



A Study on the Optimization of Talent Training Program for English Majors in Yangtze University-Based on Surveys of Graduate Employability

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ABSTRACT

This paper, combined with the orientation of the School of Foreign Languages of Yangtze University that aims to cultivate "broad caliber, thick foundation, strong ability, high quality" talents, professional touch and employment channels for students, constructs a model framework for the employability of English major students. Meanwhile, based on the surveys of the employability of English majors in our school, the paper puts forward some proposals for optimizing the talent training program: Improving students' competitiveness in the workplace and cultivating applied foreign language talents suitable for the needs of society by perfecting the discipline system, innovating the practice mode, expanding training channels and improving employment guidance.

Keywords: Yangtze University, English majors, employability, Talent Training Program

The plan for the intellectuals is the specific and practical form of intellectual cultivation goals of colleges, and the overall implementation blueprint and fundamental guiding document for intellectuals in colleges indicate cultivation and schooling ideas. In the context of the current connotative development of higher education, under the guidance of the "National Standards for Undergraduate Teaching Quality of English Majors" formulated by the government, combined with the school's school-running orientation and personnel training goals, through in-depth investigation and research on graduates' employability, adjust the talent training plan, improve the quality of talent training, and deliver more compound, applied and international foreign language talents to the society. Only by accurately understanding the knowledge and ability needs of students after graduation and the training quality of graduates can we better formulate the requirements for talent training, plan the process of talent training, and achieve training goals (Zhixiang Zhuang, 2011). Meijuan Zhao (2016), a domestic academic scholar, has carried out relevant research on the employability of graduates of foreign language colleges and universities, and analyzed the suitability between school personnel training and social needs, to clarify the core elements of foreign language college students' employability and areas that need to be improved in teaching.

This study believes that China's higher education is changing from "supply-constrained" to "demand-oriented", and higher foreign language education is facing unprecedented competitive pressure and survival pressure. So it is necessary to combine demand analysis to analyze the transition period. A survey on the employability of English majors in colleges and universities has been carried out to inspire optimizing talent training programs, to cultivate applied foreign language intellectuals that meet the needs of society.

1. Research design

According to the definition of employability and the classification of skills in previous studies; and according to the requirements of the *National Standard for Undergraduate Teaching Quality of English majors in Colleges and Universities* on the quality, ability and knowledge of English majors, as well as the orientation, speciality characteristics and talent training objectives of Yangtze University, this study divides the employability of English majors graduates into three categories: essential knowledge, basic working ability and mental culture, including 16 items (Zhong Weihe, 2015). The essential knowledge

includes professional knowledge, relevant knowledge, general knowledge and computer knowledge. Professional knowledge mainly includes English language, English literature, English culture, cross-cultural communication, English language teaching, Business English, knowledge of writing research papers and reports in English and knowledge of Chinese history, society, politics, economics, science and technology and culture; relevant knowledge refers to the courses offered by our school according to its own subject characteristics and faculty, covering a wide range of subjects: foreign affairs, education, communication studies, technology, finance, economic and trade, management, law, military theory, journalism, mechanical engineering and medicine; general knowledge includes all fields of knowledge: philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, education; computer knowledge includes the basic knowledge and methods of literature retrieval and using modern technology to obtain relevant information; basic working skills include foreign language communication ability, planning and organization ability, scientific thinking ability, management ability and teamwork ability; foreign language communicative competence includes bilingual language knowledge competence, discourse construction competence, social communication competence, communicative strategy competence and intercultural communication competence; planning and organization ability mainly covers the ability to predict and plan work tasks as well as the ability to organize and implement work in a scientific and efficient way; scientific thinking ability includes the ability of understanding, scientific analysis, critical thinking and scientific evaluation; management skills include time management, material management, financial management, human resource management, coordination and arrangement, judgment and decision-making ability; teamwork includes respect, appreciation, tolerance, equality, trust and so on; Spiritual literacy includes moral awareness, tolerance, self-confidence, responsibility, innovative spirit, Chinese feelings and international vision.

The idea of this research was just based on this cognition, which is the premise of deeply interpreted *National Standard for Undergraduate Teaching Quality of English majors in Colleges and universities*, by selecting 130, 80, and 130 English major graduates respectively in 2018-2020 three sessions in Yangtze university as investigation object, using the self-made questionnaire of employability, through distributing questionnaire by class liaisons in QQ groups, to investigate the importance and satisfaction degree of the components of graduates' employability in work. 284 questionnaires are collected, and the effective rate is 78.5% when unqualified questionnaires were excluded. The research conducts scientific analysis based on the combination of quantitative statistical data and interviews with some students, and focuses on the employment orientation of graduates, the degree of compatibility between professional teaching and practices and the ability and knowledge required by the occupation, professional curriculum setting and teaching effect, and suggestions for improvement of professional teaching, practices and management. Finally, based on the survey results, combined with the school's educational orientation, speciality characteristics and talent training objectives, the research puts forward suggestions on optimizing the talent training program for English majors in local application-oriented colleges and universities.

1.1 Employment direction of graduates

According to the survey data, the employment rates of English majors in the class of 2018, 2019 and 2020 are 95.83%, 95.15% and 95.45% respectively, and the corresponding rates are 74.32%, 74.14% and

74.13% orderly. The top three positions for graduates are education and training (25%), trade and import and export (20%), and Internet and e-commerce (16%), Others include professional services (consulting, human resources, finance 10 percent), culture, sports and entertainment (8 percent), manufacturing (5 percent), construction engineering (4 percent), public administration (2.5 percent), and social security and social organizations (2 percent). First, in the field of education and training, the analysis shows that the number of students enrolled in public kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools has decreased year by year, from 8.3% in 2018 and 7.6% in 2019 to 6.3% in 2020. This reflects the lack of significant growth in the number of teachers required by public educational institutions in recent years. English major graduates want to find a public education position difficulty has increased, so future English major graduates engaged in education work for a variety of non-public education and training institutions. Secondly, with the promotion of the implementation of the "Belt and Road" strategy, the social demand for talents who have the business knowledge and can skillfully use English for international business communication and business work is also increasing. Thirdly, quite a several surveyed students choose to work in the information technology service industry, which reflects that the booming development of the Internet and e-commerce has provided a broad employment platform for graduates.

1.2 The importance and satisfaction degrees of the curriculum and teaching

Statistics on the importance of the curriculum for the class of 2018,2019 and 2020 are 76%, 73% and 80% respectively. Interviews with graduates of different grades show that they generally believe that the courses of oral English, English reading, English writing and English translation have an important fundamental role to help them consolidate their basic language skills and improve the level of language output; The courses such as case study of English teaching method play an irreplaceable role in their work in related fields. The research group divided the top 33%, the middle 34% and the bottom 33% of students into three groups according to their comprehensive academic performance during their school years of three different graduates, and investigated their satisfaction degree of curriculum design and teaching implementation. The data analysis shows that the number of students in the top, middle and bottom positions are 74%, 70% and 63% respectively, which reflects that the better the students' comprehensive scores, the higher their satisfaction with the school's curriculum and teaching.

1.3 Importance and Satisfaction of Knowledge, Ability and Accomplishment

According to the survey of three classes of graduates, they ranked their professional knowledge in order of importance, among which English language knowledge was listed as important (91%, 90%, 93%), English education (87%, 85%, 88%), cross-cultural communication (83%, 80%, 84%), English culture (80%, 78%), knowledge of Chinese culture (80%,81%,82%), knowledge of writing research papers and reports in English (78%,75%,71%) and English literature (66%, 63%,61%). This indicates that the subject orientation of English majors and the career direction of students require more extensive knowledge of oral and written English, cross-cultural communication knowledge, teaching methods, pedagogy and other knowledge, while literature and research paper writing are less widely used. Meanwhile, the survey shows that the satisfaction with English listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation and other skills courses is (90%, 89%, and 86%), and the data of the degree of satisfaction of other professional

knowledge are English literature (86%, 85%, 80%), English culture (84%, 82%, 86%), cross-cultural communication (80%, 78%, 81%), English education (79%, 75%, 76%), knowledge of writing research papers and reports in English (90%, 88%, 86%), and knowledge of Chinese culture (87%, 85%, 84%). Among the relevant professional knowledge, the order of importance is education (75%, 73%, 72%), economy and trade (71%, 70%, 69%), finance (67%, 65%, 68%), science and technology (63%, 64%, 65%), management (60%, 60%, 61%), communication (55%). The difference in the data reflects, on the other hand, that knowledge in education, economy and trade, finance, science and technology is more important due to the differences in the employment positions of English graduates. As for the satisfaction level, the top ones are economics and trade (66%, 64%, 62%), finance (62%, 60%, 59%), education (58%, 56%, 51%), followed by science and technology (31%, 32%, 30%), foreign affairs (25%, 28%, 24%), and machinery (11%, 10%, 8%). The average content of general knowledge was philosophy (83%), history (74%), sociology (52%), psychology (80%), and education (73%). The average satisfaction level for computer knowledge was 77%. According to the survey, the importance of foreign language communicative ability is 96%, followed by planning and organizing ability (87%), scientific thinking ability (84%), management ability (81%) and teamwork ability (79%). The average data of satisfaction degree are bilingual language knowledgeability (94%), discourse construction ability (84%), social communication ability (81%), communicative strategy ability (78%), and cross-cultural communication ability (80%). Ability to predict and plan (75%), organize (70%) and implement (68%); Comprehension (83%), scientific analysis (79%), critical thinking (71%), scientific evaluation (65%); Time management (88%), material management (51%), financial management (40%), human resources management (64%), coordination arrangements (70%), judgment and decision making (71%). The satisfaction survey data for spiritual literacy enhancement were moral awareness (78%, 86%, 85%), tolerance (73%, 71%, 75%), self-confidence (80%, 76%, 71%), responsibility (60%, 57%, 55%), innovation (40%, 41%, 39%), Chinese sentiment (51%, 55%, 62%), and international perspective (62%, 67%, 61%), etc.

1.4 Students' satisfaction with work and life services

According to the survey of students' satisfaction with work and life services, graduates basically agree with the work of entrance education, career planning, psychological counselling and employment guidance provided by the student affairs department of their Alma mater, but also put forward some suggestions for improvement. It is hoped that the relevant departments can invite more elites of the industry for different majors, and provide workplace cases for students so that students can be familiar with the requirements of relevant jobs on business knowledge, ability and quality. At the same time, students hope that the school library can open more mobile platforms for students to search and borrow books, and regularly hold lectures on the use of electronic resources so that students can make full use of precious resources for learning and quality improvement. Students also praised the campus environment and logistics.

2. Suggestions for optimizing the training program for English professionals

2.1 Improve the "Wide Caliber, Thick Foundation, Strong Ability, High Quality" discipline system of "Major + Direction"

Under the background of transformation and development, English majors can further optimize the

subject system and build a professional foundation + professional compulsory + major under the guidance of the training objectives of cultivating compound, applied and international talents, combined with the direction of regional economic development and economic characteristics A comprehensive subject system of core courses + professional development courses + general education: in the basic stage of freshman and sophomore majors, high-quality teachers are provided, class hours are appropriately increased, and curriculum settings are optimized. Basic courses such as English Pronunciation, English Speaking, English Audio-visual, English Reading, Comprehensive English, and English Writing are provided etc. to consolidate students' basic language skills, and fully prepare them for the cultivation of language application ability at the advanced stage. The major compulsory courses cover English-Chinese/Chinese-English Translation, Introduction to English Literature, History of Western Civilization, etc. The purpose is to further improve students' language ability and humanistic connotation. Entering the third grade, for different professional directions, professional direction courses are opened, for the main employment areas of English majors, the main professional directions currently offered are teacher education and translation. For example, the core courses of primary and secondary education include English Teaching Methods, Pedagogy, Psychology, Class Management, and Oral English for English teachers, and the extended courses can introduce The Interpretation of Curriculum Standards and Textbook Analysis, Picture Book Reading Teaching, English Education Drama, English Teaching Skills Training, etc. The core courses of translation direction are Simultaneous Interpretation, Practical Style translation, Listening and Interpreting, and On-site Practical Interpretation, and the extended courses can introduce Translation Tools and Applications, Scientific and Technological English Translation, Translation Workshops, English-Chinese Comparison and Translation, etc. In addition to opening direction courses, we can also try to combine the market demand and the characteristics of the school, break through the barriers between faculties, integrate the strength of different faculties, and encourage students to minor in interdisciplinary majors such as Economics, Law and Trade, Medicine, Architecture, Communication, Media and other courses. In terms of general education, courses such as College Students' Mental Health, Career Planning and Employment Guidance, Entrepreneurship Foundation, Office Automation, Network Information Retrieval, Communication and Language Arts, Logic, University Language Professional Image and Etiquette, and Art Education can be set up to cultivate students' basic humanistic qualities and necessary abilities in the workplace.

2.2 Create a real environment and innovate the practical mode based on work tasks

The English major need to improve students' practical skills and level through the implementation of the joint talent cultivation mode between schools and enterprises. Given the concept of cultivating applied talents, the head of English major can lead front-line teachers to go into enterprises and institutions regularly to understand the latest development of enterprises and listen to their views and opinions on the abilities and skills required by talents in the workplace through in-depth communication with industry experts. In the process of completing work tasks, teachers have a clearer grasp of typical work tasks, operation processes, project implementation and management coordination of vocational positions, and improve their practical knowledge and skills. After that, teachers introduce real cases from the workplace into the teaching, using action-oriented project practical mode, to train students to apply their knowledge to actual work tasks and improve their ability to analyze and solve problems. Specifically, in the freshman

year, students should build a good foundation in phonetics and master the pronunciation of English phonemes, English stress, rhythm and intonation through teaching practice, and apply what they have learned in oral communication naturally and appropriately. We have also formed various clubs, such as the English Speech Club and the Debate Club, in which students can improve their language skills through a variety of language output activities. Starting with the orientation course in the third year, a step-by-step practical program of apprenticeship-internship-top job can be adapted to create a variety of opportunities for students to practice and create a realistic environment for them to learn and do real work. At the same time, students are encouraged to participate in the training programs of university and national innovation and entrepreneurship programs under the guidance of teachers, so that they can not only experience the practical effects of what they have learned but also exercise their interpersonal communication, teamwork and organizational coordination skills.

2.3 Expand Cultivation Channels and Develop International Exchange Programs

At present, colleges and universities should integrate the resources of schools, colleges, and majors, strive to develop student exchange programs with other countries, and explore joint training channels for students to encourage them to participate in international exchange programs, expand students' horizons and cultivate their international perspectives. Foreign language majors can also be encouraged to participate in paid internship programs in Europe and the United States, which will greatly improve the core competitiveness of them foreign language majors in terms of their ability to communicate in a foreign cultural context, their level of discourse strategy selection, and their cultural perception and adaptability. At the same time, universities should actively provide students with various opportunities to participate in international volunteer service to promote students' participation in social services and develop a sense of social responsibility and international perspective.

2.4 Improve employment guidance, and improve the competitiveness of students in the workplace

At the same time, survey students' English levels, to accurately understand students' English listening, speaking, reading and writing levels, so as to carry out targeted teaching. We can try to carry out a career vision survey among students to preliminarily understand students' tendency to choose future employment positions, and explore courses, teaching content and teaching methods by referring to these data. Given the actual situation of the students, we can try to further integrate employment guidance into practice with the progress of the learning process, and improve students' perception and actionability of the knowledge and ability necessary for the future workplace based on practical projects under various scenarios of campus practice and training. At the same time, the university's employment service center, student potential development center and other institutions, together with the strength of the department, provide students with a full range of services, such as employment planning, vocational ability tendency, psychological counselling, job preparation and so on.

This research is undergone though investigating the employability of English majors in our university, which found that the major vocations students choose are educational training, trade, import and export and Internet and e-commerce. Professional teaching and practices basically meet the needs of students, but it is necessary to enhance the training of cross-cultural interactions, critical thinking and professional

judgment and decision-making ability that jobs need. Banked on this basic, this research gives more specific suggestions on curriculum systems, practice patterns, training channels and employment guidance to strengthen graduates' knowledge, ability and quality in all aspects and make them become application-oriented and innovative international talents to meet social needs.

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