

Exploration of Pathways for Integrating Language Resources into General Education

Xiao Han

School of Chinese Language and Literature, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an Shaanxi 710062, China

ABSTRACT

General education is a significant component of China's higher education system. The "well-rounded talents" concept of general education necessitates that the cultivation of talents in higher education should transcend the limitations of professionalization and utilitarianism in professional education, and instead cultivate "well-rounded and developing individuals". The implementation of general education in China has been influenced by the transplantation of Western models, resulting in a lack of educational resources such as curricula and teachers. Furthermore, there is a need to enhance the recognition of the concept. In the future, general education should develop the philosophy of native education, develop the sense of language resources, utilize the interdisciplinary attributes of language resources to break down the barriers between disciplines, explore the humanistic spirit and way of thinking behind the knowledge, and weave the "thread" of traditional culture into the fabric of "education", with a particular focus on the nurturing of positive personalities in students.

KEYWORDS

Language resources; General education; Culture

1 Introduction

In the digital age, general education has become a topic of international and global concern. The modern educational philosophy is exemplified by the increasing emphasis on general knowledge in higher education. As the pace of modernization accelerates, language resources, which represent one kind of social resources, are experiencing a period of rapid growth and appreciation due to the Internet's influence. This paper considers the current state of general education in China's higher education institutions and examines the recent initiatives to integrate language resources into general education, as well as the potential avenues for fostering the localized advancement of general education in China.

2 Current Situation of General Education in China

China's general education originated from the educational ideas of early universities: the "freedom of thought and inclusiveness" of Peking University had already revealed the concept of "general education". Mr. Mei Yiqi created the "Golden Age" of Tsinghua University by adhering to the teaching philosophy and school-running ideas of "Master Theory, General Education, Free Academics, and Professor Rule". After 1949, the construction of socialism urgently needed a group of "expert" talents who were proficient in their specialized field, so the "specialization" mode of

education and training became the mainstream of higher education for quite a long time. As China entered the era of socialist market economy, the shortcomings of the "professional" talent cultivation model became increasingly evident. In March 2016, the Chinese government released the 13th Five-Year Plan, which outlines the system for categorizing academic and applied talents, combining general and professional education^[1]. This marks a significant shift in the recognition of the importance of general education in the reform of colleges and universities at the national level. In response, all types of higher education universities and colleges in China have begun to comprehensively promote various modes of general education courses with their distinctive characteristics.

Over the past two decades, China's general education sector has undergone significant growth and development. However, this expansion has also revealed some challenges and shortcomings, particularly in the following areas:

2.1 Disadvantages of Transplantation are Evident and Cultural Awareness needs to be Strengthened

"The core course pattern of general education, which exemplified by the 'four-school alliance' and the classic masterpieces study model was essentially a kind of transplantation of the American model in general education.^[2]" However, it fails to acknowledge the influence of multiple factors on the educational model, including the national system, social development, and cultural and educational background. In the early years of the People's Republic of China's foundation, the country was in the process of reconstruction. There was a pressing need for professional talents, and the model of "specialization" aligned with the demands of social development at that time. Although the current approach to professional education is overly narrow, which results in students becoming increasingly unable to adapt to the needs of social development, it is still unrealistic to completely overturn professional education. The coexistence of general education and professional education and the integration of general education and professional education are in line with the conditions of Chinese universities. However, the challenge of balancing the relationship between general and professional education represents a significant obstacle to the development of general education in the present context.

China boasts a diverse array of universities, with one-third of private colleges and universities implementing general education by directly applying the mature model. Due to the lack of combining their own characteristics and talent cultivation orientation, the absence of a mature top-level design and organizational safeguard system, and the failure to better connect the overall law of national general education and the design of self-general education implementation, the result is that although they have developed a small number of general education courses or second classroom activities, the connotation of the construction, teaching resources and other aspects have not stirred up too many waves^[3]. Therefore, China's general education must find its characteristics, and it is a fundamental aspect for the applied ones.

The objective of university education should be the growth of the individual and the retention of cultural roots. Currently, university education is confronted with the loss of cultural subjectivity, which has been brought about by the loss of educational subjectivity. This has resulted in the emergence of cultural one-sidedness and educational utilitarianism, which has eroded the general education philosophy of "well-rounded talents"^[4]. The majority of humanities general education teaching remains at the superficial level, with students demonstrating a lack of engagement with the underlying values and humanistic spirit of literary classics. There is a notable absence of a shared understanding of the core values of Chinese culture, which is a significant concern.

2.2 High-level Courses & Classes Shortages in General Education

At the current juncture, the design of China's general education course system has not yet established the concept of integrating the structure of disciplines, nor has the intrinsic connection between disciplines been sufficiently emphasized. Instead, a plethora of courses of varying quality are dispersed across thematic divisions of the humanities and the arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. The concept of "Lectures on Humanities, Science and Arts" is analogous to the integration of a layer of "general knowledge" into traditional public elective courses, professional popularization courses in the arts and sciences, and skills training courses. The cultural background is weak, and the focus is on explicit knowledge that can be spoken and transmitted while overlooking the humanistic vein and spiritual power behind the knowledge^[5].

Furthermore, the unified standard of course assessment with the professional courses and the central theory of grade point had made the learning of general studies courses more utilitarian, failing to achieve the expected goal of cultivating "well-rounded talents".

2.3 Teachers' Strength, Teachers' and Students' Identification Still need to be Improved

Currently, very few universities in China organize a whole-school learning and discussion of the concept of general education. The success of the U.S. core course mode is closely related to teachers. Chinese teachers receive professional education from an early age, the concept of general education being introduced only after working. General education requires teachers to possess a profound academic background and a significant amount of teaching experience, which many young teachers lack. Consequently, despite their enthusiasm, young teachers are unable to support the banner of general education due to their weak academic accumulation.

The current professional title and academic evaluation systems have led to a widespread conflict between teaching and scientific research among university teachers, which is reflected in the allocation of time between teaching and scientific research on the one hand, and the depth of single-discipline teaching and the broadness of interdisciplinary general studies on the other. Many colleges and universities take team teaching as an attempt to reverse the consensus that teachers of general education programs have failed to coalesce into an emotional community. Nevertheless, the actual implementation of the "team" is often a mere formality.

The initial model of Chinese universities is highly specialized. Students are closely related to their classes, majors, and faculties, which leads to the fact that students do not have the vision and lifestyle beyond their faculties. The motivation and participation of students in their academic pursuits are not as robust as they could be. Many university students divide their coursework according to a utilitarian and practical approach, placing a premium on core and professional courses while ignoring general education courses. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the sciences and engineering disciplines.

3 The Pathways for Integrating Language Resources into General Education

Language is one kind of social resources that is valuable, utilizable, productive, and capable of development. It encompasses both ontological resources and derived resources of language, as well as resources of national language capacity, which are measured by the language capacity of citizens^[6]. Language resources possess both explicit and implicit values. The explicit value of language resources is the information sharing and economic benefits generated by language as communicative and application tools. The implicit value is the cultural penetration and educational nourishment behind the elements of language resources. College students, known as "Generation

Z", have been immersed in the Internet since they were born. They have more global vision and a sense of national identity than ever before, moreover, their attitude towards self-assurance and openness is more suitable for the rational, free, and diversified cultivation of general education. The interdisciplinary nature of language resources aligns with the overarching concept of general education, which is to "develop well-rounded talents".

Language resources play a pivotal role in general education, facilitating the dissolution of boundaries between departments, disciplines, disciplines and society. They foster students' comprehension of the real world and cultivate their extensive information literacy, comprehensive thinking abilities, and a high sense of social responsibility. In the context of the complex and evolving global situation, university students must cultivate the capacity to discern between right and wrong, assume responsibility, embrace tolerance and acceptance, and engage with the multifaceted cultural nuances embedded within different languages. They must also develop the ability to examine local and other cultures critically, clarify their identification and self-confidence within the context of local cultures, and engage in constructive comparison and critique.

The pathways for integrating language resources into general education are:

3.1 Develop the Sense of Language Resources

The richness and diversity of China's language resources play an important role in fostering the sense of community for the Chinese nation and building a community with a shared future for mankind. In the future, to explore the general education system with Chinese characteristics, the conceptual view of language resources should be established. The language resources preserve a rich cultural tradition and national spirit. As a bridge between general education and culture, the ontological practice and derivative practice of language resources can assist students in perceiving traditional culture, thereby enhancing their national identity. In the context of digital intelligence, the "resource" property of language resources is a key to understanding the virtual digital space, the large language model, and the world. The characteristic of language resources to reflect on the past and present is in line with the requirements of general education, which includes the understanding of multicultural education, improvement of intercultural communication skills, and the development of a global perspective.

3.2 Develop High-quality Teaching Resources with the Interdisciplinary "Dialogue" Concept

The primary avenue of the implementation of general education is course. The high quality of the course itself is important in addition to improving the general course system. Against the backdrop of knowledge increasing rapidly in the 21st century, the key challenge in the construction of the general course is combining the relatively stable language knowledge with the dynamically updated domain knowledge. As fragmented knowledge presents a constraint on students' thinking, teachers can focus on sublimating the discussion of intellectual content into the guidance of students' values. For instance, the "Global Affairs" program at George Mason University in the United States can serve as a model for the course about "Global Emergency Language Services" in the general education module. This course explores the attitude of countries towards the utilization of language resources during emergencies, prompts students to engage in critical reflection on global issues, and develops the skills of rational thinking, precise reasoning, and accurate thinking. It will also prompt students to engage in critical analysis of global issues, thereby developing their ability to apply theoretical reasoning, logical argumentation, and scientific methodology to the resolution of contemporary challenges.

Teachers are encouraged to transcend the boundaries of their respective disciplines, form cross-faculty and cross-disciplinary teams for general studies. Furthermore, it is advised that teachers take "language resources" as a tie for researching and developing comprehensive courses and teaching materials, which are in line with contemporary trends and societal needs. It is recommended that collaborate and communicate with each other by respective disciplinary characteristics and research strengths, thereby creating new disciplinary paradigms and technical pathways for collaborative research on general education. Building academic exchange platform, opening academic conferences regularly, integrating research theories and methods from different disciplines, facing with the challenges related to survey and collection, scientific annotation, effective analysis, and reasonable application of language resources. Furthermore, the compatibility and accessibility of language resources should be enhanced, and interdisciplinary research results should be shared.

3.3 Establish the Museum Of Language Resources to Expand the Practice Space of General Education

China's course mode of general education is based on thematic module teaching. It is reasonable for universities and colleges to extend part of practice content outside of the classroom or campus, which is a model according to the actual situation of China.

"It is widely acknowledged that museum represents one of optimal medium for the preservation, protection, display, and dissemination of language and culture."^[7] The construction of a language resources museum can facilitate the creative transformation and innovative development of language and culture of general education. According to statistical data, there are twelve language museums in China, one of them is a virtual museum that is accessible online. The language resources museum employs the judicious use of advanced scientific and technological means to create an immersive virtual reality, fusion, and experiential display in one, thereby providing the public with an immersive and interactive experience. The advent of digital intelligence has led to the emergence of the virtual museum, which aligns more closely with the digital identity of "Generation Z". Teachers and students from diverse discipline backgrounds can appreciate familiar dialects as well as sounds from all over the world in language resources museum. By taking language resources as the point of entry, students are inspired to explore their native language, understand the multiculturalism behind the rich language, and discover the concealed dialogue themes and dialogue mechanisms between ideas from disparate times, regions, and cultures. This is the most fascinating aspect of general education^[5]. Furthermore, universities and colleges can also rely on language and culture museums to encourage students from diverse subject backgrounds to participate in SRT programs, College Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competitions, Challenge Cup competitions, and "Internet+" competitions, which exercise students' capabilities of rational discourse, critical thinking, aesthetic appreciation, and social participation.

3.4 Utilize High-quality Smart Education Platforms and Share the Services of Digitalization of Language Resources

China has entered into the era of Education Informatization 2.0, characterized by the availability of high-quality online educational resources, high-quality services and standardized management, which provides a high-quality online platform for general education. The scale of China MOOC's construction and application has leaped into the front ranks of the world by releasing over 76,800 courses online and serving 1.277 billion domestic learners. The Smart Education of China, the world's inaugural digital resource center and service platform for education, was launched online in

March 2022. One of the sub-platforms called the Smart Education of China-Higher Education, has launched the inaugural batch of 20,000 selected courses online.

In 2021, the Collection and Recording Platform of Chinese Language Resources Protection Project and the National Language Resources Platform were launched in sequence. As one of the world's largest language resources database, the Chinese Language Resources Protection Project Collection and Recording Platform now contains 1,329 survey sites of Chinese dialects, 429 survey sites of ethnic minority languages, and 102 state corpora of local oral culture^[8]. These resources facilitate the conduct of surveys and research in linguistics, anthropology, folklore, sociology, and other related fields by teachers and students. It also provides teachers with convenient teaching and scientific research tools, such as efficient query and specialized and academic data analysis. The "Chinese Inventory" is a corpus-based project that employs linguistic information processing technology to describe China and the world that year with one character and one word. Teachers can integrate annual popular words into the course and facilitate thematic discussions, stimulating students' enthusiasm for exploring the social language, encouraging them to inspect language and its multifaceted cultural implications from a global perspective, and fostering their capabilities to think critically and imaginatively.

4 Conclusion

The incorporation of language resources into general education is a new attempt to close to the global perspective in the context of the digital and intelligent eras. The utilization of the implicit value of language resources enables students to direct their attention to the "humanistic context and spiritual power" behind knowledge, and to use the "dialogue" attribute of language resources to examine complex issues from multiple perspectives. In addition to assuming the role of a cultural ambassador within their local community, they must also strive to become competent and responsible transmitters of Chinese cultural heritage. Meanwhile, they must cultivate an understanding of the global community and embrace the values of rationality and objectivity, thus becoming a model "global citizen." Furthermore, the utilization of contemporary information technology and the exploitation of the "data" attribute of language resources to develop a model of language smart education, which represents a promising avenue for the advancement of general education in the future. The advent of ChatGPT and other large language models has revolutionized the manner in which knowledge is acquired. However, it also brings a series of ethical concerns. With the guidance of general education, it is possible to implement a prevention strategy with the ethical aspects of large-scale models in terms of the users' and developers' behavior. Such efforts would enable university students to receive accurate value education in the current situation of the Internet and the fragmented way of acquiring information.

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