A Survey of Sinological Literacy of College English Majors Under the Background of New Liberal Arts

-- A Case Study on Chongqing Normal University

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Abstract: Under the new circumstances, the world development pattern has undergone rapid changes, and China is playing an increasingly important role on the international stage. To establish a good national image under the background of globalization, higher requirements are put forward for English majors to improve their Sinological literacy. Based on the background of the new liberal arts, the author takes English majors in Chongqing Normal University as the research subject. And combines domestic and foreign research results to study the current situation of Sinological literacy through questionnaires, interviews, and literature research. The questions consists of 4 dimensions (Sinological knowledge, Sinological competence, Sinological spirits, and Sinological emotions.) and 53 questions. The research questions are: (1) What is the status quo and problems of English majors' Sinological literacy in Chongqing Normal University? (2) What are the causes leading to students' lack of Sinological literacy? (3) What measures are offered to improve Sinological literacy? The paper founds that students majoring in English lack knowledge related to sinology. They are confused about the Sinological spirit and have weak competencies. By interviewing, the paper found 4 reasons that may explained it: (1) Students lack interest and incentive to learn Sinology. (2) There are few qualified teachers who are equipped with abundant Sinology. (3) Students prefer fragmented knowledge than Sinology due to the era of multimedia. (4) English majors are more likely to be influenced by Western culture if they’re not guided correctly. Through literature research, the paper also raises some measures:(1) Establish the correct concept, the school should add the corresponding subjects. (2) Strengthen teachers' character. (3) Make full use of the rich activities in the second classroom. (4) Build campus culture full of Sinological elements. The author analyzes the result of the investigation case and gives some corresponding countermeasures to solve the problem, in order to provide suggestions for the Sinological literacy cultivation of college English majors and hopes that schools can train more talents for English majors to communicate with other cultures.

Keywords: New Liberal Arts Background; Sinological Literacy; College English Major.

1. Introduction

In recent years, under the trend of globalization, cultural exchanges between countries are frequent. In the previous "hot English fever", English became the universal language. However, we have overlooked the significance of Sinology which is a prerequisite for the modern education and national prosperity.

As emphasized in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, "Culture is the soul of a country and a nation.” Chinese Present Xi Jinping said. Sinology studies bring the actual cultural effects in China, not by approaching China, but rather by culturally, temporally, and spatially “alienating” and rejecting China, providing an image of the “cultural Other” for the “grand narrative” of Western modernity (Zhou, 2018). College students' Sinological literacy has a direct impact on the development of comprehensive quality of college students (Luo&Wang). Especially for English major students, they play an important role in telling Chinese stories to the world (Yu Yan,2022). Meanwhile, English majors have a particular identity (Liu Yanchao, 2010). They have more access to face other cultures. However, according to current studies, the existing researches focusing on new liberal arts English majors are limited.

Hence, this paper, from the perspective of cross-culture communication, has investigated the status quo of English majors’ Sinological literacy and their existing problems by questionnaire, which consists of 4 dimensions. Based on the result of questionnaire and literature integration, the effective measures are discussed. It is hoped that this study offers an innovative perspective on English majors’ Sinological literacy and suggestions for the long-term development of sinology education for college students.

2. Literature Review

This part mainly introduces the concept of new liberal arts, sinology and Sinological literacy, and then focuses on the related studies at home of Sinology.

2.1. Definition of Key Concepts

(a). New Liberal Arts

In August 2018, before the National Education Conference, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed that "higher education should strive to develop new engineering, new medical science, new agricultural science, and new liberal arts” (referred to as the "Four new" construction), and formally proposed the concept of "new liberal arts". On April 29, 2019, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Finance and other departments jointly held the launch conference of the "Six Excellence and One Brilliance" plan, marking the official opening of the national "four new" construction project. The definition of "new liberal arts" in Chinese academic circles is mostly based on the comparison with traditional liberal arts (Huang Qibing, 2020). Therefore, the new liberal arts are based on the traditional liberal arts, the
innovative development of the traditional liberal arts, the innovative integration of the traditional liberal arts with other disciplines, and the application of liberal arts knowledge. The "new" of the new liberal arts can be summarized as follows: the change of the era theme of the humanistic spirit; Comprehensive integration and innovation of various disciplines; Digital education mode and learning mode innovation (Yu Yan, 2022).

(b). Sinology

In the broad sense, rather than being a branch of learning or a system of knowledge, Sinology is better described as an ideology, consisting of fabrication and imaginings, as well as the coordination of knowledge and power. In the narrow sense, Sinology refers to studies of China and Chinese culture as part of Oriental studies. (Zhou, 2018). Ji Xianlin, a master of Sinology, proposed that Sinology should include not only traditional knowledge but also traditional morality, etiquette, norms, cultural values, and national spirit.

(c). Sinological Literacy

Wan Shuyan (2020) said that Sinology literacy refers to People's Daily cultivation of sinology, and people's relatively stable and basic knowledge, ability and emotional attitude towards sinology that adapts to the requirements of the development of The Times. Wang Yajuan and Li Xiaoyi et al. (2020) mentioned that Sinological literacy refers to people's relatively stable literacy, ability, and emotional cognition towards Sinology, or people's ability to know and use Sinology. Ma Xiaoxia (2018) said that Sinological literacy is to make people have a correct and stable understanding of sinology classics through studying Sinology classics. In conclusion, Sinological literacy refers to the internalization and externalization of Sinological knowledge, competence and spirits and emotions, which promote people's inner cultivation and moral cognition.

The particularity of English majors, one of the most exposed people to Western language and culture, are the "susceptible" group to Western culture. As college English majors, they should not only have international awareness and understanding of foreign cultures, but also have awareness of national traditional culture (Liu Yanchao, 2010). Only in this way can he truly understand foreign culture, and at the same time, he is the inheritor and promoter of traditional Chinese culture.

Thus, The combination of English major learning and the cultivation of Sinological literacy reflects the connotation of the current new liberal arts. This will not only help English major learners to strengthen their cultural self-confidence, steer the course in the tide of cultural collision, promote wonderful Chinese stories, and make national culture sail (Yu Yan, 2022). Moreover, it is conducive to guiding students' thinking and politics in the course, so that students can get valuable guidance (Chen Liying, 2023).

2.2. Studies at Home

Domestic scholars have also researched on Sinology. On the one hand, some of them are from the macro definition of Sinology and its related term. Sinology refers to a field of scholarship, while “Sinologist” expresses the ideological or discursive properties of the said field, demonstrating the fabrications and coordination of power implicit within its knowledge, similar to “Orientalism,” as employed by Edward Said (Zhou, 2018). Sinology also emphasizes the shared sense of common humanity and opposes any parochial view on China studies (Gu&Zhou, 2018).

On the other hand, some of them are from the micro level of Sinological literacy among college students. Sinology, represented by traditional Chinese culture, is an important soil for cultivating the literacy of contemporary Chinese university students. Sinological literacy among university students directly affects their comprehensive quality development and skill enhancement (Luo &Wang). However, the current Sinological literacy of college students are not satisfactory, and the education and guidance mechanism Sinology in universities is also relatively lacking. Meanwhile some scholars have criticized the college education in Sinology that students’ indifference towards Sinology and the lack of Sinological literacy are closely related to the poor status of college students' general education (Gu &Wang). And several scholars proposal that in terms of teaching methods, Sinological education should pay attention to cultivating students' behavioral habits and abilities. Li Biyen (2012) pointed out that there are shortcomings in the teaching of English majors. She did not link Sinology with Western studies and neglected the cultivation of Sinology literacy of English majors. She proposed strategies for cultivating Sinology literacy, including setting up correct cultural concepts, adjusting curriculum Settings, and infiltrating traditional Chinese culture through multiple channels in teaching. Thus, it is necessary to establish a planned, purposeful, sustainable, and long-term system of Sinological education (Hou, 2020).

Hence, domestic research has shown that Sinology plays an indispensable and important role, and Sinological education in college can promote the internalization of socialist core values of students. But the current research on students' Sinological literacy mostly stays in primary and middle school students, and the research subjects are relatively simple. There are few studies on how to implement Sinological literacy in English majors, so this study hopes to make up for the deficiency at this aspect.

Meanwhile, the total number of current researches focusing on English majors' Sinological literacy is not sufficient. In CNKI, there are 308 articles related to Sinology literacy, most of which focus on the cultivation of Sinology literacy of primary and secondary school students, followed by 126 articles related to Chinese subjects, and only 18 articles related to English. In 2018, the CPC Central Committee made it clear that we will develop new liberal arts which is a key to constructing a bridge between English major and Sinology due to its purpose of breaking professional barriers and discipline barriers. However, the number of the existing research with a theme of "new liberal arts English major" is limited.

3. Theoretical Foundation

3.1. Cross Cultural Communication

Cross cultural communication competence, with rich connotations, is an important concept in the field of cross-cultural communication. Scholars have conducted extensive discussions on this concept and provided different interpretations. Wiseman (2004: 192) summarizes previous research findings and believes that the academic community has gradually reached a consensus after decades of research that cross-cultural communication competence specifically refers to the knowledge, motivation, and skills required to communicate appropriately and effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds.
The difference between cross-cultural communication and general cultural communication lies in the word 'cross', meaning that both parties come from different cultural backgrounds. Different cultural backgrounds between the two parties in communication can easily create communication barriers. Thus, understanding diversified cultural customs, lifestyles, ways of thinking, religious etiquette, nonverbal communication has become an indispensable part of the cross-cultural communication ability cultivation system.

Under the background rapid global economic development, the "dominant" position of English is difficult to shake. However, when Chinese people attach great importance to learning English, they should not forget that traditional Chinese culture is the essence of national culture. Traditional Chinese culture is a prerequisite for learning any foreign language. In order to provide a deeper analysis of foreign cultures, cultural globalization puts forward a higher requirement for people to have strong cultural discrimination and criticism, as well as their own solid cultural knowledge foundation. At the same time, if cross-cultural communication with foreign countries is bland to traditional Chinese culture, this kind of communication is destined to be a loft in the air and end in failure. Therefore, in order to truly improve English teaching and improve teaching quality, focusing solely on the English language itself is far from enough. It is necessary to integrate traditional Chinese culture into English teaching practice and improve students' humanistic and comprehensive qualities as a whole.

3.2. Language Transfer

Language transfer is a type of "cross-linguistic influence" that includes the influence of the mother tongue on second language acquisition and the borrowing of the mother tongue from the second language (Odlin, 1989). Although language transfer studies cross-linguistic influence, most studies still focus on the impact of mother tongue on second language acquisition, so language transfer has become a synonym for mother tongue transfer.

As English majors, we only focus on foreign language learning and overlook the impact of mother tongue learning on foreign language learning. Firstly, there is a positive migration; The similarities between mother tongue and second language often promote second language acquisition; Secondly, there is negative transfer. Only by mastering the mother tongue comprehensively and systematically can we better avoid unfavorable factors in language transfer.

4. Methods

4.1. Research Questions

This paper would like to find out the English majors' understanding and identification of Sinology literacy, analyze the current problems and causes, and summarize some effective ways to enhance the level of Sinological literacy of English majors, to promote the positive change of English majors' Sinology learning attitude and behavior under the current Chinese environment, to facilitate English majors to learn Sinology in a better way and better propagate Chinese traditional culture knowledge

(1) What is the status quo of English majors' Sinological literacy at Chongqing Normal University?
(2) What are the causes leading to students' lack of Sinological literacy?
(3) What measures are offered to improve Sinological literacy?

4.2. Subjects

In order to ensure the objectivity and credibility of the survey results, this survey is conducted by all undergraduates majoring in English in Chongqing Normal University. They are invited to participate in the survey. Factors such as the age and grade of the respondents were fully considered. 180 questionnaires were collected. The students are from freshmen, sophomore, junior, and seniors (see Figure 1).

4.3. Instruments

Through the review, collection, and analysis of relevant literature in recent years, the paper believes that the evaluation of a student's sinology literacy level should not only look at his mastery of sinology knowledge, but also at his sinology ability, sinology spirit, and sinology emotion. To this end, this paper is based on Wan Shuyan's survey of Middle School students' Sinology Literacy and Training Countermeasures published in the Journal of Nanchang Normal University, and redesigned the questionnaire of English major students' Sinological literacy, which mainly includes four dimensions: Sinological knowledge, Sinological ability (reading and writing), Sinological spirit and Sinological emotion.

To further understand the problems existing in the Chinese
literacy of English majors in Chongqing Normal University and put forward better solutions, the author also designed an interview according to the existing problems after the questionnaire was issued, and conducted an interview with English major teachers at an agreed interview place (see Appendix B).

This study used the app named Questionnaire Star to distribute electronic questionnaire and collect primary data. The link to the online questionnaire is htm:\ from QuestionnaireStar. There are a total of 53 questions, including multiple questions, and gap-filling questions. The questionnaire is divided into four dimensions: Sinological knowledge, Sinological competence (reading and writing), Sinological spirits, and Sinological emotions. Details about the questions of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). Participants were required to make a response to every question based on their previous experience and current knowledge.

4.4. Data Collection and Analysis

This study received 180 valid responses. And these primary data were collected and transferred for further analysis by using Excel to conduct statistical analysis. The data analysis is divided into four parts according to the four dimensions related to Sinological literacy.

(a). Sinological Knowledge Analysis

For setting this part (see Appendix A), the author mainly uses the form of choice questions, and gap filling questions. The questions include ancient Chinese poems, classics, red culture knowledge, ancient music and drama knowledge, and the translation of ancient culture. According to the total statistic data, about 72% of students choose the wrong, while only 28% choose the right (see Figure 2). It can be seen that most students lack the Sinological knowledge.

![Figure 2. The Correct Rate of Sinological Knowledge Answer](image)

For example, as for the question "How many ancient poems and articles can be memorized", 60 percent of the people can recite less than or equal to ten pieces of ancient poems and articles, and 15 percent can recite between eleven and twenty pieces of ancient poems and articles. 10 percent can recite between 21 and 30 pieces of ancient poems and articles, and 10 percent can recite between 31 and 40 pieces of ancient poems and articles (see Figure 3). It can be seen that most of the students can recite few ancient poems and articles, which shows that most of the English majors have shallow knowledge of Sinological knowledge.

![Figure 3. How many ancient poems and articles can you recall?](image)

(b). Sinological Competence Analysis

In "can you accurately translate the classical culture of Chinese studies into English." In this question, 10% of students completely agree, 10% agree, 15% are not sure, 35% disagree, and 30% completely disagree. This shows that there are some problems in students' translation of sinology in English. Therefore, the author specially interviewed the teachers of English majors, and the specific interview content is as follows:(see Figure 7)
Figure 4. Can you accurately translate the classical culture of Chinese studies into English

(c). Sinological Spirit Analysis
10 percent of the students fully agree to inherit the spirit of Sinology, 20 percent agree to inherit the spirit of Sinology, 20 percent are not sure, and 30 percent disagree. Most of the students have a weak awareness of inheriting the spirit of sinology.

Figure 5. Whether it is Necessary to Inherit the Spirit of Sinology in Contemporary Times

(d). Sinological Emotion Analysis
Similarly, the author conducted a questionnaire survey on whether students think it is easy to learn sinology and whether they take the initiative to learn sinology in daily life. Only 25% think it is easy to learn Sinology and 35% think it is difficult, which is consistent with the teacher's interview (see figure 5).

In terms of whether English majors take the initiative to learn sinology at ordinary times, only 20% will take the initiative to learn Sinology, and 50% of the students will not take the initiative to learn Sinology, which shows that there are certain deficiencies in the ability of English specialized students to learn Sinology independently (see figure 6).

Figure 6. It is easy for English major to learn Sinology
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![Figure 7. Will you take the Initiative to Learn Sinology in Daily Life](image7.png)

Result of Interview

Interview 1:
Interviewee: Miss Chen, a freshman teacher for English majors.
Author: What are the reasons why English majors are weak in Sinological knowledge?
Interviewee: English major students pay more attention to English subject learning. Western culture is their focus. Meanwhile, there are few subjects related to sinology in their curriculum. As a result, they only focus on the learning of English, but ignore the study of sinology.

Interview 2:
Interviewee: Mr. Liu, English major teacher
Author: What are the reasons why English majors are lacking in Sinological competence?
Miss Liu: Because the English major itself has CET-4, CET-6 TEM-4 and TEM-8 exams, students and teachers will pay attention to the cultivation of English professional knowledge. In this case, the cultivation of sinology literacy is ignored. Additionally, there are few activities provided for students to show their Sinological competence, so they may lose the enthusiasm to learn Sinology independently.

The final place of students' learning is the school. As the place of students' learning, the school's influence is far-reaching. In terms of "You usually take the initiative to participate in sinology-related lectures or exhibitions", 15% agreed, while 70% disagreed (see figure 8). In terms of "you take the initiative to share sinology books or sinology-related knowledge with people around you", 15% agreed (see figure 9). These reflect the students' initiative to learn the enthusiasm is not high, in order to explore whether the school is responsible for this, the author found the head of the school's educational administration department to understand the school's sinology literacy related activities.

![Figure 8. Sinological competence](image8.png)
To this end, the author found the person in charge of the educational administration department of the school to interview and understand the cultivation of the school’s Sinological literacy, the specific interview content is as follows:

Interview 3
Interview subject: Head of the Academic Affairs Office of the College of English, Chongqing Normal University.

Head of the Academic Affairs Office: In modern society, the demand for talents is no longer the demand for skills, more important is to cultivate the quality of students. Sinology literacy can cultivate the moral quality of English majors, so it is necessary to carry out sinology literacy education for English majors.

Author: At present, does the school involve the Chinese literacy education in the curriculum arrangement?

Head of the Academic Affairs Office: There will be one Chinese class every week, but there is no special Chinese literacy class.

To sum up, it can be seen that the lack of Sinological literacy in English majors is not only related to the students themselves only paying attention to the cultivation of English skills but also the lack of teachers’ teaching of Sinological literacy and the lack of corresponding activities in schools.

5. Result Discussion

5.1. The Existing Problems and Causes in Students’ Sinological Literacy

Based on the questionnaire survey and interviews with teachers in the school, this paper analyzes some problems existing in the Sinological literacy of English majors. In the next chapter, the author will analyze 4 aspects: Sinological knowledge, Sinological competence, Sinological spirit, and Sinological emotion, and find solutions and interventions through analysis.

(a) About “Sinological knowledge”

It can be seen that English students’ knowledge of Chinese studies is still relatively weak. Students lack interest in learning, and students who want to learn sinology are still independent learners. From interviews with teachers, it is known that English majors lack the learning initiative and independent learning ability.

(b) About “Sinological competence”

Due to utilitarian learning such as studying for professional knowledge and exams, most of the students majoring in English have good knowledge and skills in their major, but they know nothing about sinology and don’t know how to improve their competence either.

(c) About ”Sinological spirit”

Due to the influence of multimedia, compared with reading complicated sinological books, students prefer to brush some short videos to acquire fragmented knowledge. As a result, students have a weak awareness of inheriting the spirit of sinology because of lacking reading of sinology.

(d) About ”Sinological emotion”

Under the impact of multi-culture, especially under the influence of Western culture, students lack the correct value guidance. From the questionnaire, it can be seen that some English students lack confidence about sinology, which leads to their weakened feelings about sinology.

5.2. Some Measures to Improve Students’ Sinological Literacy

Given the above problems, this paper puts forward some solutions for reference.

(a). To establish the Correct Concept, the School Should Add the Corresponding Subjects

For college English major teaching, it is necessary to develop corresponding courses in order to integrate sinology literacy into English learning. Curriculum and teaching materials are the foundation to support and promote students’ Sinological literacy. Therefore, schools need to do the following: First, set up a team for the development of English courses about Sinology literacy. Second, adhere to the unity of moral education and intellectual education in curriculum development. Finally, the incentive mechanism of course development needs to be set up.

(b) . Strengthen Teachers’ Character

Teachers’ words and deeds have an important impact on the enthusiasm of English majors studying Sinology, so schools also need to attach great importance to the improvement of teachers’ sinology literacy. From the current stage, the recruitment of English major teachers in schools mainly focuses on teachers’ English professional knowledge and professional skills. Therefore, schools should take effective measures such as strengthening the training of English major teachers and regularly training them in classical knowledge of Chinese studies and teaching skills. In addition, schools should drive the English major teachers’ enthusiasm to take the initiative to learn the quality of sinology and explore the path to the integration of English education and sinology classics.

(c). Make Full Use of the Rich Activities in the Second Classroom
The second class is relative to the first class which usually refers to classroom teaching, so the second class is often referred to some activities outside the classroom. Therefore, to integrate Chinese cultural literacy into English teaching, it is very necessary to carry out the second class. So that students can make full use of their subjective initiative to organize learning content and activities, which combine Chinese cultural literacy and English. For example, the school can also set up a special section on the new media platform such as Douyin, where students can upload their works that tell Chinese stories in English. In this way, students’ wisdom can be further developed and students’ innovative learning can be guided.

(d). Build Campus Culture

The school can hold activities related to the classical Chinese Studies competition, and the content should be diversified, which can be reading, speech, performance and chanting. This can not only give English majors the opportunity to show the achievements of learning Chinese classics but also stimulate the enthusiasm of students of other majors to learn Chinese classics. In addition to these, schools can also build more meaningful and valuable campus radio and music with the theme of Chinese classics, which could play a positive role in beautifying the school environment. Such campus culture is not only conducive to the comprehensive development of English majors but also plays a positive role and significance for the comprehensive development of students of other majors.

6. Conclusion

This paper, from the perspective of cross-culture communication, has investigated the status quo of English majors’ Sinological literacy and their existing problems through a questionnaire, which consists of 4 dimensions (Sinological knowledge, Sinological competence (reading and writing), Sinological spirits, and Sinological emotions.) and 30 questions. Our research questions are: (1) What is the status quo and problems of English majors’ Sinological literacy in Chongqing Normal University? (2) What are the causes leading to students’ lack of Sinological literacy? (3) What measures are offered to improve Sinological literacy? We found that students majoring in English are lacking in the knowledge related to sinology. They are confused about the Sinological spirit and have weak competences. Through literature research, the reasons behind the result are attributed to the dominance of western culture, the lag effect of sinology education, and teachers’ fixed teaching method. So, the suggested measures include creating diversified extracurricular activities to stimulate students’ interests, exploiting related subjects to impart Sinological knowledge systematically, and enhancing teachers’ professional training.

There are also some deficiencies in the investigation process, which need to be improved. The data is not sufficient. Only 180 English majors were selected for the questionnaire survey. It is necessary to enlarge the sample size to increase the credibility of the survey results. It is lacking in quantitative analysis about the questionnaire result. Though this study mentions some measures to solve the problems, the Sinological curriculum in details needs further exploration.

References

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