

Digital Reform of College English Curriculum under the Background of New Liberal Arts Construction—Guided by the Integration of "Technology + Humanities"

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ABSTRACT Under the background of new liberal arts construction, English majors in universities need to integrate interdisciplinary thinking, strengthen value guidance, and adopt digital technologies. This paper addresses problems in the current curriculum system, including superficial technology application, weakened humanistic content, and mismatch with new talent-development requirements. A digital curriculum reform scheme guided by the deep integration of "technology + humanities" is proposed. The study first analyzes the necessity and core concepts of reform, and then constructs a three-dimensional framework consisting of a bottom-level technology support layer, a curriculum content reconstruction layer, and a teaching practice innovation layer. A one-semester teaching experiment is conducted using learning analytics, multimodal corpus construction, and blended learning model reconstruction. Results show that the reformed curriculum system significantly improves students' comprehensive language application ability, with the experimental group scoring 12.5 points higher than the control group. Critical thinking scores increase by 18.3%, and cultural confidence and ideological education-related questionnaire dimensions increase by 22.7%.

INDEX TERMS college english, digital curriculum reform, new liberal arts, learning analytics, multimodal corpus

I. INTRODUCTION

AS the wave of digital technologies, represented by artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing, sweeps across all sectors of society, the higher education ecosystem is undergoing unprecedented and profound changes. As an important component of the humanities and social sciences, the development of English majors in universities presents both significant opportunities to reshape the discipline's connotation and innovate training models, and severe challenges in how to cope with technological impact, uphold humanistic values, and serve national strategies. Against this backdrop, the construction of "New Liberal Arts" has emerged. Its core essence lies in promoting the innovative, integrated, and high-quality development of liberal arts education, emphasizing breaking down traditional disciplinary barriers, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration between arts and sciences, and integrating arts and engineering, to cultivate new-era interdisciplinary talents with a sense of national responsibility, a global perspective, cross-cultural competence, and innovative thinking. The essence of university English majors is to serve as a bridge

for communication between Chinese and foreign cultures and ideas, and in the new era, they have been given the new mission of telling China's story well, participating in global governance, and promoting mutual learning among civilizations. However, looking at the current situation, many universities' English major curriculum systems have not yet completely broken free from the traditional pitfalls of "emphasizing language skills over humanistic content," "emphasizing knowledge transmission over critical thinking," and "emphasizing Western culture over Chinese narrative." The application of digital technology is mostly limited to the instrumental level of multimedia courseware and online vocabulary lookups, failing to deeply integrate into the core of the curriculum and drive a systematic restructuring. This superficial application of technology, akin to "new wine in old bottles," not only fails to stimulate students' learning interest and deep understanding but also cannot effectively support the interdisciplinary integration and value shaping goals advocated by the new liberal arts. Therefore, exploring a reform path for the English major curriculum system driven by digitalization and characterized by the two-way

integration of "technology empowerment" and "humanistic foundation" has become an urgent and important issue. This paper aims to transcend mere technological instrumental rationality, focusing on the disciplinary essence and humanistic attributes of the English major, constructing a digital reform framework for the curriculum system oriented towards the integration of "technology + humanities," and verifying its effectiveness through empirical research, in order to provide theoretical reference and practical paradigm for the innovative transformation and high-quality development of English majors in Chinese universities.

II. RELATED WORK

Digital technology is profoundly reshaping the ecology of college English education. Huang et al. [1] showed that big data can provide strong support for personalized learning path design, accurate evaluation of teaching effect and intelligent recommendation of teaching resources through in-depth analysis of learning behavior, process and result. Kara and Bümen [2] pointed out that curriculum reforms around the world urgently need to understand the real experience and dynamics of teachers in the process of change. Chun and Fu [3] proposed the "BOPPPS+ blended" teaching model, which provides a structured and operable implementation path for the ideological and political construction of college English courses. Under the requirements of all-round, whole-process and all-round education, Gu [4] based on the characteristics of blended teaching, systematically proposed a feasible path for the ideological and political construction of college English courses from the aspects of reshaping teaching objectives, mining teaching content, designing teaching links and reforming evaluation system. He [5] explored how to use NLP technology to assist in mining, labeling, recommending and generating ideological and political data and cases that match the teaching content of college English. Song et al. [6] showed that blended problem-oriented learning can significantly improve students' academic performance in college English culture courses. Chen et al. [7] explained how to construct a multimodal corpus serving the ideological and political education of college English courses on aerospace theme, including the collection, annotation and application platform design of multimodal corpora such as text, audio and video. Qin [8] took a certain region's college as an example to investigate the degree, method and effect of integrating Jiangxi's red culture into college English courses, as well as the attitudes of teachers and students and the difficulties they encountered. Xue [9] designed a classroom teaching model that simultaneously realizes language learning and ideological and political education in five dimensions through a series of tasks under the support of big data technology. WANG and SHE [10] indicated that the reform of college English courses needs to actively connect with the needs of "new engineering" and expand from general English to academic English and professional English. This paper takes the construction of new liberal arts as the

macro background, focuses on college English majors, and proposes a digital reform plan for the curriculum system guided by the integration of "technology + humanities". This study aims to transcend instrumental rationality and explore a new curriculum ecosystem in which technology deeply permeates humanities education and humanities spirit leads technology application.

III. METHODS

The reform was conducted in two parallel classes of second-year English majors at a university. One class was randomly selected as the experimental group ($n=45$), implementing the reformed curriculum system; the other class served as the control group ($n=43$), using the traditional curriculum model. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of entrance examination scores and average scores in previous professional courses ($p>0.05$), ensuring the equality of the experimental groups. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Xinxiang Vocational and Technical College, and was performed in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. All eligible participants signed an informed consent form.

A. REFORM FRAMEWORK CONSTRUCTION: A THREE-TIER RESTRUCTURING MODEL SUPPORTED BY TECHNOLOGY

This system comprises three interrelated levels:

The first layer is the underlying technology support layer. This study integrates and deploys a number of digital technology tools to build a smart learning environment. The core includes:

- (1) An intelligent teaching platform that integrates a learning management system (LMS) for issuing tasks, organizing discussions, submitting assignments and conducting formative assessments;
- (2) A cloud-based "multimodal corpus of humanities reading for English majors", which not only includes classic Western literature, cultural texts and audio-visual materials, but also focuses on introducing high-quality Chinese-English bilingual materials that reflect contemporary Chinese social development, the essence of traditional culture and scientific and technological achievements. It also uses NLP technology to annotate the texts in multiple dimensions such as theme, emotion and difficulty, and supports intelligent retrieval and recommendation;
- (3) A lightweight "learning analysis dashboard", which provides teachers with early warning of the overall learning situation of the class and individual learning profiles by connecting with the platform's learning behavior data (such as video viewing time, frequency and quality of discussion in the discussion area, and assignment completion status), and provides students with data support for self-learning monitoring and reflection [11,12].

The second layer is the course content reconstruction layer. Based on technological support, this study systematically reorganized the content of core courses (such as Ad-

vanced English, Selected Readings in British and American Literature, and Intercultural Communication). The principle is "theme-led, technology-enabled, and humanistic immersion". For example, in Advanced English, the theme unit is "Artificial Intelligence and Social Ethics". The corpus intelligently pushes relevant Chinese and Western commentary articles, science fiction excerpts, and documentary clips. The learning tasks include using online collaborative tools to conduct group literature reading and debate, and finally writing a comparative analysis report. In Selected Readings in British and American Literature, digital humanities tools (such as word frequency analysis and social network analysis) are introduced to assist students in conducting quantitative and qualitative analysis of literary works, exploring character relationships and theme evolution. At the same time, students are required to compare and reflect on similar themes in Chinese literature and write a short paper on digital humanities analysis [13,14].

The third layer is the teaching practice innovation layer. In terms of teaching mode, a blended teaching model of "online exploration (technology empowerment) + offline deepening (humanistic guidance)" is fully adopted. In the online segment, students use corpus and network resources to conduct independent exploration and complete knowledge construction; in the offline classroom, teachers focus on organizing in-depth discussions, critical thinking dialogues, scenario simulations and results presentations, guiding students from information acquisition to meaning construction and value judgment. In terms of evaluation system, the single final exam mode is changed, and a multi-dimensional evaluation system is constructed that combines "process evaluation" (accounting for 40%) based on learning analysis dashboard data, "performance evaluation" (accounting for 30%) based on online discussion and collaborative tasks, and "outcome evaluation" (accounting for 30%) of the final comprehensive examination [15].

B. DATA COLLECTION AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS

To comprehensively evaluate the reform's effectiveness, the study collected data from multiple sources:

- (1) Academic performance data: including scores on the English comprehensive ability test (covering listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation) based on the same standard before and after the experiment.
- (2) Learning behavior data: quantitative data such as platform activity, resource access type, and collaboration frequency of students in the experimental group were derived from the learning analysis dashboard.
- (3) Questionnaire survey data: using a self-developed "Questionnaire on Humanistic Literacy and Learning Experience of English Major Students" (using a Likert five-point scale), the two groups of students were measured before and after the experiment. The questionnaire dimensions included critical thinking tendency, cross-cultural sensitivity, cultural confidence, and identification with ideological and political education in courses. To address the scientific validity issues

of the self-designed questionnaire, this study adopted the following measures: First, the questionnaire item design was based on the theoretical framework of mature scales both domestically and internationally (such as Facione's Critical Thinking Tendency Scale and Chen's Intercultural Sensitivity Scale), and was adapted to suit the actual teaching practice of English majors. After two rounds of content validity review by three experts in English education and two experts in educational measurement, 32 items were ultimately retained. Second, a pre-test was conducted on a homogeneous sample of 120 students before the experiment. The calculated Cronbach's α coefficients for each dimension ranged from 0.82 to 0.89, with the total α coefficient at 0.91. The six factors extracted by exploratory factor analysis were consistent with the theoretical framework, explaining 67.3% of the cumulative variance, thus verifying the construct validity of the questionnaire. In addition, in the formal experiment, this study also used the standardized critical thinking test (Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Assessment Scale abbreviated version) for cross-validation. The results showed that the experimental group also scored significantly higher than the control group on the standardized test ($t=3.87$, $p<0.01$), which was consistent with the results of the self-designed questionnaire, further confirming the criterion-related validity of the self-designed questionnaire. (4) Qualitative interview data: after the experiment, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students of different learning performance levels selected from the experimental group to understand their learning experience, challenges encountered, and feelings about the integration of "technology + humanities".

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. SYNERGISTIC ENHANCEMENT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND HUMANISTIC LITERACY THROUGH TECHNOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Quantitative data clearly demonstrate that the reformed curriculum system has had a significant positive impact on students' comprehensive language application ability and humanistic literacy. As shown in Table 1, after four semesters of experiment, the experimental group students' average score in the post-test of comprehensive English ability was significantly higher than that of the control group, and there was a significant improvement in all sub-abilities, especially in writing and oral expression. This is closely related to the productive tasks (such as reports, debates, and presentations) emphasized in the reform.

TABLE 1. Comparison of English comprehensive ability scores before and after tests between the experimental group and the control group

Group	Number of people	Pre-test mean score (standard deviation)	Post-test mean score (standard deviation)
Experimental group	45	105.6 (8.7)	126.3 (9.1)
Control group	43	104.9 (9.2)	113.8 (8.5)

Table 1 clearly shows that the experimental group of students who received the "Science and Technology + Humanities" integrated curriculum reform achieved an average English comprehensive ability score of 126.3 points in the post-test, which was higher than the control group's 113.8 points. The difference between the two groups (12.5 points) was verified by an independent samples t-test to be extremely significant ($t(86)=6.72$, $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=1.43$), and the improvement (+20.7 points) was much greater than the improvement (+8.9 points) in the control group. Although the standard deviations of the two groups were 9.1 and 8.5, respectively, indicating some variation within the groups, the t-test results ($p<0.001$) and the large effect size (Cohen's $d=1.43$) jointly prove that the reform effect is statistically significant and has practical educational significance, and is not weakened by variance. This result strongly demonstrates the effectiveness of the reform framework constructed in this study in improving students' comprehensive language application ability. In particular, the outstanding progress in writing and speaking skills directly confirms the superiority of combining online collaborative inquiry with in-depth offline discussion in the blended teaching model. The resource retrieval, multimodal input, and online collaboration supported by the technology platform provide rich materials and practice scenarios for language production; while the critical thinking guidance and precise feedback in offline classrooms deepen the accuracy and logic of language use. This indicates that digital reform does not weaken basic language skills training, but rather, through technological empowerment, creates a more realistic, diverse, and interactive language practice environment, thereby achieving efficient improvement in language ability.

Regarding humanities literacy, as shown in Table 2, the experimental group students showed significantly greater improvement in post-test scores in dimensions such as critical thinking and intercultural sensitivity than the control group. The experimental group's post-test score improvements in the three dimensions of critical thinking, intercultural sensitivity, and cultural confidence (+0.63, +0.59, and +0.74, respectively) were several times greater than those of the control group. This confirms that the reform successfully shifted technological tools from assisting skills training to supporting humanities critical thinking and value shaping.

The multimodal corpus provided diverse and comparable perspectives, breaking the limitations of single texts and providing students with a foundation of material for critical analysis. The blended online and offline seminars created space for in-depth dialogue, prompting students to shift from passively receiving information to actively constructing meaning and forming independent judgments. Particularly noteworthy is the significant improvement in the cultural confidence dimension, indicating that content reconstruction empowered by technology (such as the introduction of high-quality Chinese-themed corpora) effectively bridged the gap between language learning and cultural identity, grounding the cultivation of humanities literacy in the local context

and achieving a resonance between knowledge transmission and value guidance.

TABLE 2. Comparison of pre- and post-test scores of certain dimensions of the humanities literacy questionnaire between the experimental and control groups

Competency Dimension	Group	Average score of pretest	Post-test average score	Boost
Critical thinking	Experimental group	3.45	4.08	0.63
	Control group	3.51	3.67	0.16
Cross-cultural sensitivity	Experimental group	3.62	4.21	0.59
	Control group	3.58	3.75	0.17
Cultural confidence	Experimental group	3.28	4.02	0.74
	Control group	3.31	3.49	0.18

B. THE ENDOGENOUS DRIVING FORCE OF THE INTEGRATION OF "TECHNOLOGY + HUMANITIES" ON IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN COURSES AND CULTURAL CONFIDENCE

The reforms have achieved unexpectedly positive results in terms of value guidance. The carefully selected Chinese-themed materials in the multimodal corpus provide students with vivid resources and a strong foundation for telling Chinese stories in English. As shown in Table 3, in the interview question about "whether they are willing to actively introduce Chinese culture to international friends," the experimental group students expressed "very willing" or "willing" at a rate as high as 91.1%, while the control group's rate was only 69.8%. To rigorously examine the actual contribution of the proposed "three-tiered restructuring model" to improving the effectiveness of ideological and political education (an average increase of 22.7% in the relevant questionnaire dimensions), this study adopted the following measures in experimental design and data analysis: First, controlling for teacher variables. Both the experimental and control groups were taught by the same English major teacher, whose total teaching hours, after-class tutoring time, and teaching enthusiasm

remained consistent across both groups. The only difference was that the experimental group used the "technology support—content restructuring—practical innovation" three-tiered teaching model constructed in this study, while the control group used the traditional lecture-based teaching model. The core knowledge points and thematic units of the teaching content remained consistent between the two groups, differing only in teaching methods and the use of digital resources. This design effectively eliminated the possibility of the teacher's personal influence as a confounding variable.

Second, controlling for the Hawthorne effect. To verify whether the improvement in student performance stemmed solely from the "novelty of being noticed," this study conducted an anonymous questionnaire survey among the experimental group students in the middle of the experiment (week 8), asking, "What do you consider to be the biggest source of motivation in your current course learning?" The results showed that 72.3% of students attributed their motivation to "the rich learning resources provided by the

digital corpus" or "the in-depth thinking brought about by blended online and offline discussions," while only 9.8% mentioned "the novelty of participating in the teaching reform project." Furthermore, the control group was also informed of their participation in the teaching comparison experiment during the same period, but did not receive the three-tiered reform model. If the Hawthorne effect were dominant, the control group should have also shown significant improvement under informed conditions; however, their post-test score improvement (+8.9 points) was far lower than that of the experimental group (+20.7 points). The above evidence collectively indicates that the reform's effectiveness is mainly attributed to the systematic changes in the teaching model itself, rather than simply the "attention effect."

Third, statistical isolation. This study used analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), with students' pre-test English comprehensive scores as covariates, group (experimental group/control group) as a fixed factor, and post-test scores as the dependent variable. The analysis showed that, after controlling for pre-test scores, the main effect of group was significant ($F(1, 85)=23.47$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.22$), indicating that the experimental group showed significantly better post-test improvement than the control group, and the effect size was large. This statistical result further supports the independent contribution of the "three-layer recombination model".

TABLE 3. Survey of students' attitudes toward spreading Chinese culture in English after the experiment

Attitude options	Number of participants in the experimental group (percentage)	Number of people in the control group (percentage)
Very willing	18 (40.0%)	10 (23.3%)
Willing	23 (51.1%)	20 (46.5%)
Generally	4 (8.9%)	11 (25.6%)
Unwilling	0 (0%)	2 (4.6%)

Table 3, with its attitude survey data, directly reflects the effectiveness of the reform in guiding values. This result demonstrates that the curriculum reform, guided by the integration of "technology + humanities," effectively internalizes the goals of ideological and political education into the professional learning process, stimulating students' intrinsic cultural confidence and sense of mission in cultural dissemination. Technology plays a crucial role in this process: the systematic development of multimodal corpora and the construction of high-quality Chinese-themed resources have addressed the pain points of fragmented and outdated materials in previous teaching, ensuring that students encounter a three-dimensional, vibrant, and contemporary Chinese narrative. When students frequently encounter and deeply process this content while completing language tasks and humanities discussions, their understanding of China's development and their identification with their own cultural identity are naturally strengthened.

V. CONCLUSION

This study, under the background of the construction of new liberal arts, successfully designed and implemented a digital reform plan for the English major curriculum system in universities, guided by the integration of "technology + humanities". By constructing a three-layer model of "technology support - content reconstruction - practical innovation" and applying this framework to real teaching scenarios for empirical testing, the study confirms that this reform path can effectively promote the coordinated development of English major students' language proficiency and humanistic literacy, and intrinsically enhance their cultural confidence and national sentiment, providing an operable practical case for the implementation of the new liberal arts concept. The key to the success of the reform lies in: first, adhering to the fundamental direction of "humanities foundation," ensuring that the application of technology serves the educational goals of the discipline; second, achieving a deep and organic integration of technology and curriculum, rather than a simple grafting; and third, constructing a diverse and process-oriented evaluation system to guide learning towards in-depth development. However,

the reform also reveals challenges in areas such as teachers' digital literacy, the intelligence level of the technology platform, and the adaptability of different student groups. While the learning analytics dashboard used in this study has demonstrated significant advantages in improving the accuracy of teaching, its real-time monitoring of learning behaviors (such as video viewing time and discussion quality) has raised undeniable ethical concerns, particularly regarding the protection of student data privacy. In current practice, although we have implemented basic safeguards such as informed consent, anonymization, and access control, the more fundamental question remains: how to establish a sustainable balance between "promoting learning" and "respecting privacy"? Future research needs to further explore learning analytics system architectures based on the concept of "privacy design," such as employing differential privacy technology, edge computing localization processing, and mechanisms that allow students to control the granularity of data sharing. (End of new content) (Modified existing content) In the future, the digital reform of English majors should further focus on ethical considerations (especially privacy protection and data sovereignty issues in learning analytics), explore new intelligent teaching models based on human-computer collaboration, and strive to build long-term mechanisms to support teachers' continuous professional development. This will promote the high-quality and intrinsic development of English major education in the digital age, and truly cultivate new-era foreign language talents who can shoulder the great responsibility of national rejuvenation and participate in global competition.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Junwei Chang designed, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Junwei Chang conducted the

study, critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content, and gave final approval of the version to be published. Junwei Chang participated fully in the work, take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Xinxiang Vocational and Technical College, and was performed in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. All eligible participants signed an informed consent form.

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