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Research on Role Transformation and Competency Reconstruction Methods of College English Teachers in the Era of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract: As artificial intelligence technology increasingly permeates every facet of higher education, the fundamental landscape of college English instruction—including pedagogical models and talent development standards—has undergone profound transformations. The traditional teacher role and competency framework for college English educators have become obsolete, failing to meet modern pedagogical demands. Drawing on theories such as posthumanism and distributed cognition, this study examines the structural shifts in English teaching driven by AI, identifies core pathways for teacher transformation, and proposes actionable competency restructuring strategies. These insights aim to equip college English instructors with practical tools for adapting to intelligent teaching environments and achieving professional growth, ultimately advancing English education toward higher quality.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; college English teachers; role transformation; competency reconstruction; teaching practice

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1. Introduction

With the deepening application of artificial intelligence technology in education, generative AI tools like ChatGPT and DeepSeek, along with speech recognition systems and intelligent teaching platforms, have gradually permeated every aspect of college English instruction, transforming traditional teaching methodologies and operational frameworks. As a public foundational course in higher education that combines practical utility with humanistic values, college English education has shifted its focus from mere language knowledge transmission to cultivating students 'cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and self-directed learning capabilities. This paradigm shift undoubtedly demands elevated professional competencies from educators. However, some college English instructors remain constrained by conventional teaching models, exhibiting challenges such as inadequate technological proficiency, unclear role perception, and limited innovation awareness. These factors hinder their ability to fully leverage AI technologies' educational potential, with some even resisting smart teaching tools due to technological anxiety. In this context, researching role transformation pathways and competency restructuring strategies for college English teachers to address practical challenges in professional development not only helps educators adapt to smart education requirements but

also drives innovation in teaching models. Achieving efficient human-machine collaborative teaching approaches holds significant theoretical and practical implications for advancing college English education[1].

2. The transformation of college english teaching and the inevitability of teacher role transition in the era of artificial intelligence

2.1. The structural impact of artificial intelligence on college english teaching

The application of artificial intelligence technology has broken the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional college English teaching, driving a profound shift from teacher-centered to student-centered pedagogical approaches. In practical classroom settings, intelligent speech recognition systems provide real-time pronunciation feedback and personalized speaking practice guidance, effectively addressing key challenges in conventional oral instruction such as large class sizes, significant individual differences, and lack of authentic practice environments. Meanwhile, smart writing assessment tools like Grammarly swiftly identify grammatical errors and lexical mismatches in student compositions while offering optimization suggestions. This significantly reduces teachers 'grading workload, allowing educators to focus more on nurturing students' writing cognition and guiding emotional expression development[2].

In terms of educational resource provision, artificial intelligence technology integrates extensive English learning materials, including listening materials, reading texts, and video courses tailored to varying difficulty levels and learning contexts. By analyzing students' foundational knowledge and specific needs, the system delivers personalized learning resources, achieving truly "one-to-one" precision teaching. Additionally, big data analytics track learning trajectories to pinpoint weak areas, providing educators with robust data support for adjusting teaching strategies and optimizing instructional plans. This transformation shifts pedagogy from experience-driven approaches to data-driven methodologies.

Theoretically, post-humanist theory demonstrates how human-machine integration reshapes teacher-student relationships by fostering deep symbiosis between humans and technology. This paradigm shifts traditional authority boundaries to establish more egalitarian and interactive learning dynamics. Meanwhile, distributed cognition theory advocates for environment-based teaching, asserting that cognition occurs not only within individuals but also through their interactions with the environment. This requires educators to leverage intelligent technologies to expand students' cognitive horizons and enhance collaborative learning among peers.

2.2. The inevitability of core transformation in teacher roles

In traditional universities, English teachers primarily function as "knowledge transmitters," focusing on teaching core language skills like vocabulary, grammar, and texts while guiding the entire learning process. However, in the AI era, this role has shifted. AI tools now deliver more efficient and accurate instruction, assessment, and feedback on fundamental language knowledge. This evolution compels teachers to adapt their roles—otherwise, they risk falling behind in the rapidly evolving educational landscape[3].

From the perspective of talent development needs, the requirements for college English professionals in the new era have evolved from "mastering basic language skills" to "developing cross-cultural communication competence, critical thinking, and innovative capabilities." Cultivating these advanced competencies cannot be achieved by AI tools alone; it requires teachers 'guidance and inspiration. Moreover, AI applications present ethical challenges such as algorithmic bias, academic integrity, and privacy security, necessitating teachers to provide proper guidance and standards. This helps students establish correct perspectives on technology use and avoid risks caused by misuse. Therefore, the transformation of college English teachers' roles is not about passively adapting to changes, but rather an inevitable choice to actively align with educational reforms and meet talent development demands.

3. Core directions for role transformation of college english teachers in the era of artificial intelligence

In light of the transformative characteristics of college English teaching in the era of artificial intelligence and the demands for talent cultivation, the role transition of college English teachers should revolve around the core concept of "human-machine collaboration," shifting from the traditional "knowledge transmitter" to a multifaceted and integrated role. Specifically, this can be categorized into the following four directions[4].

3.1. Transition from "Knowledge transmitter" to "Learning designer"

With AI tools now handling the transmission and assessment of fundamental language knowledge, teachers 'core mission has shifted from "knowledge delivery" to "learning design". Educators must integrate curriculum objectives, students' learning needs and characteristics, and leverage AI tools to create personalized learning plans, tasks, and scenarios, establishing a "human-machine collaborative" framework. For example, in English reading and writing courses, teachers can guide students to use AI tools for literature searches, topic development, and academic language refinement. By designing real research questions, students can conduct small-scale studies and complete academic papers, thereby developing their research and writing skills through this process.

Furthermore, educators must leverage big data analytics to dynamically adapt learning plans based on student performance metrics, delivering personalized guidance that helps students overcome learning challenges and achieve precision teaching. This requires teachers to break free from traditional pedagogical frameworks, embrace a student-centered approach, and devote greater focus to instructional design and innovative teaching methods[5].

3.2. From "Classroom dominator" to "Learning guide and companion"

In the age of artificial intelligence, students have become the primary agents of learning, while teachers have transitioned from being classroom instructors to guides and companions in the learning process. Teachers are no longer the sole source of information in the classroom but instead help students actively utilize AI tools to acquire knowledge and solve problems, fostering their self-directed learning abilities. For instance, in oral language instruction, intelligent systems can provide real-time pronunciation feedback, while teachers focus on students' emotional expression and cultural appropriateness, guiding them to apply language in authentic communication scenarios. This approach helps students overcome anxiety in oral expression and enhances their communicative competence.

Meanwhile, teachers should focus on students 'learning processes and emotional needs. By combining online and offline approaches, they can engage in deep interactions with students, promptly address their questions, and provide encouragement and support in their studies. When students use AI tools for learning, teachers should guide them to view the role of these tools correctly, avoid over-reliance on AI, and cultivate students' independent thinking and critical thinking skills.

3.3. From "Skill trainers" to "Cultivators of cross-cultural literacy"

A core objective of college English education is to develop students' intercultural communication skills. While AI tools can provide linguistic support, they cannot convey the cultural values, thought patterns, and emotional nuances underlying different cultures. Therefore, college English teachers should transition from being mere "language skill trainers" to "cultivators of intercultural literacy". By integrating intercultural education elements into teaching, educators can help students understand cultural differences, foster intercultural tolerance, and enhance their communication abilities.

Teachers can utilize virtual reality technology to create immersive cross-cultural scenarios, enabling students to experience cultural clashes and integration within digital twin environments, thereby enhancing their cultural awareness. By integrating textbook content, English films, and literary works, educators can guide students to analyze linguistic expressions, social etiquette, and value systems across different cultural contexts. This approach cultivates students' "third space" cognitive abilities, helping them accurately convey information and respect cultural differences in cross-cultural

communication[6].

3.4. Transition from "Single educator" to "Lifelong learner and educational ecosystem builder"

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence technology has led to the continuous emergence of new intelligent teaching tools and pedagogical models. This demands that university English teachers embrace the concept of lifelong learning, constantly acquiring AI-related knowledge and skills to enhance their technical application capabilities and adapt to teaching reforms. By participating in academic salons, online training sessions, and teaching seminars, educators can learn AI tool applications and innovative teaching approaches. They should also establish personal knowledge management systems to document the effectiveness of intelligent tools and teaching reflections, thereby constructing an English teaching knowledge map and practicing the philosophy of 'learning-oriented teachers.'

Furthermore, educators should serve as architects of educational ecosystems, actively participating in developing intelligent English courses at universities. They must facilitate the deep integration of AI technology with English instruction while guiding students to adopt proper technology usage concepts and cultivate AI literacy. This enables students to identify deepfake content, evaluate information credibility, and enhance 21st-century core competencies. In teaching practice, educators should also address ethical concerns arising from AI applications, regulate student learning behaviors, uphold academic integrity, and foster a healthy, well-ordered intelligent education ecosystem.

4. Specific methods for competency reconstruction of college english teachers in the era of artificial intelligence

4.1. Enhancing the cultivation of technical application capabilities to alleviate technological anxiety

Higher education institutions should establish a tiered and categorized technical training system tailored to faculty members' age groups and technical proficiency levels. For middle-aged and senior teachers, targeted training programs should focus on mastering fundamental intelligent teaching tools, including operating smart learning platforms, AI grading systems, and speech recognition technologies. Younger educators should receive advanced technical training to explore innovative integration pathways between AI technologies and pedagogy, thereby fostering innovative teaching capabilities.

Meanwhile, universities should establish technical exchange platforms to organize teaching seminars and case study sessions for faculty members, enabling peer learning and sharing of practical experiences in intelligent education to alleviate technical anxiety. Educators themselves should cultivate proactive learning habits by utilizing online courses and academic forums to continuously acquire AI-related knowledge and skills, thereby enhancing their technical application capabilities and achieving deep integration of technology and pedagogy. For instance, educators could adopt best practices from Tsinghua University's Language Teaching Center, guiding students to effectively utilize AI tools in reading-writing and communication courses to simultaneously improve learning efficiency and academic quality.

4.2. Clarify the role orientation and enhance the consciousness of teaching innovation

College English instructors should proactively transform their teaching philosophies, clearly define their role in the AI era, break free from traditional pedagogical constraints, and embrace a student-centered approach. The focus of instruction must shift from knowledge transmission to competency development. By leveraging AI technologies, educators should innovate teaching content and methodologies, design personalized and diversified learning activities, and effectively stimulate students' academic engagement.

For instance, in English writing instruction, teachers can utilize AI writing tools to guide students through initial draft creation and revisions. By comparing AI-generated texts with students 'own work, educators can help them analyze strengths and weaknesses, thereby cultivating critical thinking and writing skills. In oral communication classes, AI-powered speech recognition systems provide personalized pronunciation feedback while designing authentic conversational scenarios to enhance students' speaking proficiency through interactive practice. Furthermore, teachers

should strengthen pedagogical research by exploring human-computer collaborative teaching models to drive innovation and advancement in instructional methodologies.

4.3. Enhancing cross-cultural teaching competence and data literacy

To address the challenge of insufficient cross-cultural teaching competence, universities should implement specialized training programs. This involves inviting experts and scholars in cross-cultural education to deliver lectures, helping teachers expand their knowledge base and master effective teaching methods. Educators themselves should proactively study diverse cultural contexts, stay updated on global cultural trends, and continuously enhance their cross-cultural literacy. By integrating cross-cultural educational elements into teaching practices, they can effectively cultivate students' intercultural communication skills.

To enhance data literacy, universities should implement big data analytics training programs. This equips educators with methodologies for data collection, organization, and interpretation, enabling them to analyze students' learning trajectories and needs through big data, thereby refining teaching strategies for precision education. Teachers must cultivate data awareness and integrate big data analytics into all teaching phases. By analyzing data, they can identify instructional challenges, optimize teaching plans, and improve educational outcomes. For instance, intelligent learning systems can generate personalized knowledge maps for students and create customized "cognitive scaffolds," truly achieving differentiated instruction tailored to individual needs.

4.4. Improve the professional development support system and clarify growth pathways

Universities should enhance the professional development support system for college English teachers by optimizing training content and adding specialized programs in artificial intelligence technology application, cross-cultural teaching, and data literacy, ensuring the training aligns with teachers 'practical needs. Additionally, universities should establish a scientific teacher evaluation system that places greater emphasis on assessing teaching innovation, technology application, and cross-cultural teaching. The evaluation results should be linked to teachers' professional title evaluations and performance-based salaries to motivate their active participation in role transformation and skill enhancement.

Furthermore, universities should establish platforms for faculty exchange and collaboration, organizing cross-institutional and interdisciplinary teaching seminars to facilitate the sharing of pedagogical experiences and innovative approaches, thereby fostering collective professional growth among educators. Concurrently, institutions should encourage faculty participation in teaching reform initiatives and research projects, support studies on intelligent teaching methodologies, clarify career development pathways, and cultivate a positive environment for professional advancement. Faculty members themselves should develop personalized professional growth plans with clear objectives, continuously enhance their expertise, and achieve role transformation alongside competency enhancement.

5. Conclusion

The advent of the artificial intelligence era has brought both new opportunities and challenges to college English education, while driving profound transformations in the role of university English instructors. Educators should proactively adapt to educational reforms by embracing lifelong learning concepts, continuously enhancing professional competencies, and actively exploring human-machine collaborative teaching models. By fully leveraging the empowering potential of AI technologies, they can cultivate English professionals with cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and innovative capabilities, thereby advancing college English education toward higher-quality development.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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