

Research on the Construction of Foreign Language Teacher Teams in Local Universities under the Background of Industry-Education Integration

-- A Case Study of Liaoning Province

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the national push for industry-education integration, the professional growth and practical skill enhancement of foreign language teachers in local universities have emerged as critical issues in educational reform. Focusing on local universities in Liaoning Province as the research subjects, this study employs qualitative research methods, specifically semi-structured interviews and textual analysis, to investigate foreign language teachers' actual participation, challenges encountered, and development pathways within industry-education integration contexts. Findings reveal that despite teachers' positive perceptions of industry-education integration, their engagement level and effectiveness remain constrained by factors such as underdeveloped university-enterprise collaboration platforms, singular competency structures among teachers, and insufficient incentive mechanisms. Based on these insights, the article proposes policy recommendations for optimizing the professional development of foreign language teachers in local universities, aiming to enhance their adaptability and capacity to serve regional development.

Keywords

Local universities; Industry-education integration; Foreign language teachers; Faculty development; Qualitative research.

1. Introduction

Industry-education integration is a key national strategy to deepen higher education reform, with far-reaching significance for promoting university discipline construction and improving talent training quality[1]. Compared with research universities, local universities play a more critical role in driving regional industrial upgrading and technological transformation due to their closer ties with regional economies, shouldering the mission of cultivating application-oriented and compound talents for local socioeconomic development[1]. In this context, foreign language teachers, as a vital force in universities' international talent training systems, face significant challenges in transforming from academic-oriented to application-oriented and service-oriented roles in terms of professional structure, teaching content, and competency literacy[2]. Especially with the national advocacy of cross-disciplinary integration such as "foreign language + profession" and "foreign language + industry," the roles and responsibilities of foreign language teachers are undergoing profound changes [2].

Liaoning Province, as China's traditional old industrial base, is in a critical period of industrial transformation and economic restructuring [2]. In recent years, as Liaoning actively advances the development of emerging industries and opening-up strategies, local universities have been endowed with more urgent regional service functions [1]. During this process, the demand for

professionals in language services, international business communication, and cross-cultural competence has grown rapidly. Foreign language teachers in local universities are required not only to possess traditional teaching capabilities but also to participate in industrial projects and provide language support and international exchange services for local enterprises[3]. Therefore, exploring the current status of faculty construction, competency transformation pathways, and institutional guarantee mechanisms for foreign language teachers in Liaoning's local universities under the industry-education integration framework not only responds to the practical needs of local higher education reform but also provides a referenceable model and practical experience for similar regions nationwide, holding typical theoretical and practical research significance.

2. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to deeply understand the participation status and development pathways of foreign language teachers in Liaoning's local universities within the industry-education integration context. By combining semi-structured interviews and textual data analysis, the study aims to present multi-dimensional teacher experiences and institutional environments.

2.1. Research Subjects

Five representative local undergraduate institutions in Liaoning Province were selected, and ten front line foreign language teachers were invited to participate in interviews, covering professional backgrounds such as English, Business English, and English Translation to ensure sample diversity and representativeness. Additionally, three university teaching management personnel were interviewed to obtain information on institutional design and implementation, and two enterprise representatives collaborating with universities were interviewed to observe the role and function of university foreign language teachers in industry-education integration from an industrial perspective.

2.2. Data Collection

The research team conducted one-on-one in-depth interviews, each lasting 45 to 90 minutes, covering teachers' motivations, methods, difficulties, and growth experiences in industry-education integration. Furthermore, the study collected and analyzed policy documents on industry-education integration, teacher development plans, teaching reform schemes, and project cooperation texts published by enterprises in recent years, forming systematic primary and secondary data.

2.3. Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis. First, all interview data were transcribed and thoroughly read, with an open coding framework developed based on initial readings. Subsequently, data were categorized and focused using theoretical frameworks to extract core themes such as teacher cognition, participation practices, development bottlenecks, and achievement transformation. The research process continuously revised analyses against raw data to enhance the reliability of analysis and the authenticity of results.

3. Research Findings

3.1. Current Status of Teachers' Participation in Industry-Education Integration

At the cognitive level, interviews revealed that most foreign language teachers generally hold a positive attitude toward the concept of industry-education integration. They believe it not only

aligns with national policies promoting collaboration between education and industry but also meets the practical needs of teaching reform and professional development[3]. Many teachers mentioned that traditional foreign language instruction tends to focus on the transmission of language knowledge and the training of language skills, lacking strong connections to real industry contexts. As a result, students often struggle to apply their language skills effectively and face challenges adapting to the workplace after graduation[4]. The advancement of industry-education integration provides opportunities for teachers to better understand industry demands and connect with real work scenarios, thereby helping them optimize course content and enhance the practicality and relevance of their teaching [4].

Moreover, some teachers noted that industry-education integration has not only updated teaching content but also gradually reshaped their teaching philosophies and role perceptions[3]. Teachers are transitioning from traditional “knowledge transmitters” to “learning organizers” and “practice facilitators,” requiring them to develop stronger project management skills, intercultural communication abilities, and industry knowledge[3]. This cognitive shift has led teachers to develop new expectations for their professional growth, aspiring not only to achieve academic success but also to serve society and contribute to regional industrial development.

In terms of specific participation methods, foreign language teachers are involved in industry-education integration through several approaches:

Enterprise-based teaching practice. Some universities arrange for teachers to engage in short-term work placements, on-site investigations, or corporate language training and exchange activities[5]. By observing actual business operations and understanding the linguistic demands of various positions, teachers gain authentic materials for curriculum design and teaching case studies. However, most of these activities are short-term and remain at the level of “observational experience,” lacking a systematic feedback mechanism into teaching practices [6].

Collaborative course development and co-teaching. Some institutions have begun partnering with enterprises to co-develop “foreign language + industry” courses, such as Cross-border E-commerce English or Practical Translation. Enterprises provide industry cases and training resources, while teachers are responsible for organizing content and offering language instruction[2]. These courses enhance relevance and practical value but remain in the pilot phase in most universities and have yet to be widely adopted [5].

Participation in translation and language service projects. To support local economic development and international exchange, some universities mobilize teachers to participate in multilingual translation projects, trade fair interpretation, and guest reception activities, in collaboration with local foreign trade companies, cultural institutions, or government agencies[7]. Such experiences enhance teachers’ language proficiency and deepen their understanding of local industrial culture and international communication etiquette. However, interviews indicate that these opportunities are often dependent on individual teacher networks or informal departmental connections, lacking stable collaboration mechanisms and clearly defined roles [6].

Project mentoring and student collaboration. Some teachers serve as language mentors in school-enterprise cooperation projects, guiding students in real-world tasks such as writing foreign-language product manuals, producing promotional videos, or building e-commerce platforms in foreign languages[8]. This “project-based” teaching approach fosters collaboration between teachers and students in authentic settings. In some universities, these practices have been incorporated into internship modules and have become highlights of industry-education integration efforts [8].

Despite the variety of participation formats, overall teacher engagement remains relatively infrequent and limited in scope. Many teachers indicated that due to a lack of systematic policy guidance and resource support, their involvement tends to be “opportunity-based” rather than institutionalized[9]. Moreover, the degree of industry-education integration varies significantly across institutions. While some universities have established robust school-enterprise collaboration platforms that regularly involve teachers in industry projects, others are still in early exploratory stages, with teachers’ participation constrained by personal networks or college-level initiatives [8].

3.2. Major Challenges

Lack of Resource Support. Local universities often face tight resource constraints in advancing industry-education integration. On one hand, due to limited government funding and weak capacity to generate additional financial resources, institutions struggle to provide sufficient practical opportunities and project funding for foreign language teachers [9]. On the other hand, enterprises also face challenges in offering systematic practice platforms due to the absence of effective education-industry coordination mechanisms. As a result, collaboration often remains at a short-term and superficial level[10]. Furthermore, most existing school-enterprise cooperation platforms in local universities are designed for science and engineering disciplines, leaving foreign language teachers with limited access to relevant industry resources. This restricts their opportunities for practice and undermines the accessibility and sustainability of their involvement in industry-education integration projects [9].

Mismatch of Competencies. Currently, many foreign language teachers still possess a knowledge structure centered on language and literature instruction, lacking the professional knowledge required to engage with real industry scenarios. There are evident deficiencies in interdisciplinary integration, project management skills, and professional language competence [11]. In addition, teachers trained under traditional teaching models often lack experience in interdisciplinary course design, which makes it difficult for them to adapt to curriculum integration tasks such as “foreign language + discipline” or “foreign language + industry” [11]. Although some teachers demonstrate strong learning abilities and a willingness to engage in practice, the absence of systematic training support hinders the development of stable knowledge transfer and comprehensive teaching capabilities [12].

Lack of Incentive Mechanisms. Under the current teacher management and evaluation systems, outcomes related to industry-education integration have not been institutionally recognized[13]. In most local universities, teachers’ contributions to enterprise collaboration, curriculum reform, or the development of interdisciplinary teaching content are inadequately evaluated during promotion assessments, leading to a situation where “real work yields no real benefits” [14]. This institutional gap in incentives directly reduces teachers’ enthusiasm and initiative for participating in industry-education integration. Additionally, because performance appraisal systems have yet to include industry-education integration outcomes as evaluation criteria, many teachers find themselves in a dilemma: time and effort are invested, but results remain invisible and career development stagnates. Consequently, teachers often become resistant to participating in such projects [14].

3.3. Effective Practices in Teacher Development

Firstly, some universities have implemented a “Teacher Secondment Program,” which encourages foreign language teachers to participate in enterprise-based practical training every two years. This initiative is incorporated into annual performance evaluations and is supported by funding and course-load adjustment policies. It enables teachers to undertake secondments in front-line institutions such as foreign trade companies, translation agencies, and international exhibition service providers without disrupting their regular teaching duties [15].

Secondly, certain institutions have established long-term partnerships with local industrial clusters and park-based enterprises to co-develop “translation training bases” or “language service centers.” Foreign language teachers are not only involved in the construction and management of these platforms but also directly take on roles in planning and supervising enterprise projects. These training bases enhance teachers’ industry sensitivity and their ability to transform practical experience into teaching content, while also providing students with stable practicum opportunities. This fosters a closed-loop structure of “teacher guidance — student participation — project delivery — feedback to the classroom” [12].

In addition, some universities have explored a “co-constructed curriculum mechanism,” inviting industry experts to collaborate with foreign language teachers in designing integrated courses such as “Business English Practice” and “International Project Communication.” These courses incorporate real-life business cases and work processes into the teaching content. In such collaborations, teachers act as coordinators and instructional designers. This cross-sector cooperation not only enriches course resources but also promotes continuous growth for teachers in expanding knowledge boundaries and innovating teaching methods [15].

These practical cases demonstrate that with well-designed mechanisms and effective resource integration, teachers are willing to actively participate, reflect, and continuously improve their engagement. As a result, their role in industry-education integration can evolve from mere “participants” to proactive “leaders” [16]. These examples offer replicable and scalable models for teacher development and practice in other local universities.

3.4. Teaching Transformation of Industry-Training Outcomes

The interviews revealed that after participating in enterprise training or industry projects, teachers gained significantly enhanced understanding of industry-specific terminology, authentic language use in workplace scenarios, and intercultural communication skills [17]. Particularly in courses such as translation, business English, and professional writing, some teachers were able to integrate real cases, communication processes, and common discourse patterns from enterprises into classroom instruction. This not only increased the authenticity and vocational relevance of the teaching content but also sparked students’ interest in their future careers [18].

Furthermore, some teachers introduced new technologies encountered during training, such as AI-assisted translation tools and international trade platforms, into their teaching. These efforts to integrate digital tools with language instruction improved students’ ability to use language effectively in real-world work settings [18].

However, some teachers also reported challenges. Due to rigid course structures, outdated syllabi, and the lack of dedicated instructional support mechanisms, it remains difficult to systematically and routinely translate training outcomes into long-term teaching innovation [17].

4. Discussion

Local universities should regard industry-education integration as a key component of their teacher development strategy. At the institutional level, enterprise-based practice should be included in teachers’ annual development plans, with adequate support in terms of funding, time allocation, and teaching load adjustments. This ensures that teachers are not forced to forgo practical opportunities due to overwhelming teaching responsibilities [7]. Meanwhile, a comprehensive evaluation and incentive mechanism for teacher involvement in industry-education integration should be promptly established. This would allow teachers’ practical contributions to be meaningfully reflected in areas such as promotion, performance appraisal, and teaching quality evaluation [13].

In terms of capacity building, a new competency framework for foreign language teachers should be developed. This framework should emphasize a multidisciplinary development path that integrates language proficiency with industry knowledge, intercultural communication, and project management skills [19]. Universities should take the initiative to broaden teachers' industry perspectives by offering training programs focused on "industry language and practice," organizing corporate immersion experiences, and inviting industry experts to engage in joint instructional research. These efforts will support the transformation of language teachers into "language + industry" composite professionals [2].

Regarding the instructional transformation of outcomes from industry-education training, internal mechanisms for sharing teaching achievements must be strengthened. Universities can establish a "repository of integrated teaching cases" and encourage teachers to present their own transformation experiences during internal academic development activities, thereby facilitating the co-construction and sharing of exemplary resources [20]. In addition, curriculum structures and teaching management systems should be optimized to allow for more modular and flexible design of integrated courses. This will enable teachers to embed industry-oriented content more effectively, further supporting the systematic integration of practical outcomes into teaching practices [19].

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the practices observed in several universities in Liaoning Province, a systematic transformation of teacher development can be promoted at multiple levels. First, the construction of school-enterprise cooperation platforms should be further improved, with institutional design and resource allocation providing strong support for teachers' active participation in enterprise practices. Second, teacher training systems should be enhanced with a focus on interdisciplinary skills and industry literacy, helping teachers to acquire fundamental industry logic and communication patterns beyond traditional language teaching.

At the same time, teacher evaluation mechanisms should be aligned with the goals of industry-education integration, ensuring that practical outcomes are truly "visible, measurable, and rewardable" within the evaluation system[6]. Furthermore, mechanisms for translating training achievements into teaching practices should be strengthened. This includes building collaborative curriculum systems and platforms for sharing teaching outcomes. Future research could expand the scope to include comparative studies across different types of universities and teacher backgrounds, in order to explore more universal and targeted strategies for faculty development in the context of industry-education integration.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by the Educational Research Project of the University of Science and Technology Liaoning, Project No. GJ24YB08, titled "Current Status and Development Strategies of Foreign Language Teacher Team Construction in Colleges and Universities under the Background of Industry-Education Integration." The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude for the financial and academic support provided by this project, which played a vital role in the successful completion of this study.

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