguistics. The new curriculum system lays the foundation for the establishment of teaching team. With the help of teaching teams, curriculum construction will be promoted, and critical thinking ability, cross-cultural communicative ability and innovative ability will be integrated into teaching and research. In addition, the new curriculum system is open and provides the opportunity to cooperate with foreign universities, which makes resource-sharing and credit transfer possible. English major has reached an agreement with the University of Strathclyde in Britain, expanding students' international horizon of school-running. Joint training with foreign universities can be realized in the professional curriculum of linguistics, literature, culture and translation. Students of English majors can complete professional basic courses in China, then they can go abroad to study more related courses, which is conducive to developing their international outlook.

The curriculum system of English majors in IMUT has gone through three stages:

In the first stage, the 1980s and 1990s, skill training was emphasized including listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, and the professional courses were mainly British and American literature, linguistics and Introduction of Britain and America (Brinton, D. M., M. A. Snow, & M. B. Wesche, 1989).

In the second stage, in 2000, in order to improve students' application ability, meet the needs of society for compound talents, and solve problems of narrow knowledge and difficult employment, English majors began to cultivate compound talents jointly with other majors such as management, economy and trade, etc. However, the talent training program caused a lot of problems, such as plenty of class hours, heavy academic burden, lacking of systematic mastery of complex professional knowledge, and the tendency of instrumentalization of English majors. These problems made us have to stop running a school jointly with other majors. As Professor Sun Youzhong said, it fails to fundamentally solve the problem of discipline construction of English majors itself, on the contrary...further deepening the instrumentalization tendency of English majors (Sun Youzhong, 2008: Preface).

In the third stage, in 2016 and 2020, English major has carried out two consecutive formulation of new talent training program (Cheng, Z, 2020). And through the new reform of curriculum system, English majors explores its discipline connotation, fully embodies its essence of humanities, and focuses on cultivating students' critical thinking ability and

inter-disciplinary thinking, thus lays the foundation for training innovative talents. On the one hand, the new curriculum system integrates English skills courses with professional courses, and improves English skills in the process of learning professional courses. For example, oral English competence can be improved step by step through oral English class, English audio-visual class and English speech class. This way of learning abandons mechanical way, improves English skills based on content, so it pays attention to the improvement of students' language application ability. On the other hand, the new curriculum system adds research methods courses. Students can initially understand and master the research methods of English literature, English linguistics, English culture and English translation, so that they can not only master professional knowledge, but also master research methods, which is of great help for them to further study for master's degree or engage in future work.

In short, the new curriculum system makes it possible to improve students' accomplishment of subject, critical thinking ability, research ability, innovative ability and cooperative ability; and makes teachers more enthusiastic to combine scientific research with teaching. For example, in view of weak critical thinking ability of English majors, the author pays attention to the cultivation of their metonymic thinking ability in teaching, using empirical research methods to improve their critical thinking ability. These abilities are necessary to cultivate innovative talents.

### **2.3 Highlighting the distinctive features of the English Major**

Guided by the idea of achievement orientation, teaching research should be carried out around the unique characteristics. The construction of the curriculum system of English majors guides the direction of teachers' teaching and research, and the major development and teachers' development promote each other. The establishment of the teaching teams is based on the new curriculum system. Professor Chen Yajie has established a teaching team of basic courses for English majors and Professor Zhang Yuan has established a teaching team of ethnic cultural translation courses. Team members devote themselves to teaching research, actively promote teaching reform, cultivate teaching results, and popularization and application of the results has produced a positive demonstration effect.

In the past five years, English teachers have been granted 17 research project, published 15 papers and 2 monographs, which have promoted the construction of new liberal arts and helped English majors to be approved as national first-class major. They have discussed new methods of teaching reform from the perspective of modern information technology and multi-modality, which fully reflects the distinctive features of English majors in technology universities. And 11 related projects have been approved including Investigation and Research on the Ecological Environment of Professional Foreign Language Education in Inner Mongolia Universities under the Background of Big Data, Research on the Cultivation of Students' Multicultural Cognitive Ability under the Multi-modal Teaching Model of College English in Inner Mongolia, Deep Integration of Information Technology and Subject Teaching under the Perspective of MOOCs: Research on the Network Multiple Autonomous Learning Model of College English in Western Science and Technology Universities under the Information Technology Environment-Taking Inner Mongolia University of Technology as an Example. Besides, a monograph *The Application and Research of Case Teaching Method in English Teaching* has been published (He Huili & Wang Zhiyin, 2022).

Teachers have published more than 10 papers on the combination of information technology and foreign language teaching, which fully reflects the characteristics of technology and inter-disciplinary thinking. Specifically, these papers include A Bibliometric Analysis of English Learning Demotivation of Chinese Learners, Reconstruction of College English Teachers' Role Concept in Ethnic Minority Areas under the Network Technology Environment, Exploration of the Cultivation Model of Multiple Literacy in Multi-modal Teaching Environment and so on.

In brief, the teaching achievements based on the new curriculum system of English majors reflect its national and regional cultural characteristics, promote cultural publicity, and serve the local economic development and cultural construction. English major has been approved as a teaching team building project of National Culture Translation Series Course at university level. The combination of the Belt and Road Initiative and foreign language teaching in minority area fully reflects interdisciplinary thinking, and has been approved by the Ministry of Education for a research project on the translation and dissemination of the Mongolian living epic Jangar. Four provincial-level subject have been approved including the Creation and Application of Parallel Corpus of Inner Mongolia Tourism Publicity under the Background of the Belt and Road Initiative; Research on Several Issues of Foreign Language Education in Inner Mongolia from the Perspective of the Belt and Road; Research on Innovative Talents Training Mode of English Majors in Inner Mongolia Serving the Belt and Road and others; Five related academic papers (including three CSSCI high-level papers) have been published and one academic monograph *National Identity and Poet Complex-Translation Studies of Contemporary Chinese Anthropological Poetics* has been finished.

## 2.4 Integration of industry and education

English major cooperates with enterprises actively, understands the demand for talents, and jointly trains applied and innovative talents with enterprises. At present, it has signed educational agreements with Beijing Foreign Research Online Digital Technology Limited Company, Inner Mongolia Yunfuer Data Technology Limited Company, Shandong Hengbang Education Information Limited Company etc. to cultivate students' innovative ability.

## 3. Innovation of Constructing the Connotation of English Majors

From the perspective of connotative development, the curriculum system of English majors reflects the characteristics of itself, highlights inter-disciplinary thinking, technological characteristics and national regional cultural characteristics, serves local economy and culture, and fully embodies the characteristics of new liberal arts. The direction of teaching and research development meets the needs of the English major development. The goal is to build English majors with outstanding characteristics in ethnic minority area, and actively promote the construction of national first-class English major.

Innovation 1: The integration of information technology and foreign language teaching fully reflects the advantages of English majors in technology university. IMUT has established an Information Technology and Foreign Language Teaching Research Integration Development Innovation Practice Platform.

Innovation 2: English major integrates the national cultural characteristics with the cultivation of students' inter-disciplinary consciousness. It has the characteristics of the ethnic regional culture, promoting cultural publicity.

Innovation 3: English major integrates industry, teaching and research to cultivate innovative talents.

Innovation 4: English major combines the research of curriculum system with the cultivation of innovative talents and teaching practice, and combines connotation construction with the construction of curriculum system. The new curriculum system reflects the curriculum concept of modular teaching, hierarchical optimization, and equal emphasis on characteristics, highlighting the trend of diversity, flexibility and autonomy of English majors (Kasper, L. F., 2000). It also highlights the characteristics of technology, and takes into account the cultivation of applied talents and academic talents. The characteristic curriculum module in the curriculum system reflects technological characteristics and historical development, and the public elective courses are also added to related courses. IMUT and enterprises cooperate with each other to jointly cultivate innovative talents. IMUT pays attention to the connotation construction of English majors and carries out the reform of teaching methods. Teachers of the English majors explore the new methods of teaching reform from the perspective of modern information technology, multi-modality and metonymic thinking, so as to achieve the compatibility of arts and sciences and cultivate students' inter-disciplinary thinking ability.

## 4. Conclusion

English majors in IMUT, as a humanities of science and technology universities in ethnic minority area, has its special educational environment and talents training objectives. This makes its professional connotation construction have its own unique characteristics, reflecting the integration of scientific literacy and humanistic spirit, and the close communication between national culture and western culture. English majors in technology universities should have rigorous scientific research spirit. The new talent training program aims at cultivating compound talents with critical thinking ability, innovative ability and cross-cultural communicative ability, and provides a broad academic research space for students and teachers. And this program has constructed a curriculum system with the characteristics of science and technology disciplines and ethnic region, which has set up a platform for the construction of new liberal arts, the construction of national first-class English major and the cultivation of innovative talents of English major in the Belt and Road. English majors with technological characteristics have gained a sense of belonging in science and technology universities and a sense of identity in the construction of new liberal arts, showing their own advantages in foreign language circles. In the process of constructing the connotation of the English major in science and technology universities, English majors show its irreplaceable value.

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