

Reform and Practice of the "English Plus Specialty" Compound Curriculum System under the Background of New Liberal Arts

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Abstract: The current "English Plus Specialty" talent cultivation model exhibits significant shortcomings, severely constraining the quality of cultivating international compound talents. Grounded in the educational connotation and construction requirements of New Liberal Arts, and aligned with the realities of college foreign language teaching, this paper clarifies four core principles for constructing a compound curriculum system. It proposes systematic reform pathways across five dimensions: curriculum module restructuring, classroom teaching innovation, faculty team development, evaluation mechanism optimization, and university-enterprise collaborative education. The study explores an educational model that deeply integrates language education with professional education. This approach effectively addresses the traditional drawbacks in foreign language teaching—overemphasis on theory, neglect of application, and weak interdisciplinary integration—while enhancing students' professional English proficiency and comprehensive vocational competence. It provides practical references for reforming foreign language curricula under New Liberal Arts and optimizing compound talent cultivation systems in higher education institutions.

Keywords: New Liberal Arts; English Plus Specialty; Compound Curriculum System; Construction Principles; Reform and Practice

1. Introduction

The construction of New Liberal Arts represents a crucial strategic deployment for the high-quality development of higher education. Characterized by interdisciplinary integration, innovation empowerment, practice-oriented education, and value guidance, it breaks down the barriers of singularization and homogenization inherent in traditional liberal arts education. New Liberal Arts construction is both an essential pathway for the breakthrough of liberal arts education and an indispensable strategic pivot in building a strong educational nation [1]. With the continuous deepening of high-level opening-up, the demand for international talents has shifted from purely language-proficient individuals to "English Plus Specialty" compound talents. Such talents are required not only to possess solid English application abilities but also to master domain-specific knowledge, aligning with the needs of cross-border business and international exchange positions. However, current English teaching models still exhibit notable deficiencies. Predominantly focused on imparting pure linguistic knowledge, these models suffer from a disconnect between the English curriculum and professional courses, lacking interdisciplinary integration, practicality, and applicability. Regarding graduates' long-term career development, the limitations of relying solely on English language skills have become increasingly apparent [2], making it difficult to meet the requirements of New Liberal Arts construction and market demands. Consequently, urgent curriculum system reform is imperative.

Against this backdrop, conducting research on the reform and practice of the "English Plus Specialty" compound curriculum system within the context of New Liberal Arts holds significant theoretical and practical importance. Theoretically, based on the concepts of New Liberal Arts construction, it explores pathways for the deep integration of foreign language disciplines with various professional disciplines. This enriches the theoretical framework for cultivating compound foreign language talents from the perspective of New Liberal Arts, offering theoretical guidance for university curriculum reform. Practically, reconstructing the compound curriculum system breaks down disciplinary silos and bridges the gap between language learning and professional application, addressing the pain points where students are "strong in language but weak in specialization" or

"proficient in English but struggle with its application." Simultaneously, it precisely aligns with the demand for international talents, enhancing students' cross-cultural communication skills and professional operational capabilities, thereby providing implementable practical solutions for the transformation of foreign language education.

2. Problems Existing in the "English Plus Specialty" Compound Curriculum System

2.1 Superficial Disciplinary Integration and Prominent Curriculum Barriers

Currently, the integration between English and professional disciplines remains largely superficial, failing to form a deeply interwoven teaching system. In most institutions, English courses and professional courses are offered independently, belonging to different teaching modules with disconnected content, leading to fragmented course structures that undermine their instrumental utility [3]. English teaching emphasizes foundational language knowledge, focusing on vocabulary, grammar, and general communicative competence, rarely incorporating industry-specific terminology or scenario-based discourse. Conversely, professional courses are entirely delivered in Chinese, neglecting the cultivation of students' professional English application abilities. Significant pedagogical barriers exist between disciplines, hindering resource sharing and resulting in disjointed teaching objectives, thereby inadequately supporting the core requirements of compound talent cultivation.

2.2 Lagging Curriculum Design and Insufficient Industry Alignment

Presently, most "English Plus Specialty" curricula adhere to traditional frameworks, with slow content updates, creating a disconnect between industry demands and instructional content; curricula lag behind technological advancements [4]. The system predominantly comprises basic theoretical courses, with a low proportion of emerging interdisciplinary or industry-specific English courses. Existing content shows poor alignment with the workflows of contemporary foreign-related positions and global industry trends, failing to dynamically optimize modules based on industrial internationalization needs. Pronounced curriculum homogenization persists, lacking targeted specialized English instruction tailored to the diverse developmental needs of students from different majors for international roles.

2.3 Weak Practical Teaching and Limited Educational Effectiveness

Compound curriculum teaching commonly suffers from an overemphasis on theory at the expense of practice. Practical teaching segments are generally weak and unsystematic, confined mainly to language skill drills [5]. On-campus practical training often involves simplistic formats like classroom role-plays or written translation exercises, lacking support from authentic foreign-related work scenarios. Off-campus bases for international practice are scarce and lack deep collaboration, limiting students' exposure to real industry operations. The insufficient proportion of practical teaching hours, coupled with a lack of systematic design and the disconnect between theory and practice, results in students' deficient ability to integrate language application with professional practice, compromising the effectiveness of talent cultivation.

2.4 Singular Faculty Structure and Lack of Compound Competence

The current teaching faculty responsible for relevant courses exhibits a homogenous structure and relatively weak internationalization, failing to meet the demands of compound teaching reform [6]. Most English teachers possess strong language teaching skills but lack corresponding professional knowledge reserves and industry practical experience. Subject-specialist teachers excel in their domain theories and practices but commonly face challenges in English proficiency and cross-cultural teaching competence. Institutions lack compound instructors who combine bilingual teaching ability, professional literacy, and industry experience. Furthermore, mechanisms for cross-disciplinary faculty training are underdeveloped, limiting overall capacity for teaching innovation and reform.

2.5 Rigid Evaluation Mechanisms and One-Dimensional Assessment Systems

Existing curriculum assessment models remain rigid, clinging to traditional, singular evaluation systems ill-suited for compound teaching [7]. Assessment methods rely heavily on summative

evaluation, overemphasizing test scores. They focus on testing rote memorization of linguistic theory and written exam performance, neglecting process-oriented assessments of core competencies such as professional English application, cross-cultural communication, and comprehensive practical abilities. Evaluation is dominated by unidirectional teacher assessment, lacking multi-faceted approaches like student self-assessment and university-enterprise co-evaluation, thus failing to comprehensively reflect students' true developmental level in compound capabilities.

3. Construction Principles for the "English Plus Specialty" Compound Curriculum System Under the Background of New Liberal Arts

3.1 Interdisciplinary Integration Principle

Interdisciplinary integration is the core essence of New Liberal Arts curriculum development and the key principle for dismantling the isolated development of traditional disciplines. Curriculum system construction must thoroughly break down the inherent barriers between English and professional disciplines, fostering deep cross-pollination between language education and professional education. Teaching content should transcend isolated language knowledge or professional theory, achieving organic linkages between the instrumental attributes of language and professional knowledge systems. By integrating cross-disciplinary teaching resources, restructuring interdisciplinary content, and establishing integrated teaching modules, holistic convergence of subject knowledge, pedagogical models, and educational resources is realized, forming a unified curricular framework for compound talent cultivation.

3.2 Demand-Oriented Principle

Curriculum system construction must be grounded in the requirements of higher education development in the new era and the demand for industry-specific international talents, adhering to a demand-centric reform orientation. It requires close alignment with regional industrial upgrading, the evolution of foreign-related sectors, and job competency standards to accurately gauge market expectations for compound talents. Course structures and content should be dynamically adjusted based on these demands, eliminating outdated modules and introducing specialized content reflecting international industry developments. Balancing students' individualized developmental needs with professional growth requirements, and harmonizing general and specialized competency cultivation, ensures the curriculum's practicality and relevance.

3.3 Integration of Knowledge and Practice Principle

The Integration of Knowledge and Practice principle focuses on synergizing theoretical instruction with practical education, addressing the traditional pitfall of prioritizing theory over application. Curriculum design must balance knowledge transmission with competency development, rationally allocating class hours between theory and practice while refining a comprehensive, process-oriented practical teaching system. Practical training content should be designed around authentic professional foreign-related scenarios, embedding language use, professional operation, and cross-border communication into daily teaching. Leveraging on-campus training platforms and off-campus industry bases facilitates students' transformation of theoretical knowledge into practical application skills, significantly enhancing the practical value of talent cultivation.

3.4 Holistic Education Principle

The Holistic Education principle aligns with the comprehensive and multidimensional educational philosophy of New Liberal Arts, emphasizing the all-round development of students' competencies. Curriculum construction must move beyond mere knowledge dissemination to integrate three core dimensions: knowledge instruction, competency cultivation, and value guidance. Diversifying educational vehicles—including classroom teaching, university-enterprise collaboration, and autonomous research—enriches pedagogical formats and learning environments. Simultaneously, integrating the cultivation of language proficiency, professional competence, cross-cultural thinking, and professional ethics builds a comprehensive compound education system, fostering the synergistic advancement of students' professional capabilities and overall quality.

4. Reform and Practice Pathways for the "English Plus Specialty" Compound Curriculum System Under the Background of New Liberal Arts

4.1 Restructuring Hierarchical Curriculum Modules to Solidify the Foundation for Compounding

By hierarchically organizing modules with distinct focuses, a progressive enhancement of general competence, professional literacy, and interdisciplinary capability is achieved, laying a robust curricular foundation for compound talent cultivation.

(1) General English Foundation Module: Focuses on developing students' core listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Moving away from exam-oriented pedagogy, it prioritizes building vocabulary, mastering grammar, and cultivating fundamental cross-cultural communication abilities. Content is optimized to include daily foreign-related communication and basic international etiquette, aligning with contemporary global interaction needs. This module establishes a solid linguistic groundwork for subsequent professional English learning and bilingual coursework, ensuring standardized development of general language proficiency.

(2) Professional Core Literacy Module: Grounded in the talent cultivation objectives of each major, this module streamlines core professional knowledge and skill points, refining the teaching system for key subject courses to solidify students' theoretical foundations and specific operational abilities. Infusing international perspectives into routine professional teaching, it aligns content with globally recognized industry standards. This ensures students master core professional skills, providing essential subject-specific support for the deep integration of language and specialization.

(3) Bilingual Cross-Disciplinary Integration Module: Breaking down disciplinary silos, this module integrates English language resources with professional teaching materials, offering specialized courses such as Industry English and Bilingual Professional Subjects. Focusing on professional foreign-related application scenarios, it covers specialized English terminology, international industry norms, and cross-border business processes. This module facilitates the transition from general language proficiency to specialized application competence, directly addressing the core issue of disconnect between language and professional studies.

4.2 Innovating Diverse Teaching Models to Activate Classroom Efficacy

To enhance teaching effectiveness, it is essential to leverage information technology and diversified pedagogical methods, innovating classroom formats to fully activate their educational potential.

(1) Bilingual Immersive Teaching: Instructors appropriately balance the ratio of Chinese and English during lectures, progressively increasing the proportion of bilingual delivery for professional content based on course characteristics. Language learning is woven throughout the entire process of professional knowledge explanation. Through bilingual explanations, interactive discussions, Q&A sessions, and seminars, students adapt immersively to bilingual cognitive patterns, becoming adept at interpreting professional knowledge bilingually. This continuously hones their integrated ability to express themselves and comprehend professionally in two languages.

(2) Case-Based and Project-Oriented Teaching: Utilizing authentic industry cases involving foreign engagement and materials from international cooperation projects as primary teaching vehicles, classroom activities revolve around case analysis, project discussion, and solution design. Students, working in groups, undertake tasks such as bilingual literature reviews, drafting case analysis reports, and defending project proposals. This embeds language proficiency and professional knowledge within practical project execution, effectively sharpening students' problem-solving abilities in real-world foreign-related professional contexts.

(3) Online-Offline Integrated Teaching: Leveraging online platforms to disseminate resources like bilingual micro-lectures, international industry updates, and professional English literature expands extracurricular learning avenues. Online activities—including check-in assignments, bilingual discussions, and remote tutoring—complement offline classroom instruction. This creates a closed-loop where onlinepreview and reinforcement seamlessly connect with offline in-depth lectures, extending pedagogical reach and enhancing coverage.

4.3 Forging Compound Faculty to Strengthen the Educational Foundation

A robust faculty development system encompassing cultivation, co-development, and evaluation is

essential to build a high-quality teaching team suited to New Liberal Arts compound education.

(1) Refining Faculty Cultivation Mechanisms: Regularly organize training programs on professional knowledge and industry frontier lectures for English teachers to bolster their subject-matter expertise. The university facilitates bilingual teaching skills workshops and foreign language proficiency enhancement courses for subject-specialist teachers to strengthen their bilingual delivery capabilities. The university establishes on-campus platforms for faculty exchange and collaborative lesson planning between language and subject teachers, promoting mutual support and experience sharing across disciplines, thereby elevating overall compound teaching competence.

(2) Establishing University-Enterprise Co-Development Platforms: Select on-campus faculty for temporary placements within partner enterprises, allowing them to participate directly in foreign-related business operations. This builds firsthand industry experience and keeps them abreast of the latest sectoral trends and job competency demands. The university invites seasoned enterprise practitioners and industry experts to campus for lectures and guest instruction, enriching the pool of adjunct faculty. This fosters a collaborative faculty development ecosystem bridging campus and industry.

(3) Optimizing Faculty Evaluation Systems: Incorporate criteria such as bilingual teaching effectiveness, achievements in interdisciplinary pedagogical reform, guidance in practical teaching, and outcomes of university-enterprise joint research into faculty appraisals. The university refines evaluation metrics to encompass both the teaching process and its outcomes. The university implements incentive and restraint mechanisms, recognizing outstanding compound teaching faculty to stimulate proactive engagement in curriculum reform and the enhancement of compound teaching capabilities.

4.4 Refining Whole-Process Evaluation to Optimize Educational Quality

Constructing a comprehensive, whole-process, and closed-loop evaluation system enables precise monitoring and continuous improvement of talent cultivation quality.

(1) Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Assessment: Integrate diverse evaluators—including course instructors, students (self and peer assessment), and enterprise mentors—to broaden assessment perspectives. Instructors focus on classroom engagement and theoretical understanding; students emphasize self-reflection and peer feedback; enterprise mentors concentrate on practical performance and job readiness. This multi-source input yields a holistic view of students' compound competency development.

(2) Balanced Process and Outcome Assessment: Process-based assessment covers daily learning indicators such as classroom performance, bilingual assignments, project practice and phased seminar outcomes to fully record students' growth trajectories. Summative assessment combines final comprehensive evaluation, professional bilingual examinations and practical outcome grading, balancing knowledge mastery and competency improvement to shift from unitary exam-oriented assessment to comprehensive literacy evaluation and guarantee assessment comprehensiveness.

(3) Dynamic Closed-Loop Feedback Mechanism: Promptly analyze findings from periodic assessments to identify student learning gaps and instructional shortcomings, generating tailored feedback reports. Instructors utilize this feedback to refine content and pedagogy; students adjust learning strategies accordingly; and the data supports the dynamic optimization of the curriculum itself. This fosters a virtuous cycle where evaluation drives improvement, and improvement enhances quality.

4.5 Building University-Enterprise Collaborative Platforms to Strengthen Practice-Oriented Education

Deepening university-enterprise collaborative education involves integrating premium on-campus and off-campus practical resources to establish specialized, real-world training platforms, significantly amplifying the impact of practice-oriented teaching.

(1) Co-Constructing Practical Training Bases: Tailor bilingual training platforms to the internationalization needs of different majors, equipping them with necessary facilities and resources. The university utilizes these bases for regular in-class practicums, specialized skill drills, and simulated job tasks. This exposes students to authentic industry foreign-related scenarios on campus, solidifying their professional bilingual operational skills and mitigating the scarcity of realistic practice settings.

(2) Co-Designing Industry Practice Projects: Employ genuine projects as vehicles, guiding student teams through the full workflow—including project research, drafting bilingual proposals, and simulating foreign liaison. Such project-based experiences hone students' bilingual application, professional execution, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities. This aligns practical teaching closely with actual job requirements, facilitating seamless transitions from learning to workplace application.

(3) Jointly Cultivating Compound Application-Oriented Talents: Universities focus on nurturing foundational theory, general bilingual competence, and core professional literacy. Enterprises concentrate on developing job-specific operational skills, industry-specific bilingual application, and professional workplace conduct. Both parties collaborate on formulating talent cultivation plans, practical teaching schedules, and assessment criteria. This precision alignment with industry demands produces compound talents with enhanced employability and job-readiness.

5. Conclusions

Anchored in the context of New Liberal Arts construction, this study systematically examined the predicaments confronting "English Plus Specialty" compound talent cultivation in universities. It identified prevalent issues within the current curriculum system: superficial interdisciplinary integration, lagging curriculum design, inadequate practical components, insufficient faculty capacity, and rigid evaluation mechanisms. Building upon these findings, the study established four core construction principles—Interdisciplinary Integration, Demand Orientation, Integration of Knowledge and Practice, and Holistic Education. Subsequently, it proposed a comprehensive, multidimensional reform pathway encompassing curriculum module restructuring, pedagogical innovation, faculty development, evaluation system refinement, and university-enterprise collaboration. This framework offers a systematic approach to advancing the deep integration of language education and professional education. Primarily situated within the context of general university education, this research did not delve into granular analyses differentiating across institutional types or specific majors; consequently, the targeted nature of the reform proposals retains scope for enhancement. Future research will focus on refining discipline-specific curriculum reform blueprints and conducting longitudinal tracking studies to iteratively improve dynamic curriculum adaptation mechanisms.

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