

A Sustainable Cultivation Framework for Graduation Thesis Guidance of English Majors in Application-Oriented Universities Guided by In-depth Learning Concept

Yue Zhu

School of Accounting and Finance, Xi'an Peihua University, Xi'an, China

Abstract

Undergraduate thesis has represented a core part of evaluating the quality of talent cultivation. Guided by In-depth Learning Concept and based on the orientation of application-oriented universities, this study addresses existing problems in the supervision of graduation thesis for English majors. Taking English majors as research subjects, the study integrates Constructive Learning Theory and information technology to construct a sustainable cultivation framework for graduation thesis supervision. It highlights the preliminary preparation function of English courses and strengthens teachers' whole-process scaffolding guidance. Through online and offline interactive communication, whole-process guidance is provided in topic selection, proposal defense, drafting, revision and thesis defense, so as to effectively cultivate students' information retrieval, evaluation, critical thinking and innovative abilities. It shows this framework can systematically enhance students' information literacy and academic competence, optimize the quality of graduation thesis, and provide a feasible path for the long-term development of graduation thesis supervision for English majors in application-oriented universities.

Keywords

In-depth Learning Concept; application-oriented universities; English majors; sustainable cultivation.

1. Introduction

1.1. Literature Review

Teaching Syllabus for English Majors in Institutions of Higher Education (2000) (hereinafter referred to as *the Syllabus*) clearly states in the document *Several Opinions on the Undergraduate Education Reform of Foreign Language Majors Facing the 21st Century* that foreign language talents in the new century are expected to possess the following five characteristics, that is, a solid foundation in language skills, a broad scope of knowledge, a considerable command of professional expertise, superior practical capabilities, as well as desirable personal qualities. The Syllabus further points out that "the graduation thesis acts as a vital means to examine students' comprehensive abilities and evaluate their academic performance." ... It also requires that the thesis should be "fluent in language expression, logic in thinking structure, substantial in content, and capable of reflecting certain independent insights and original views as well." ... "Universities and colleges are entitled to enhance the guidance and evaluation of students' graduation thesis writing, so that this process can genuinely promote their academic development and effectively avoid becoming a mere formality.[1]" These requirements, evidently, provide a significant policy guidance for the practical instruction and management of graduation thesis among English majors.

Taking "graduation thesis of English majors" as the core research theme, the author has carried out a systematic literature retrieval on CNKI, covering journal papers, conference proceedings

and master's dissertations which are published in the recent five years, with the total number of relevant documents amounting to roughly 82. Among these collected studies, about 5 documents focus on the writing of master's essays, while nearly 15 center their discussions on thesis education in independent colleges and application-oriented undergraduate universities. By carefully sorting out, summarizing and analyzing the existing research findings, previous studies have explored three aspects as follows. First, the studies are conducted from the perspective of student subjects. Scholars have probed into the cultivation of students' critical thinking abilities, innovative awareness and comprehensive competence in the process of thesis writing, as well as their internal writing motivation, learning attitudes and related influencing factors. Second, the studies are conducted from the perspective of the thesis text itself. Existing research attach great importance to identifying the typical problems and deficiencies in thesis writing and putting forward valuable strategies and practical solutions. Third, the studies are conducted from the perspective of thesis writing courses and teaching practice. Scholars have continuously attempted to explore innovative teaching models, put forward the optimal teaching designs and effective practical methods to promote the teaching reform and development of graduation thesis teaching.

To sum up, compared with studies in other disciplinary fields, the overall amount of academic research focusing on thesis writing for English majors remains relatively scarce. It is true that previous research has paved a solid foundation and exerted positive significance in promoting the standardization and quality improvement of thesis writing among English majors, yet the majority of these studies tend to focus on a single dimension, lacking a sustainable and long-term improvement mechanism which runs through the whole process. Meanwhile, the specific methodological approaches in the actual guidance provided by supervisors have been overlooked. All of these aspects result in failing to establish a dynamic, comprehensive and whole-process feedback mechanism. As a result, English majors differ greatly in the overall quality of graduation thesis. In actual teaching practice, many problems in thesis writing, at an early stage, are hard to be detected and often emerge behind schedule. It is not until students submit their first drafts of paper, or even until the plagiarism checking for the paper is conducted, that a large number of problems break out intensively, making it extremely difficult for students to revise them within a limited period. In fact, during the undergraduate education stage, the entire process of undergraduate thesis writing for English majors generally spans two semesters, ranging from topic selection to the final defense. The guidance of graduation thesis usually adopts the tutorial system, under which supervisors play a pivotal and irreplaceable role in the whole process of students' completion of the graduation thesis, exerting a profound and far-reaching influence on the formation of students' academic thinking and the improvement of their thesis quality.

Specifically, the guidance content covers a series of key links: assisting students in sorting out research ideas and determining proper research topics, guiding students in collecting, classifying and summarizing relevant literature materials, helping students draft and revise the research proposal repeatedly, supporting students in formulating a logical thesis outline, guiding students to complete the first draft and carry out continuous revision, polishing and improving until the final version is finalized, as well as providing pertinent guidance on defense skills and academic norms. In detail, the guidance involves multiple dimensions such as the rationality of thesis framework and structure, the accuracy and fluency of language expression, and the standardization of thesis format and citation norms.

Therefore, under the guidance of In-depth Learning Concept, and based on the talent cultivation orientation of application-oriented universities, this study attempts to construct a comprehensive and systematic cultivation framework for the guidance of graduation thesis for English majors. By implementing whole-process and sustained guidance for students through this framework, the study aims to systematically cultivate students' information knowledge,

establish their information awareness, enhance their information ability and information ethics, enhance their overall information literacy and comprehensive academic competence in an all-round way, so as to fundamentally optimize the quality of graduation thesis guidance, and ultimately realize the sustainable development of graduation thesis guidance for English majors at the undergraduate level.

1.2. Significance of the Research

1.2.1. Theoretical Significance

The National Standards for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in Institutions of Higher Education has clearly stated that graduation thesis is designed to foster and examine students' capability to comprehensively apply theoretical knowledge into exploring and coping with practical problems, as well as their innovative thinking and pragmatic abilities[2]. For English majors, thesis writing acts as an all-round comprehensive training process that integrates knowledge absorption, academic research, critical thinking and innovative exploration, which could effectively inspect whether students have acquired solid professional literacy and independent problem-solving competence through four years of systematic undergraduate study and disciplinary accumulation. Furthermore, undergraduate thesis writing can fully embody student' comprehensive language application proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, systematically cultivate their logical cognition, critical thinking and academic reasoning abilities, thus lay a solid foundation for stimulating their innovative awareness, broadening their academic horizons and shaping their independent research literacy in the field of foreign language studies.

1.2.2. Practical Significance

Undergraduate graduation thesis across the country, in both public and private universities and colleges, is subject to rigorously random inspection in accordance with the *Trial Measures for Random Inspection of Undergraduate Graduation Thesis (Design)* issued by the Ministry of Education. The inspection results exert a direct and far-reaching impact on multiple key aspects of higher education development. On the institutional level, they are closely connected with the school's overall educational reputation, discipline development assessment, professional construction evaluation, and talent training quality certification. On the individual level, the qualification and quality of graduation thesis directly determine students' Bachelor degree grant qualification, academic capability and future career development opportunities. The quality of undergraduate graduation thesis, under this circumstance, has gradually become a double-edged sword for both universities and students. Not only does it serve as a major evaluation indicator to test the practical effects of colleges' talent training systems and curriculum construction, but also profoundly influences students' academic development trajectory, employment competitiveness and long-term professional growth, playing an irreplaceable pivotal role in regulating academic norms, intensifying academic integrity and improving the overall quality of undergraduate talent cultivation.

1.3. Research Value

In terms of theoretical value, this study can effectively enrich and promote the systematic theoretical framework for graduation thesis guidance of English majors in application-oriented universities and colleges, thus provide useful references for subsequent research in this field, help universities and colleges construct a more scientific thesis guidance framework, so as to enhance the professional competitiveness and talent cultivation influence of local application-oriented universities among peer institutions of the same type.

In terms of practical value, this study offers practical guidance methods and strategies for English major teachers in application-oriented universities, copes with diverse prominent difficulties and realistic problems existing in the current daily graduation thesis teaching and

guidance work, significantly boosts the overall efficiency and targeted effectiveness of teachers' thesis guidance, and steadily improves the overall writing level and academic quality of graduation thesis of English majors. What's more, this study could also assist in promoting the continuous professional growth and comprehensive competence for college English teachers, helping teachers summarize pragmatic experience, refine teaching path. At the same time, it is conducive to enhancing teachers' professional capabilities and integrate the thesis guidance concepts and some practical methods into daily teaching and curriculum practice in a long-term and effective way.

In terms of social value, this study is beneficial to cultivate high-quality application-oriented English graduates with advanced critical thinking ability, independent logical thinking awareness and innovative practical exploration capacity, so as to accurately adapt to and meet the diversified market demands for high-level applied foreign language talents in the current social and economic development.

2. Research Content

Based on the concept of in-depth learning, this study is committed to constructing a sustainable training framework for graduation thesis guidance for English majors in application-oriented universities. Centering on the cohesive mechanism between English major courses and graduation thesis writing, the study systematically explores the preliminary supporting role of curriculum content in cultivating students' academic writing competence. Meanwhile, it consolidates the core position of supervisors in the whole-process guidance, integrates the multi-dimensional cultivation of information literacy, research capacity and other key competencies throughout the entire learning and guidance process, conducts an in-depth analysis of the dynamically interactive and symbiotic relationship among information literacy, academic competence and guidance quality, and clarifies their internal logical connections. This study verifies the effectiveness of the proposed framework through empirical research. It aims to realize the organic coordination and continuous optimization of all links in graduation thesis guidance, promote the gradual and steady improvement of students' writing ability, ultimately establish a long-term and effective guidance system for graduation thesis, and comprehensively enhance the overall quality of graduation thesis and the talent cultivation output efficiency of English majors in application-oriented colleges and universities.

3. Research Design

3.1. Construction of a whole-process guidance mechanism supported by English curriculum

The preparation for graduation thesis writing needs to run through the entire undergraduate stage. In addition to listening, speaking, reading, and writing courses that consolidate students' sentence construction, discourse organization skills, and comprehensive language application capability, core courses such as linguistics, literature, culture, and translation also play a vital role in providing early-stage support for graduation thesis writing. Their enabling effect embodies in offering research perspectives, nurturing topic directions, and familiarizing research methods. Through collaborative group work, classroom presentations, and other instructional activities, English teachers should help students gradually develop critical thinking skills, master the structural framework and argumentation logic of academic papers, and ultimately achieve a closed-loop cultivation that transforms curriculum knowledge accumulation into academic capacity.

To ensure the sustainable cultivation of thesis guidance for English majors, this study is guided by the Constructive Learning Theory, emphasizes the dominant position of students, enables

learners to proceed with in-depth and proactive exploration activities on the basis of their cognitive schemas. The theory holds the view that the essence of learning lies in guiding students to start from their prior experience, gradually constructing and generating brand-new personal experience systems. Constructive Learning Theory is composed of three core dimensions, that is, the perspectives of knowledge, learning and teaching. It vigorously advocates the implementation of inquiry-based learning and cooperative learning in practical teaching, and actively proposes situational teaching modes as well as scaffolding teaching strategies[3]. Only by integrating the logic of constructivism's "active construction" throughout the entire process of topic selection, proposal, writing and revision can students' in-depth exploration behavior be effectively stimulated and the learning effect of in-depth learning be achieved.

At present, the course of thesis writing guidance for English majors in the author's university is arranged with merely 8 times, covering a total of 16 periods, which makes it tough for students to fully digest, absorb and internalize the professional knowledge and writing skills they have learned in limited class time. Moreover, teachers' systematic explanation of theories and classroom teaching are only one part of the whole guidance process. What matters more is to let students learn how write the paper by doing, which fully implements the student-centered learning mode, encourage students to engage in independent exploration and in-depth thinking relying on their existing cognitive schemas, and convert the information from the short-term memory and working memory into the long-term memory through intensive and detailed cognitive processing. With the dual functions of assimilation and accommodation in cognitive development, such information can be permanently stored in students' knowledge reserve system and ultimately transformed into practical abilities and cognitive cognition belonging to individual learners. In addition, students, at the initial stage of research, are unable to determine the entire content and complete framework of whole thesis writing. They need to make multiple adjustments and optimal revisions to the structural framework of their papers through continuous literature reading, independent thinking, practical writing and one-on-one guidance from supervisors.

In line with the core requirements of the constructive perspective of knowledge, students are required to possess sharp sensitivity to information identification, accurate ability of information acquisition and objective judgment of information content when searching for and consulting massive learning materials through online network resources and library document resources. They should master the scientific and effective method of screening and distinguishing various information and sources, and strictly refrain from quoting non-academic and unreliable network platforms such as the app of "Homework Help" in their thesis writing. In line with the perspective of learning, students ought to start the study based on their research topics, actively conduct extensive reading of relevant literature and carry out deep processing and intensive analysis of document materials, so as to determine the most appropriate research perspective, theoretical foundations, research methods and specific research content for their own graduation thesis. In line with the perspective of teaching, considering that undergraduates have no way to independently complete the whole complex task of thesis writing without external support, teachers are required to constantly point out their hidden problems and underlying deficiencies that students fail to perceive and recognize in the writing process, help learners sort out correct writing methods and logical paths, and steadily promote their academic output ability and professional expression level.

3.2. Detailed teacher-student interactive strategies guided by In-depth Learning

In-depth Learning refers to a high-level learning mode in which learners critically absorb and comprehend new ideas and facts on the premise of sufficient comprehension, integrate newly

acquired knowledge into their original cognitive structure and knowledge system, establish effective logical connections between diverse ideological viewpoints and theoretical contents, transfer and apply existing acquired knowledge to brand-new practical situations, and further make rational decisions and solve complex practical problems.

Relying on the basic professional knowledge and disciplinary theories accumulated in the early stage of English major study and combining with social experiences in fields such as teaching and translation, students can explore and discover valuable research topics worthy of in-depth discussion and systematic research. Under one-on-one guidance of supervisors, students conduct extensive retrieval and intensive consultation of various document resources, collect a large number of reading notes and literature cards, and continuously polish and sort out research content and logical framework through in-depth knowledge combing and effective teacher-student communication, so as to finalize the research topic after repeated revision and optimization. The research hypotheses which are put forward by students can be regarded as the specific situational creation for academic research. On the basis of in-depth processing and systematic sorting of previous research achievements made by domestic and foreign scholars, learners summarize and formulate the basic outline of graduation thesis, and determine the overall research ideas and complete research paths through multiple rounds of teacher-student interaction, discussion and revision. After completing the formulation of research frameworks, students start the first draft of thesis writing. Teachers provide timely and pertinent feedback and revision suggestions in every single stages, while students carry out repeated modification, polishing and improvement until the final version of the thesis is finalized. Every round of questioning and professional feedback from supervisors, every process of independent exploration and in-depth thinking completed by students, as well as every effective interaction and collaborative revision between teachers and students, jointly promote the whole process of thesis writing to move towards a higher level of in-depth research. The entire guidance and writing process organically integrates teachers' pertinent teaching and guidance with students' autonomous learning and personalized exploration.

3.3. The whole-process cultivation path of information literacy from the perspective of educational informatization

Information literacy mainly covers information awareness, information knowledge, information capability and information ethics[4]. Against the backdrop of educational informatization, thesis guidance should actively integrate modern information technology. Teachers shall regularly hold online and offline meetings to exhibit ways of accessing commonly used databases and share reading reflections, assisting students in mastering relevant skills swiftly, obtain literature accurately and enhance their information capabilities. Via WeChat platform, students are required to upload preliminary reading cards, notes and sources of literature information, keep track of their learning progress, urge them to accumulate information knowledge and foster their information awareness. Before the first draft, teachers help students sort out writing ideas and illustrate the formatting settings such as table of contents, font, line spacing, paragraph spacing, headers and footers, so as to promote students' document processing and editing skills. Meanwhile, students are required to submit complete sources for all cited references to standardize their academic awareness. Sound supervision from teachers, throughout the whole process, can effectively safeguard students' information ethics.

4. Conclusion

Based on the concept of In-depth Learning and relying on the in-depth integration of Constructive Learning Theory and information technology, the in-depth cultivation of students' information literacy in thesis supervision for English majors need to adopt a student-centered

mode, emphasizing the situational creation, autonomous learning and critical thinking. At the same time, the advantages of information technology should be fully explored to enhance students' abilities in information retrieval, processing, analysis and communication. Through the early-stage support of English courses, the meticulous guidance of teachers throughout the entire process, and the whole-process cultivation of information literacy, a sustainable training framework integrating courses, guidance, and thesis has been established, so as to lay a solid foundation for their future academic research and career development.

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