A Study of “Foreign Language+” Innovative Talents Training Model Driven by Social Needs* 

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Recently, great changes have taken place in the field of foreign language talents training in universities. Training of foreign language talents should take both national strategy and local development into consideration. Traditional skill-centered foreign language talents training model has been gradually taken place by “foreign language+” model which can better adapt to new social needs and sustainable development of the foreign language major. In a word, foreign language talents training requires not only the language skills, but also professional knowledge and other abilities so that they can develop in full scale and meet the needs of the social development effectively.

Keywords: social needs, foreign language+, foreign language talents training, interdisciplinary knowledge

I. Introduction

Great attention has been attached to the foreign language talents training in China for many years. According to Shu (2017), “Foreign language teaching and discipline construction should not only meet the national strategic needs, but also meet the small needs of personal development” (p. 22). First of all, from the perspective of national strategy, China’s foreign language education has gradually changed from traditional language skill-centered training into the path of compound foreign language talents training which can better meet the needs of social, economic and cultural development. The development of The Belt and Road Initiative brings more challenges and opportunities for the foreign language talents training. It is an important measure for national strategic development based on social needs, and it also puts forward a practical concern for the foreign language talents training in the future.

The Belt and Road Initiative involves a large number of foreign language talents in economy, trade and other fields. In the past, foreign language talents training mainly focused on the cultivation of language skills which included reading, writing, speaking and listening. Nevertheless, foreign language talents training in the new era is much closely related to the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge background. To put it simply, foreign language talents training and professional knowledge learning should be closely connected so as to meet the needs of the country and society. At present, what foreign language talents need is not only foreign language knowledge, but also special knowledge in specific fields, i.e. professional knowledge. Based on the national overall strategy and the demand for foreign language talents training, foreign language talents training

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should achieve the effective integration of foreign language (English or other foreign languages such as Japanese, Russian etc.) and relevant professional knowledge. From the perspective of personal needs, if foreign language talents want to survive in the fierce market competition, they need a more comprehensive and perfect knowledge framework. Therefore, mastering more interdisciplinary knowledge cannot only better meet the needs of society for foreign language talents, but also improve the social competitiveness of foreign language talents.

II. The Inevitability of “Foreign Language +” Innovative Talents Training

From the current situation of foreign language education in China, it is necessary to analyze how social needs and individual needs affect the cultivation of foreign language talents. We will further discuss the feasibility and inevitability of the foreign language talents training model of “foreign language+”. Compared with modern foreign language education, traditional foreign language education is quite different. Today’s foreign language talents training should consider the social needs, because most foreign language talents will go to the society and serve the society. In recent years, foreign language major students have faced more challenges in employment after their graduation. On one hand, this phenomenon shows the fierce competition in the foreign language talents market. On the other hand, it also shows that there is a problem in the training of foreign language professionals, that is, the foreign language talents trained by schools cannot meet the needs of the society completely. What our society needs is compound foreign language talents. In other words, it’s not enough for foreign language talents to have basic language skills only, but they need more various practical capabilities and knowledge background in other fields of research such as economy, law, foreign trade, politics, interpretation etc. Therefore, foreign language talents training must be combined with relevant professional knowledge and other abilities. Only in this way can foreign language education really meet the needs of national strategy as well as the personal needs. Based on the current situation of foreign language talents training, this study believes that “foreign language+” education driven by social needs has the following advantages.

First of all, the integration of foreign language and innovative professional training model meets the needs of national and regional development. It also helps to enhance the social competitiveness of foreign language talents. At present, China’s talents training is gradually moving towards the increased enrollment and training. The training of foreign language talents in the context of increased enrollment faces both challenges and opportunities. Under the traditional model of foreign language education, skill-centered foreign language education plays a leading role. However, foreign language education based on the perspective of national strategy can not only cultivate foreign language talents who are proficient in various foreign languages, but also satisfy the needs of regional development. The integration of foreign language and professional knowledge will enhance the level of foreign language talents training and improve their social competitiveness, so that foreign language major students will no longer become non-professional students. In a word, the training of foreign language talents should be combined with professional knowledge background which is one of the crucial components in contemporary social development.

Secondly, the integration of foreign language and professional innovative training model has an important impact on the sustainable development of foreign language majors. Foreign language education in China has developed for decades. From primary school, middle school to university, most of the students learn foreign languages (mainly English) for almost more than 10 years (in a few areas, Japanese and other foreign languages
are taught to the students). Teachers in foreign language majors should recognize the urgency for the survival of foreign language majors. The deepening of reform and openup provides more opportunities for the demand of foreign language talents in China. However, there still exist practical issues, that is, though there are many foreign language talents, many of them are not qualified enough in many professional fields of work. Lack of competent foreign language talents hinders normal development of regional socio-economy and cultural development. In a word, we should break through the restriction of traditional foreign language education for the sustainable development of foreign language major and talents.

Finally, “foreign language +” model speeds up competitive power of foreign language talents. As is known to all, the national strategy plays a guiding role in the training of foreign language talents, and the training of foreign language talents should be closely combined with the national strategy. We will take foreign language education in ethnic minority areas as an example. The training of foreign language talents there mainly depends on regional colleges and universities. In many colleges, the goal of foreign language talents training is mainly to train middle school foreign language teachers. In recent years, foreign language majors in colleges are facing greater challenges and opportunities for the development of foreign language majors. Therefore, more and more foreign language majors begin to provide relevant professional courses which will bring much benefit for the development of foreign language talents. Dai (2018) believes that “China’s foreign language talent cultivation should face diversified foreign language talent needs”. It is rather evident that in foreign language talents training, we still have a long way to go.

III. Challenges to the Cultivation of “Foreign Language +” Talents Training

Dai (2018) pointed out that at present, China’s foreign language education should focus on the following paths.

First, in the face of diversified demand for foreign language talents, we need to cultivate high level talents who are proficient in foreign language and literature, and then cultivate international talents with an international vision. What’s more, they are familiar with the national conditions of the target country, and they also have profound cultural heritage. They also master professional knowledge and have strong cross-cultural communicative ability. (Dai, 2018, p. 3)

All in all, the training of foreign language talents in the new era should be on the way of all-round development. Development of foreign language talents also affects regional economy. Take Yanbian area in Jilin Province as an example, foreign language education in this area should take regional factors into consideration. Countries like Russia, South Korea, DPRK, Japan and other areas are around the borders of this area. These surrounding countries and regions are closely related to Yanbian in the field of economy, services and social culture etc. Therefore, in the process of training foreign language talents, we should recognize that various foreign language talents are needed who are competent in Russian, Japanese and Korean etc. Based on the characteristics of multi-cultural areas, foreign language talents training should promote the integration of foreign language (one or more) and professional knowledge. Multilingual talents with professional knowledge will have much powerful social competitiveness. In the face of various challenges in foreign language education, foreign language talents training can find a breakthrough from the following aspects.

First of all, we should explore the specific ways to improve the quality of foreign language talents. Under the framework of globalization, foreign language is not only a necessary tool for communication, but also an
invisible capital in international development and competition. Mastering one more foreign language can provide more opportunities in the fierce competition of the world. Under the background of increased enrollment in China, the competition among talents will be more intense. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the mastery of professional knowledge and highlight the advantages of their capabilities. In addition to the learning of basic language skills, the knowledge of language, literature, education, translation, and other fields within the framework of foreign language education, professional knowledge is also required to reach a certain level so that they can meet the social needs. Thus social needs will become the motivation of foreign language talents training and it helps foreign language talents make a breakthrough in a field of professional skills. This is the most basic requirement for foreign language talents in the future. In addition, various abilities also become one of the indispensable requirements for foreign language talents. In a word, accumulation of professional knowledge background is the core of “foreign language +” innovative foreign language talents training model and development of abilities will bring new vigor and vitality for the foreign language talents.

Secondly, foreign language talents training should be based upon the necessity of social needs. The planning of courses related to the training of foreign language talents should focus on the needs of national strategy and the comprehensive development of regional economy, society and culture. We can summarize the foreign language talents training as “language tools + professional knowledge + other diversified abilities”. As is known to all, major function of any foreign language is a tool for human communication. Under the background of globalization, communication among different cultures will inevitably increase and more foreign language talents will be required. In general, foreign language talents are more proficient in language performance than that of non-foreign language majors, especially in the basic language skills. However, they still face challenges in the society because they lack professional knowledge background.

According to the recent survey, many of English major students have difficulties in finding satisfactory jobs when they look for jobs after graduation. One of the major reasons for this phenomenon is that they lack professional knowledge in specific field. All in all, the training of foreign language talents must break the traditional understanding of “language skill learning only” and broaden their horizon into interdisciplinary fields. We can better illustrate the “foreign language +” innovative language talents training model through the following diagram. It implies that foreign language talents should master at least one professional knowledge on the basis of future job and some other background knowledge so that they can meet the needs of the society.

![Diagram](image_url)
Finally, we need to understand the importance of diversified abilities in foreign language talents training. Many people learn English by majoring in linguistics, literature and English education. Nevertheless, they feel rather frustrated when they look for jobs because they lack the abilities that many companies require. Nowadays, many youngsters have recognized that lack of abilities will influence their future development to some extent. Communicative ability, cooperative ability, research ability and working ability etc. are the ones that many companies concentrate on while recruiting foreign language talents. As a result, the cultivation of qualified foreign language talents should not only consider the needs of society, but also be based on the development of personal ability.

**IV. Values of “Foreign Language +” Talents Training**

“Foreign language +” talent training model fully reflects the country’s demand for foreign language talents. Today, there is a new tendency in our society, that is, with the development of globalization, more interdisciplinary talents are needed. Recently, needs for the foreign language talents have shown certain interdisciplinary changes. Foreign language talents training tends to be more diversified. Under the new thought of foreign language talent training, we should reform the training plan of foreign language talents, get rid of the restrictions of the traditional training consciousness of foreign language talents, and emphasize the all-round development of foreign language talents especially by focusing on “foreign language +” model. The traditional training of foreign language talents only focused on the training of basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, which made the goal of foreign language talent training rather confined. It is difficult for the foreign language talents to meet the needs of globalization under such framework. From the perspective of national foreign language education strategy, foreign language talents in the new era will have an interdisciplinary and multicultural vision.

“Foreign language +” model can also serve the development of regional economy and development. The training of foreign language talents in ethnic regions can better reflect their regional characteristics in the training of “foreign language +” talents. The cultivation of compound foreign language talents pays attention to the improvement of their comprehensive quality including language ability, professional knowledge and other abilities. This is in line with the overall purpose of training foreign language talents and reflects the new recognition of foreign language talents training in the new era. The traditional foreign language teaching framework will be broken, and the relationship between subjects will be much closer. Foreign language talents will eventually move to the path of general talents training. Foreign language learners will improve their comprehensive ability by accepting professional knowledge, cross cultural awareness and other relevant knowledge, so as to meet the needs of foreign language talent training in the new era.

**V. Conclusion**

The training of single-skilled foreign language talents for foreign language majors will turn to the integration of foreign language and other major, that is, “foreign language +” innovative training model. It will become an opportunity to solve the employment difficulties of foreign language majors. Under the traditional mode of foreign language education, the training of foreign language talents pays more attention to the training of language skills than the mastery of special knowledge, which leads to the various difficulties in employment. After adopting the integration model of foreign language and specialty, the competitiveness of foreign language
talents will be strengthened, which can achieve survival in competition and development in innovation. The training of foreign language talents should be based on the present and the future, and provide support and guarantee for the development of foreign language talents in relevant fields of the region. In terms of regional economic and socio-cultural development, especially in the fields of regional foreign trade and economic cooperation, social and cultural exchanges, the shortage of foreign language talents can be supplemented. In conclusion, “foreign language +” talents training model which is driven by social needs becomes an inevitable choice in foreign language teaching.

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