

# **Integrating Career Education into Foreign Language Programmes in the Context of New Liberal Arts in China: An Integrative Model**

Shikun Shan<sup>1,4</sup>, Supramaniam Kaarthiyainy<sup>2\*</sup>, Mohammad Nor Afandi Ibrahim<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA,  
42300, Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia  
*shanshikun@126.com*  
*kaarthiyainy@uitm.edu.my*

<sup>3</sup>Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA,  
78000 Alor Gajah, Melaka, Malaysia  
*afandi664@uitm.edu.my*

<sup>4</sup>School of Foreign Languages, Shandong Jianzhu University, Jinan, China  
\*Corresponding Author

<https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v21i1.5586>

*Received: 14 November 2024*

*Accepted: 1 February 2025*

*Date Published Online: 6 March 2025*

*Published: 6 March 2025*

**Abstract:** Amidst the ongoing new liberal arts education reform in China, foreign language programmes encounter both challenges and opportunities. Traditionally, foreign language education has emphasized linguistic skills, and yet overlooked the development of professional qualities and employability, thus leading to low rate of graduate employment, reduction of the enrollment scale or even cancellation of foreign language programmes. In response, this study proposed a holistic model that integrates career education into foreign language programmes targeted for improving students' professional competence and employment competitiveness. The researchers selected the integration in Shandong Jianzhu University as a case study in which questionnaire survey responses were collected from the faculty leaders and teachers, alumni, students, parents, employers and education experts, and Analytic Hierarchy Process and contrast analysis were utilized to analyse the effect of career education integration. The findings showed that the cultivation process is valued as the most important factor followed by teaching effectiveness and that not only the employment rate of graduates and also the ratio of high-quality employment have increased. It has been tested that this new integration model is fruitful in promoting the development of foreign language programmes and offers new theoretical support and practical guidance for the revitalization of foreign language programmes.

**Keywords:** Integration, University, Career Education, Foreign Language Program, New Liberal Arts

## **1. Introduction**

In an era marked by globalization, the cultivation of foreign language programmes faces new challenges and requirements. While traditional education models emphasize language skills, they often neglect essential aspects such as career planning guidance and the development of employability. Despite attempts at reform in interdisciplinary training and “foreign language +” composite talent programmes, the revitalization of foreign language programmes remains elusive. Even the application of AIGC technology to enhance language talent training has yielded limited success (Li & Gu, 2024).

The employment prospects of foreign language programme graduates have reached a critical juncture, with many universities in China and around the world reducing enrollment or discontinuing foreign language programmes. Notable institutions such as Pusan University, the University of Foreign Languages in South Korea, West Virginia University in the United States, and at least 101 universities including the University of Science and Technology of China, Henan University, have either halted enrollment or canceled foreign language studies (Max Research, 2024). Despite these challenges, universities in China which are usually responsible for students’ initial employment should take the task of facilitating a seamless transition for students from academia to the job market.

The crucial factor affecting the employability of the foreign language programmes is that the students do not have a clear idea about their career and they have not received any systematic career planning guidance and made sufficient exploration into the job market (Zhang & Liang, 2023). In today’s dynamic and uncertain world, providing accurate career education to college students emerges as a central task in higher education reform (Wang & Yang, 2023). Consequently, exploring innovative approaches to integrate career education into foreign language programme curricula have become essential. Not only does this integration enhance students’ professional quality and employability, but it also represents a crucial direction for foreign language education reform.

So, there is a need for an integrative model as the current ones focus on language skills only and may not prepare students for the job market. By adopting this model, students from foreign language programmes can better plan their careers, enhance their professional competencies, and position themselves effectively in the job market.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 What Is Career Education**

Career education, also known as career planning education or vocational career planning education, is a new type of educational system based on the concept of career planning. Career education was first proposed in 1971 by Sidney Percy Marland, who believed that all educational experiences, including curriculum, teaching, and counseling, should prepare for economic independence, personal self-realization, and the enhancement of work dignity. However, he never gave a precise definition of career education (Chen, 2022).

The National Vocational Education Association of the United States believes that career education is “a viable learning system that can help all young people get useful information. This information includes the occupational structure under the economic environment, diverse career choices, the obligations and responsibilities of labor, personal talents and ambition determination, the necessary qualities of all occupations, and the preparation for obtaining paid and useful occupations” (cited in Feng, 2019). Hoyt advocated that “career education can be defined as such an effort: aimed at refocusing the actions of American education and the broader community, helping individuals to acquire and use the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and making

work a meaningful, effective, and satisfying part of his lifestyle” (Hoyt, 1975).

In China, career education is defined as “a purposeful, planned, and organized comprehensive educational activity with career planning as the main line. It is the basic way for students to improve their self-career planning awareness and skills, and to smoothly transition from school life to social and professional life. It is also an important part of school quality education”(Jin, 2007;Jin, 2025; Shanghai Education Commission, 2012).

Therefore, the academic community has not yet formed a unified opinion on the definition of career education. However, it is generally believed that career education includes not only pure and specialized vocational education and employment education, but also the cultivation of non-vocational skills such as students’ career planning awareness, occupational quality, and vocational choice skills. It is a comprehensive educational activity with the main aim of guiding individuals to carry out and implement career planning goals (Xu & Xu, 2023).

The core content of career education includes: self-cognition and development, career exploration, decision-making skills, adaptability, learning and life skills, planning and management of careers (Super, 1980; Herr & Cramer, 1988; Krumboltz, 1996; Jin, 2007;Jin, 2025). In this study, these core elements will be integrated into the redesign of foreign language programmes, aiming to help individuals make appropriate choices at different stages of career and develop the necessary abilities to achieve lifelong development and occupational satisfaction.

## **2.2 Three Current Models of Career Education**

At present, career education focuses on pre-employment learning and post-employment learning, and involves real world application(Pan & Sun, 2018). Career education has been conceptualized in three different models: (1) career education courses taught separately; (2) career education embedded in discipline education; and (3)Dewey’s combination of general education and vocational education, in which students are prepared for the job market.

In the first model, the career education of specific programs in universities is mainly carried out through separate courses, such as setting up special career planning courses. However, this model often overlooks the intrinsic connection between career planning education and professional learning content, which may lead to students being unable to apply the knowledge they have learned to actual career planning (Wang & Yang, 2024).

In the second model, the holistic education concept proposed by American scholar Ron Miller in the early 1970s has enabled career education to develop in a whole-process and personalized direction. Whole-process means that career planning education runs through the entire learning process of students, rather than being limited to a specific course or stage. Personalization emphasizes providing customized career education services based on the characteristics and needs of each student.

In the third model, Dewey believed that general education and vocational education should not be against each other and that so-called general education (academic education) is actually a preparation for various “occupations” just like vocational education (Feng, 2021). The strategy of integrating general education and vocational education advocated by Dewey has been adopted by the mainstream career education in American universities because neither separate career education courses nor career-embedded discipline education can achieve good career education effects. Dewey’s ideology has also been practiced by researchers in other countries, such as Faizah, a Malaysian educator, who highlighted the importance of technical and vocational education and of training graduates’ graduate employability skills (Abd Majid et al., 2024).

## **2.3 Career Education in China in the Context of New Liberal Arts**

Career education in China has progressed since the beginning of the 21st century, and has received widespread attention. However, the overall development of career planning education in China is still at a primary level, and there is a significant gap compared with developed countries in Europe and America (Liu, 2022; Xu & Xu, 2023). According to Li Yuechi's CiteSpace-based study of 341 documents on career education for college students in China from 2013 to 2022 (Li, 2024), the research field mainly includes four aspects: the concept, significance, current status of development, and curriculum construction of career education. There are three problems in career education in colleges and universities: (1) outdated values of job selection and employment, and lack of professional ethics education; (2) lack of systematic career content and lack of planning for long-term career development; and (3) disconnection of theory and practice. Despite this, some scholars in the foreign language circle have begun to pay attention to the role of career education in the continuity and development of foreign language programmes (Ge, 2015; Huang, 2022).

In general, mainstream academic education in China is separated from career guidance. Students not only lack understanding of the new professional world, but also lack the ability and intention to plan career life and life goals (Feng, 2019). Moreover, the current career education practices in China still face the issue of separation between career education and specific academic subjects, let alone the integration into certain programmes (Fang, 2022).

Under the vision of new liberal arts, both the national-level authorities and foreign language education experts have expounded the problems of foreign language programme development from the perspective of talent cultivation (Wu, 2019; Hu, 2020; Guo, 2020; Shi & Jiang, 2020; Xiang, 2020; He & Wang, 2021). The above-mentioned research has paid attention to the important links of foreign language specialty construction and talent cultivation, but they have not mentioned the occupational quality and employability based on the specialty of foreign language graduates, that is, the ability to adapt to the occupational world. A gap still persists in relation to foreign language education where the curricula do not involve career education, which means the students will not be prepared for the job market.

Therefore, it is necessary to integrate career education, which is an indispensable part of higher education, into foreign language programme education in universities. This study especially models this integration for foreign language programmes in the context of new liberal arts which focuses on technology integration, cross-integration, and "integration with similar professional clusters" (Wu, 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Site**

This study applied the case study method, and selected the integration of career education into foreign language programmes in the School of Foreign Languages of Shandong Jianzhu University (SDJZU) as a case study. SDJZU is a public university in Shandong Province in China, with a history of 75 years. Its School of Foreign Languages has been engaged in the integration of career education into foreign language programmes and has carried out a four-year education reform on career integration for all the 2020 undergraduates.

#### **3.2 Instrument**

The questionnaire used in this research is composed of four categories: *Cultivation Process*, *Student Development*, *Teaching Effectiveness*, *Career and Employment*. The first three categories all involve students and talent cultivation from the perspective of *Undergraduate Education*

*Teaching Audit and Evaluation Index System of the Ministry of Education (2021-2025)*, with *Professional identity*, a newly added item, grouped into the category of *teaching effectiveness*. The fourth category is in particular added, which is composed of three items related to the integration of career education into foreign language programmes: *students' career planning ability*, *occupational quality*, and *employability*. Therefore, there are 17 items in the questionnaire (among which 13-18 can be regarded as one item), with a total of 4 categories and 13 sub-categories (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Categories and items of the questionnaire*

Category	Item	Category	Item
<b>Cultivation process</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Teaching effectiveness</b>	<b>6</b>
Cultivation plan	2	Achievement	1
Programme construction	1	Adaptability	3
Practice teaching	1	Satisfaction	1
Innovation and entrepreneurship	2	Professional identity	1
<b>Student development</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Career &amp; employment</b>	<b>3</b>
Academic achievement and overall quality	1	Career planning ability	1
International perspective	1	Occupational quality	1
		Employability	1

### 3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Through the questionnaire survey responses collected from the six groups (Faculty leaders and teachers, alumni, parents, students, employers, and education experts) on the effect of career education integration and by adopting the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and contrast analysis, the researchers made a comprehensive evaluation of the effect of career integration from the above six groups by exploring the effect of the integration and the factors influencing the integration, and also analyzed changes in the employability of the graduates of 2023 and 2024 (see Table 5).

#### Data and analysis for AHP analysis:

AHP was built to comprehensively evaluate the effects of the integration through the weight analysis of criterion layer and scheme layer. The steps are as follows:

1) Build a judgment matrix

A judgment matrix for each evaluation angle was constructed to compare the importance between them. a 6x6 matrix could be constructed where each element represents the importance of the row elements relative to the column elements. Importance can be represented on a scale of 1-9, where 1 means that both elements are equally important and 9 means that one element is extremely important than the other.

2) Calculate the weight

By solving the eigenvalues and eigenvectors of the judgment matrix, the weights of the criterion layer and the scheme layer can be obtained.

3) Perform a consistency check

In order to ensure the consistency of the judgment matrix (that is, the evaluator's judgments of importance are consistent), a consistency test is required. This is usually done by calculating the consistency ratio (CR), and if the CR is less than a certain threshold (such as 0.1), the judgment matrix is considered consistent.

4) Administer questionnaire survey

After completing the teaching reform of integrating career education into foreign language programmes, a questionnaire survey was conducted, with a total of 385 questionnaires distributed and 364 valid questionnaires returned. The specific evaluators in this study were: Faculty leaders and teaching staff ( $n=46$ ), alumni ( $n=27$ ), parents ( $n=140$ ), students ( $n=140$ ), employers ( $n=27$ ), and education experts ( $n=5$ ). All these parties were involved to ensure the objectivity and accuracy of the evaluation.

5) Conduct the overall evaluation of the integration

Based on the results of AHP analysis, the researchers evaluated the effectiveness of the whole integration scheme and the four dimensions in the scheme layer.

### **Data and analysis for contrast analysis:**

The data for the contrast analysis came from the Faculty's employment counselors and involved the graduates of both 2023 and 2024. The dimensions of the contrast are overall employment rate, domestic postgraduate enrollment rate, overseas postgraduate study rate, central state-owned enterprise employment rate, public post entrance examination and registration rate, self-employment rate, small and micro enterprise employment rate, of which the overall employment rate covers the latter six dimensions. In addition, domestic postgraduate enrollment rate, overseas graduate study rate, central state-owned enterprise employment rate, public post entrance examination and registration rate are generally regarded as the embodiment of high-quality employment.

## **4. Findings**

The effectiveness of career education integrated into foreign language programme is presented from the aspects: the comprehensive evaluation using AHP and contrast analysis of student employability.

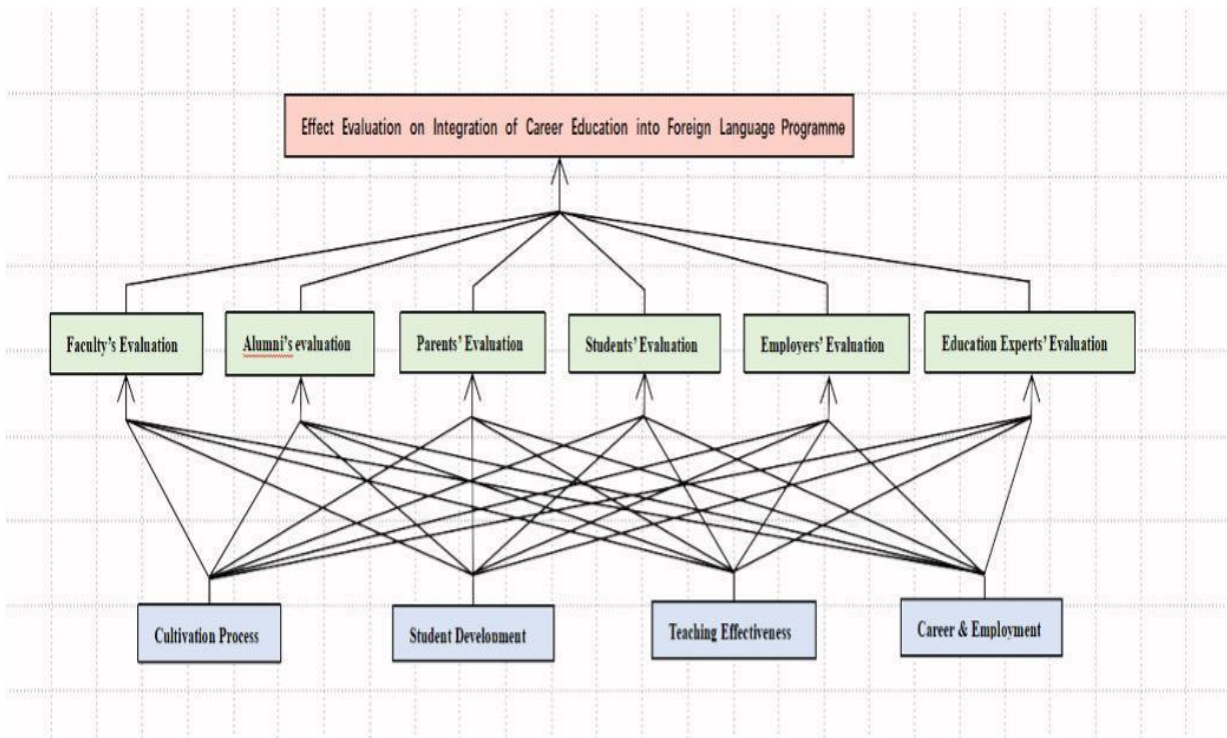
### **4.1 Findings from Comprehensive Evaluation Based on AHP**

The structural model was constructed as follows:

The target layer of the model constructed in this study is evaluation of the effect of integrating career education into the foreign language programmes. The criterion layer consists of six groups: faculty leaders and teachers, alumni, parents, students, employers, and education experts. The scheme layer is the specific evaluation of the effects of integrating career education into the foreign language programmes on four dimensions (see Figure 1).

### **Figure 1**

*Model for evaluating the effect of integrating career education into the foreign language programmes*



Five steps were gone through to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of integration after the construction of structural model:

1) Judgment matrix

The judgment matrix (see Table 2) normalizes the evaluation inputs of the six different evaluators on criterion layer, including faculty leaders and teachers, alumni, parents, students, employers, and education experts. This judgment matrix presented in Table 2 is a comparison matrix that reflects the relative weights among the above mentioned six stakeholders. Each cell in the matrix indicates the relative weight of one stakeholder group compared to another. The rows represent the stakeholder being compared, and the columns represent the stakeholder to which they are being compared. All diagonal values in the matrix are set to 1, as these represent the comparison of a stakeholder group to itself, where the ratio is always equal. For instance, the diagonal value of Faculty leaders and teachers vs. Alumni (Cell [1, 2]) is 1.4485, which indicates that, in the judgment matrix, faculty leaders & teachers are approximately 1.4485 times more important compared to alumni. The judgment matrix provides a systematic way to calculate the weights of the six stakeholder groups.

**Table 2**

*Judgment matrix*

	Faculty leaders & teachers	Alumni	Parents	Students	Employers	Education experts
Faculty leaders & teachers	1	1.4485	1.5248	1.4214	1.1487	1.3209
Alumni	0.6904	1	1.6847	0.8637	0.6988	0.6310
Parents	0.6558	0.5936	1	0.8341	0.7055	0.6160
Students	0.7035	1.1578	1.1989	1	0.7408	0.6604
Employers	0.8706	1.431	1.4175	1.3498	1	1.1487
Education experts	0.7571	1.5849	1.6234	1.5141	0.8706	1

2) Weight Calculation

Weights of Criterion Layer Elements

Through the judgment matrix, the ranking weights of the evaluation subjects in the criterion layer are as follows:

Evaluation by faculty leaders and teachers: 0.2116

Evaluation by alumni: 0.1425

Evaluation by students: 0.1443

Evaluation by parents: 0.1177

Evaluation by education experts: 0.1909

Evaluation by employers: 0.1930

From the weight distribution on criterion layer, it can be seen that Faculty leaders and teachers have the highest weight (0.2116), emphasizing their dominant role in the evaluation process. Employers (0.1930) and Education experts (0.1909) also contribute significantly, highlighting the importance of professional insights and industry expectations. The relatively secondary evaluations are those of alumni, students, and parents.



**Table 3**

*Weights of the four dimensions in scheme layer*

	Faculty leaders & teachers	Employers	Education experts	Students	Parents	Alumni
Cultivation process	0.3791	0.1974	0.3008	0.2898	0.3157	0.2544
Teaching effectiveness	0.2517	0.2051	0.2215	0.1666	0.2208	0.2030
Student development	0.1602	0.2815	0.2262	0.2709	0.2351	0.2306
Career and employment	0.2090	0.3159	0.2516	0.2727	0.2284	0.3121

Weights of Scheme Layer Elements

Through Arithmetic Mean, the weights of four dimensions in the scheme layer are obtained as follows (see Table 3):

- Effects of cultivation process : 0.2895
- Effects of teaching effectiveness : 0.2030
- Effects of student development : 0.2306
- Effects of career and employment : 0.2650

From the weight distribution, it can be seen that Cultivation Process (0.2895) is the most important dimension, suggesting the process of cultivating skills and knowledge is central to integration effectiveness. Career and Employment (0.2650) ranks second, underlining the critical focus on aligning education with future career opportunities. Student development and teaching effectiveness are relatively secondary.

### 3) Calculation Process and Consistency Test

To ensure the rationality of the AHP judgment matrix, a consistency test (CR) is required. When the CR value is less than 0.1, the consistency of the matrix is considered acceptable. The specific calculation process is as follows (see Table 4):

$$\text{Consistency Ratio (CR)} = (\lambda_{\max} - n) / (n - 1) \times \text{RI}$$

Where  $\lambda_{\max}$  is the maximum eigenvalue,  $n$  is the order of the matrix, and RI is the random consistency index.

In the weight calculation of all evaluation subjects in criterion layer, the consistency ratio is less than 0.1 (CR=0.0073), indicating that the judgment matrix has good consistency.

**Table 4**

*Consistency test of criterion layer weights*

	$\lambda_{max}$	$CI((\lambda_{max}-n)/(n-1))$	RI	CR	Consistency test
faculty leaders & teachers	6.046	0.0093	1.26	0.0073	pass
alumni					
parents					
students					
employers					
education experts					

In the weight calculation of all four dimensions in the scheme layer, the consistency ratio is less than 0.1(CR=0.0146), indicating that the judgment matrix has good consistency (see Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Consistency test of scheme layer weights*

	eigenvalue	$\lambda_{max}$	CI	CR	Consistency test
Cultivation process	1.1963	4.0389	0.01297	0.0146	pass
Teaching effectiveness	0.7943				
Student development	0.5056				
Career and employment	0.6596				

#### 4) Questionnaire Survey Analysis

After sorting and organizing the collected questionnaire data, it was imported into SPSS 27.0 software. A Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient value above 0.8 indicates high reliability. The KMO value ranges from 0 to 1, with a higher KMO value indicating higher validity. The p-value corresponding to Bartlett's Test of Sphericity must be less than 0.5 to pass the test. The analysis revealed that the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficients for the subjective indicators in the questionnaire survey were all greater than 0.9, indicating very high reliability of the questionnaire data. The KMO value was 0.948, and the p-value was 0.000, which is less than 0.5, indicating good validity of the questionnaire data as well (see Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Reliability and validity of the questionnaire*

Quantity	Cronbach'α	KMO	Bartlett test	df	P
364	0.901	0.948	1427.408	171	0.000

5) Overall Evaluation

After sorting and organizing the questionnaire data, it was imported into SPSS 27.0 software. Calculations were then performed based on the evaluation weights obtained previously for the scheme layer, resulting in evaluation values for each indicator. These values were then ranked according to their magnitude, with the results presented in the table below (see Table 7):

**Table 7**

*Overall evaluation of the effects of integration*

Overall evaluation value of integration	Indicator (Dimension)	Specific evaluation value	Rank
6.4	Cultivation process	7.638	1
	Teaching effectiveness	5.871	4
	Student development	5.966	3
	Career and employment	6.270	2

Based on the above table, the overall evaluation score for integrating career education into foreign language programmes is 6.4. On a 9-point scale, this overall evaluation reaches a level above average, closer to the “satisfied” evaluation tier. Among the four dimensions in the scheme layer, the evaluation scores for cultivation process and career and employment are both higher than the overall evaluation score, ranking first and second respectively, indicating good performance in these two. This shows that the integration reform as a whole and cultivation process and career and employment contribute greatly to professional development and employability of the foreign language programmes.

**4.2 Findings from Contrast Analysis of Employability**

The researchers made a contrast analysis of overall employment rate, domestic postgraduate enrollment rate, overseas postgraduate study rate, central state-owned enterprise employment rate, public post entrance examination and registration rate, self-employment rate, small and micro enterprise employment rate of the graduates of the School of Foreign Languages of SDJZU, the site of the case study between 2023 and 2024. The contrast results in the seven dimensions are shown in Table 8 (data obtained from the employment counselors of the Faculty). In this table, the overall employment number and employment rate include the number and rate of the following six dimensions (see Table 8).

**Table 8**

*Contrast of employment information of graduates in 2023 and 2024*

	Overall employment rate	Domestic postgraduate enrollment rate	Overseas postgraduate study rate	central state-owned enterprise employment rate	Public post entrance rate	Self-employment rate	Small & micro employment rate
Class of 2023 Graduates (n=224)	61.6% n=138	25% n=56	2.66% n=6	2.66% n=6	0.89% n=2	0.89% n=2	29.46% n=66
Class of 2024 Graduates (n=229)	77.29% n=177	31.44% n=72	4.37% n=10	9.61% n=22	3.49% n=8	1.31% n=3	27.07% n=62

As can be seen from the above table, the employment rate of graduates has increased from 61.6% in 2023 to 77.29% in 2024, a 15.69 percent increase. The ratio of high-quality employment represented by *domestic postgraduate enrollment rate*, *overseas postgraduate study rate*, *central state-owned enterprise employment rate* and *the public post entrance rate* has jumped from 31.21% in 2023 to 48.91% in 2024, a 17.7 percent increase. Through the integration of career education, both the employment rate and employment quality of graduates have improved significantly, especially in the context of the current sharp increase in the number of college graduates (11.79 million graduates in 2024, compared with 11.58 million in 2023) and the sluggish global and national economy.

## 5. Discussion

The results of AHP and contrast analysis both indicate that the model of integrating career education into foreign language programmes constructed in this study is effective. Moreover, the finding that cultivation process and career and employment occupy the most important position in the overall evaluation indicates that special attention should be paid to the reform or reconstruction of foreign language programme curricula, teaching methods, participants involved, teaching ideology, internship, and career guidance. All these six aspects are key elements of cultivation process and career and employment, which best represent how the career education is embedded into foreign language programmes.

### 5.1 Reforming Foreign Language Programme Curriculum System

The traditional curriculum for cultivating talents in foreign language programmes has been reformed by integrating career education content for foreign language programmes. The Faculty implemented a “whole-process segmentation + school-enterprise cooperation for employment empowerment” curriculum reform. This system spans the whole cultivation of four years, including the freshman stage of professional cognition, the sophomore stage of cognition practice, the junior stage of professional practice, and the senior stage of graduation internship. It emphasizes career planning with deep involvement in enterprises throughout the whole curriculum. The Faculty integrated existing career-related and credit-based theoretical courses and practical courses such as “Introduction to Foreign Language Programmes,” “Cognition Practice,” “Professional Practice,” “Talent Market Research,” “Career Planning and Employment Guidance,” and “Graduation Internship” into a career-oriented and programme-based curriculum system.

Additionally, the Faculty added a credit course titled “Career Planning and Professional Competence Enhancement for Foreign Language Programmes” to the overall curriculum. This course further guides students to explore various career paths and development directions, clarifying their personal career goals.

Finally, the Faculty emphasized the roles of two main courses *Intensive Reading* and *Applied Writing*, for students to explicitly explore career elements related to their careers within the coursebooks. This approach allows students to enhance their language skills while mastering language application in real-world employment environments, achieving the dual development of academic learning and career awareness.

From the perspective of career planning education, all the career activities designed for foreign language programmes were systematically and hierarchically integrated into the foreign language teaching curricula and conducted both explicitly and implicitly. Specifically, this pathway can be divided into the following four stages.

#### Stage 1: Professional cognition stage in first year

The focus of career planning education is to help students develop a comprehensive understanding of their foreign language programs, including knowledge of the field’s fundamentals, skill requirements, and career prospects. Simultaneously, students should begin self-awareness exercises, exploring their vocational interests, skills, values, and aspirations.

#### Stage 2: Cognition practice stage in second year

The goal of career planning education is to provide students with practical experiences that initiate career exploration. Collaborations between educational institutions and businesses or organizations can offer internship opportunities. Through internships, students gain firsthand experience of professional roles, understanding the actual work content and environment. This exposure significantly aids students in making informed career choices and planning their future paths.

#### Stage 3: Professional practice stage in third year

In this critical phase, students apply their acquired professional knowledge and skills to real-world work scenarios, enhancing their professional competence. Simultaneously, educators guide students in reflecting on their practical experiences, adjusting their career plans as needed. Students must master both academic and life skills, as well as develop the ability to plan and manage their careers effectively.

#### Stage 4: Graduation internship stage in fourth year

This final phase of career planning education serves as a crucial transition for students entering the professional world. During this stage, students complete an extended period of work at an internship placement. This experience not only allows them to accumulate practical work experience but also provides an opportunity to validate and adjust their career plans. Students can be able to develop strong decision-making skills and adaptability for the workplace.

## **5.2 Innovating Student-Centered Teaching Methods for professional and Career Development**

In the realm of English language education, fostering an environment that promotes professional and career development is paramount. Innovating student-centered teaching methods not only enhances students’ linguistic proficiency but also equips them with the skills necessary to excel in their future careers.

In this study, five specific approaches were implemented to innovate the foreign language programme curriculum: (1) Personalized Learning Paths: Tailor the learning experience to each student's career interests, value and aspirations and encourage students to focus on areas that align with their career goals; (2) Integration of Real-World Applications: Incorporate authentic materials and scenarios such as job interview and resume writing into the curriculum. This could involve case studies, role-plays, and projects that reflect real-world challenges faced by professionals in various industries. For example, organizing mock interviews, debates, or presentations can prepare students for workplace communication; (3) Collaborative Learning and Peer Mentoring: Encourage collaboration among students through group projects, peer review, and mentorship programmes. These activities help build teamwork and leadership skills required in job market, while also providing opportunities for networking and exchanging ideas; (4) Technology-Enhanced Learning: Leverage technology especially AI to allow students to apply foreign language knowledge to solve real-world problems in simulated professional environments and provide students with access to a wealth of resources and tools that can support both professional and career skill development; and (5) Professional Networking and Internships: Establish partnerships with businesses to offer internship and job shadowing opportunities. Such experiences allow students to apply what they've learned in practical settings and make valuable connections within their chosen field.

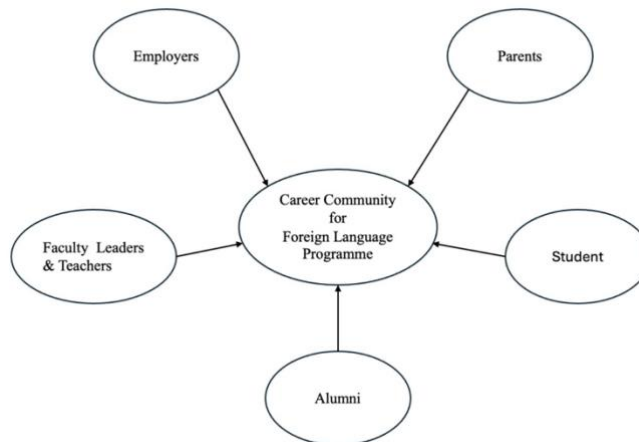
By adopting these innovative, student-centered teaching methods and implementing explicitly and implicitly career-based teaching activities, the foreign language programme students have gained the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to thrive in a globalized, competitive job market.

### 5.3 Establishing Career Community for Foreign Language Programmes

In this study, a five-in-one integrated career community model for foreign language programmes was initiated both as a component of cultivation process and that of career and employment (see Figure 2). This initiative brought together faculty leaders and teachers, students, alumni, employers, and parents, the five parties involved in students' career and employment, resulting in a fundamental change in the situation that the Faculty alone is responsible for students' career and employment.

**Figure 2**

*Five-in-one integrated career community for foreign language programmes*



Employers, such as Yiruan Co., Ltd. and Yingke Co., Ltd., joined the community to provide more job opportunities to the students and also require the Faculty to cultivate students to the market need. Alumni were sources for students to ask about work experiences and also served as career interviewers. Parents had clear ideas about the students' career objectives and worked together with their children for a satisfying job. Such a career community conforms to *Sanquan Education*, an educational principle that all the parties involved and all the means are utilized to contribute to the cultivation of students throughout the whole university life. The construction of the career community proposed in the study involves the following affairs:

1) Integration of Career Education into Foreign Language Programmes: Addressing the common issue of separate approaches to foreign language teaching and career education in universities, the focus is on reforming foreign language education to better serve students' career prospects. This involves strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship education, promoting integration between foreign language teaching and career education, and empowering professional development and student employment through career education.

2) Effective School-Enterprise Cooperation: The Faculty collaborates closely with enterprises to provide more internship opportunities and jobs for students. By engaging with employers and understanding industry demands, the Faculty adjusts its training models to align with market needs.

3) Leveraging Alumni Resources: Building upon alumni associations, the Faculty promotes student internships, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities. Alumni can serve as external mentors or career advisors, directly guiding students in their career planning and job search.

4) Enhancing Parent Involvement: The Faculty aims to change traditional and rigid career perceptions held by parents. By involving parents in the integration reform, students can better adapt their four-year study and career plans, leading to academic and career success.

Through these explicit efforts, the Faculty ensured precise implementation of career education activities and sustainable development within the foreign language major programmes. This establishment of a career community is in some way identical to Malaysian SULAM programme, which integrates community service with academic learning (Wahab, 2024).

#### **5.4 Building Career-Oriented Overall Perspective for Foreign Language Programmes**

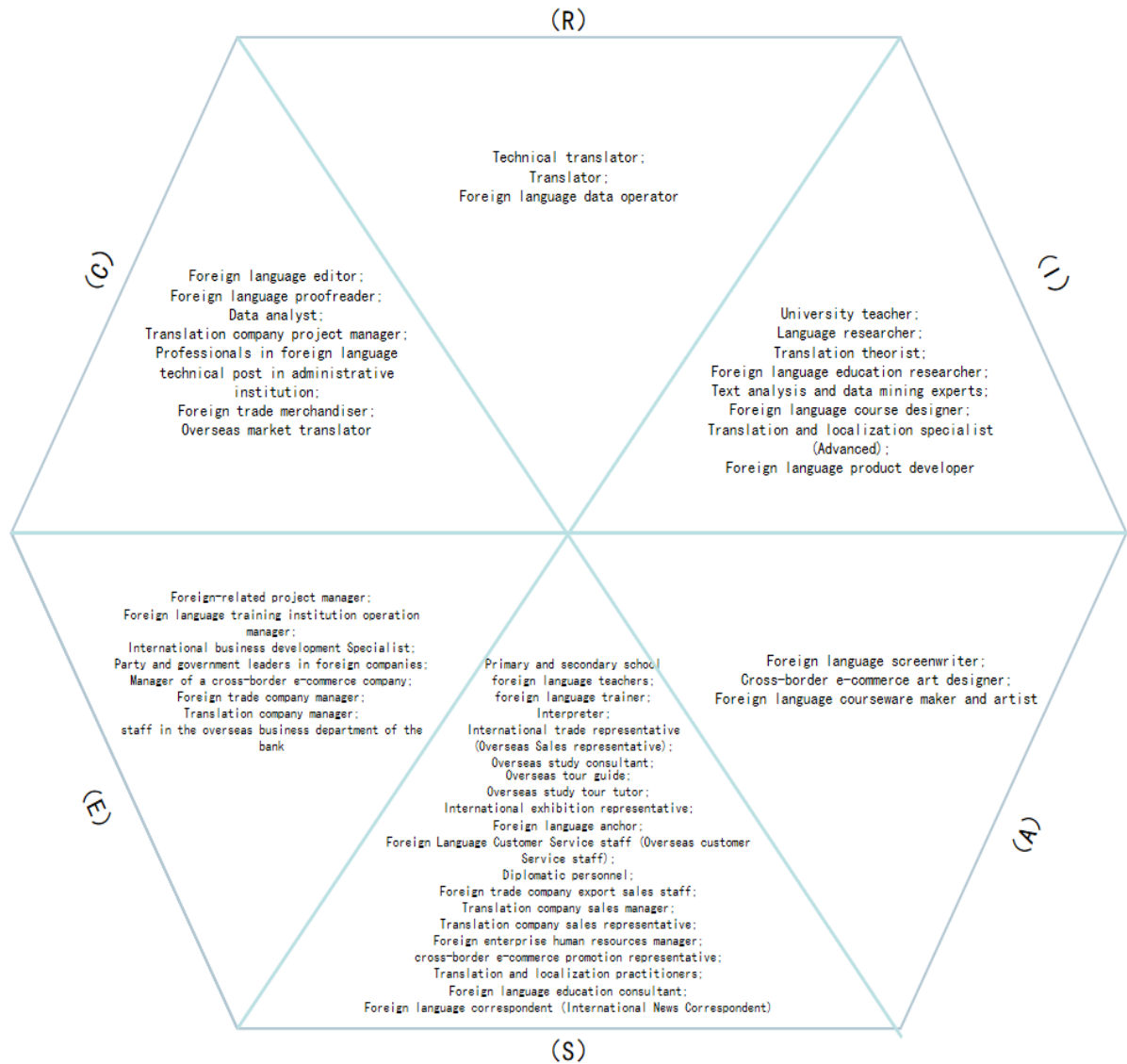
The career-oriented overall perspective for foreign language programmes was supported by the Employment Hexagon of Foreign Language Programme Graduates (see Figure 3) which was developed by School of Foreign Languages of SDJZU by utilizing the employment data of foreign language programme graduates in more than 100 universities in the past five years and drawing on Holland's Theory of Person-Job Fit, also known as the Personality-Vocation Match Theory (Holland, 1997). Holland classified personality types into six categories, each corresponding to specific occupational types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. He believed that when an individual's personality type matched their occupational type, their job satisfaction, occupational stability, and sense of professional accomplishment would be higher, and used a hexagonal model to describe the relationships among these six personality types, with lines connecting each type to the other five.

This employment hexagon in this study encompassed over 50 types of job positions related to foreign language programmes excluding such functional roles as sales representatives and civil servants. As an explicit career education form, it has significantly changed the bias that limited foreign language programme graduates to teaching, translation, and foreign trade, thereby expanding the field of career awareness within the discipline. The establishment of an overall career perspective for foreign language programmes has provided a thorough career understanding for both faculty and students. It has shown a clear picture of jobs that foreign language graduates can

undertake, delineated future career paths, and enhanced the professional identity of foreign language programme students.

**Figure 3**

*Hexagonal employment for foreign language programme graduates (Developed by the Career Consultant Team of School of Foreign Languages, Shandong Jianzhu University)*



Note 1: There is a greater degree of matching between the two adjacent occupational interests;

Note 2: Functional positions are not listed in the occupational hexagon;

Note 3: With the development of transferability and self-management skills, the career choices of foreign language majors will be more extensive;

Note 4: The main administrative institutions requiring foreign languages are: Maritime Administration/Internal Revenue Service/Ministry of Exit and Entry/Commerce/Foreign Affairs Administration (CCPA/Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Ministry of Education/Ministry of Industry and Information Technology/Ministry of Public Security (Ministry of National Security/Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security/Ministry of Science and Technology/People's Bank/Broadcasting Company/Food and Drug Administration/Press and Publication Administration/Health Commission; Provincial and municipal standard review center/National Standard Technical Review Center/Internet public opinion Center, etc



## 5.5 Constructing career-planning-based and employment-oriented internship bases

Practical experiences are crucial for enhancing students' occupational quality and employability. SDJZU collaborated with enterprises and established career-planning-based and employment-oriented internship bases instead of superficially established or poorly managed ones to provide students with more practical exposure and career development resources. This initiative aimed to create a model to promote internships and facilitating employment for foreign language programme students:

1) Implementing Pre-Internship Career Planning Education: Utilize standardized and non-standardized assessment methods to help students achieve multidimensional awareness of vocational matching, vocational values, and vocational skills. Conduct surveys to know about students' preferred internship types.

2) Connecting Enterprises for Talent Demand Information: Integrate professional human resources and corporate resources to provide stable, long-term enterprise resources for student internships and practical experiences. Optimize the matching between different types and functions of internship bases and students' internship preferences.

3) Establishing a Collaborative Management Mechanism for School-Enterprise Co-Built Internship Bases: Explore the "school-enterprise joint training" model, where both parties jointly form training and employment teams. Develop a "dual mentorship" system, combining academic advisors and industry mentors/class instructors, to guide students toward rational career decisions.

4) Integrate Career Planning through the Internship Process: Adopt problem-oriented approaches based on theories such as Minnesota Work Adjustment Theory, Super's Career Development Theory, and Cognitive Information Processing Theory. Conduct career maturity assessments and facilitate possible career choices through career decision-making tools. Organize career interviews with professionals from enterprises, helping students make informed career decisions after a certain internship period.

By implementing effective employment-oriented internships in collaboration with enterprises, this approach has enhanced the quality and scale of student employment. The integration of career education into internship practices has improved the alignment between talent cultivation and employment, ultimately achieving the goals of professional education.

## 5.6 Implementing Diversified Career Guidance

As an extension of the curriculum system and in an explicit form, a diversified career counseling system was established to foster students' career and employment. Through one-on-one consultations, skills assessments, interest exploration, and career activity weeks, the students developed career awareness and cognition, and gained a deeper understanding of their career. Students explored their individual career interests, values, personality traits, and the connections between these factors and their language professional skills, which process enabled them to identify career options that aligned with their long-term development goals. Career interviews, career lectures, industry expert sharing sessions, and company visits were organized, allowing students to directly engage with the workplace environment. By doing so, they gained insights into the current status and future trends of language-related industries. Additionally, career exploration, resume writing, interview techniques, and other essential job-hunting and career development skills were taught to increase the chance of being employed. Furthermore, the students were encouraged to be prepared for the future job through taking career planning competitions, such as *National College Students' Career Planning Competition*, at the departmental, university, provincial, and national levels. These competitions assessed the effectiveness of their academic learning, improvements in professional skills, and readiness for career goals.

By establishing student career guidance mechanisms and enhancing career planning education, the students can not only find suitable positions in the complex and ever-changing job market but also cultivate their ability to independently plan for their future.

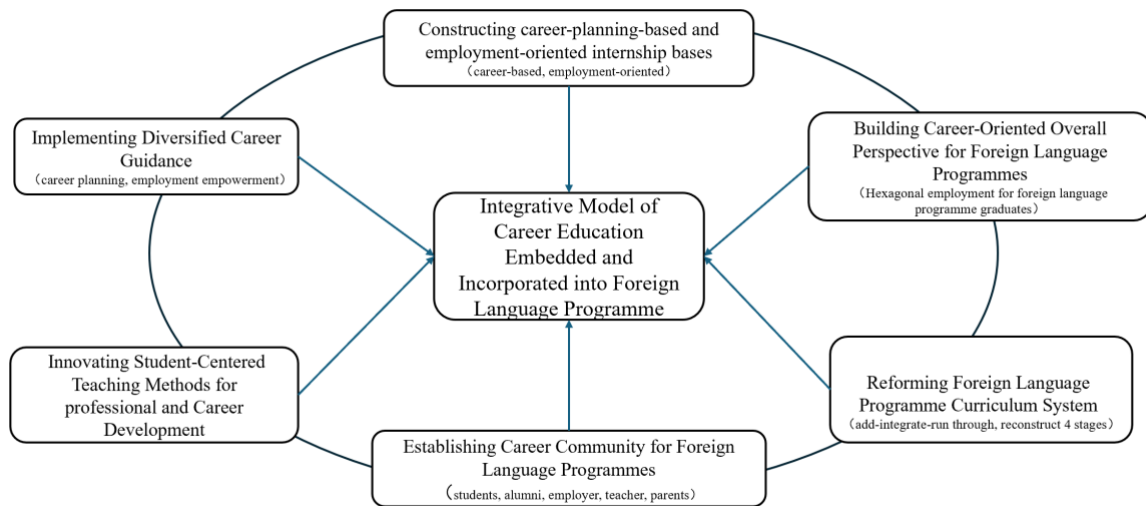
## 6. A New Path Model for Integrating Career Education with Foreign Language Programmes

Based on literature research and case study analysis, a new model framework for integrating efficient career education with foreign language programmes can be established (see Figure 4). On the basis of constructing a precise and ecological career community for foreign language programmes, it promotes both teachers and students from foreign language programmes to establish a career-oriented overall prospective, builds a new foreign language programme curriculum system integrating career education content, adds career courses that combine the characteristics of foreign language programmes, innovates professional teaching methods with students as the career focus, gives full play to the leading role of courses such as *Intensive Reading* and *Applied Writing*, builds career-based and employment-oriented internship bases, and implements personalized career guidance.

Through these initiatives, a new form of foreign language talents characterized by the integration of career development into their education can be cultivated. By adopting this model (see Figure 4), foreign language programme students can better plan their careers, enhance their professional competencies, and position themselves effectively in the job market

**Figure 4**

*A new path model for the integration of career education and foreign language programmes*



(Reforming Foreign Language Programme Curriculum System, as seen in 5.1; Innovating Student-Centered Teaching Methods for professional and Career Development, as seen in 5.2; Establishing Career Community for Foreign Language Programmes, as seen in 5.3; Building Career-Oriented Overall Perspective for Foreign Language Programmes, as seen in 5.4; Constructing career-planning-based and employment-oriented internship bases, as seen in 5.5; Implementing Diversified Career Guidance, as seen in 5.6 )

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendation for Future Research**

This study has proposed a holistic model that seamlessly integrates career education into foreign language talent cultivation programmes in the context of new liberal arts reform. This model has been tested effective by utilizing AHP and contrast analysis. The innovative model and the integration practice of career education have played a pivotal role not only in that it elevates students' professional competence and employability, but it also offers fresh insights and directions for reforming foreign language education. Furthermore, it contributes significantly to elevating the overall quality of foreign language professional education and nurturing individuals with an international perspective and innovative abilities. Importantly, it sheds light on integrating career education into other disciplines at the university level.

Although the research has contributed new ideas of embedded and integrated career education system, career education community for foreign language programmes, and an integration model of career education into foreign language programmes for the first time, we must exercise caution when applying the research findings to specialized foreign language colleges and universities because of the nature of case study. Further research and analysis are necessary to determine the applicability of these results to general contexts.

## **8. Co-Author Contribution**

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Author 1 carried out the fieldwork, prepared the literature review, wrote the research methodology and carried out the statistical analysis. Author 2 carried out interpretation of the results and overlooked the writeup of the whole article. Author 3 carried out interpretation of the results and polished the language.

## **9. Acknowledgements**

The research is supported by the Industry-University-Research Project of the Ministry of Education: Current Situation and Countermeasures of Innovation and Entrepreneurship of Foreign Language Programmes in Colleges and Universities in the Context of New Liberal Arts (Project No.: 220501212114558); Ministry of Education Supply and Demand Matching Employment Education Project "Career Planning-Based & Employment-Oriented Foreign Language Practice Base Construction Research" (Project No.: 20230110284); Shandong Jianzhu University University-level education reform key projects "Construction of College Career Counseling Standard System from the Perspective of Sanquan Education" and "A Study of Integrating Career Education into Foreign Language Programmes in the Context of New Liberal Arts".

## **10. References**

- Abd Majid, F., Sharil, W. N. E. H., Yau, S. A., & Kamaruzaman, M. F. (2024). Strategies in developing graduate employability skills: an investigation on a TVET programme in a Malaysian public university. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 20(3), 807–821. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v20i3.27868>
- Chen, Q. (2022). The characteristics and enlightenment of career education in American colleges and universities. *Research on Vocational Education*, 10, 92–96.
- Fang, W. (2022). On the construction of the theoretical system of college students' career development education with Chinese characteristics. *Journal of National Academy of Education Administration*, 07, 10–18.
- Feng, J. (2019). *Research on the paradigm of American career guidance theory* [East China Normal

- University]. <https://doi.org/10.27149/dc.nki.Ghdsu.2019.000151>
- Feng, J. (2021). General employment integration or general employment separation: the controversy between Dewey and Sneed. *Perspectives on Global Education, 11*, 59–71.
- Ge, Y. (2015). Problems and measures in career planning for foreign language major undergraduates. *Journal of Changchun Education Institute, 31*(24), 124–125.
- Guo, Y. (2020). Reflections on several major issues in foreign language education in the era of “new liberal arts and Great Foreign Languages.” *Chinese Language, 01*, 4–12. <https://doi.org/10.13564/j.carol.carroll.nki.Issn.1672-9382.2020.01.002>
- He, N., & Wang, S. (2021). New liberal arts, new foreign languages and new orientation: on the development and innovation of foreign language professional talent training. *Frontiers in Foreign Language Education Research, 04*, 3–8. <https://doi.org/10.16362/j.cnki.cn61-1023/h.2021.01.001>
- Herr, E. L., & Cramer, S. H. (1988). *Career guidance and counseling through the life span: Systematic approaches (3rd ed.)* (3rd ed.). Scott, Foresman & Co.
- Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: a theory of vocational personalities and work environments* (3rd ed.). Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Hoyt, K. B. (1975). *An introduction to career education*. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
- Hu, K. (2020). The construction and development of foreign language discipline from the perspective of New Liberal Arts -- Ideas and approaches. *China's Foreign Language, 03*, 14–19. <https://doi.org/10.13564/j.carol.carroll.nki.Issn.1672-9382.2020.03.003>
- Huang, J. (2022). Analysis of the influencing factors of college students' career planning on employment intention and behavior. *Heilongjiang Science, 13*(19), 23–25.
- Jin, S. (2007). *Career counseling and coaching*. Higher Education Press.
- Jin, S. (2025). *Career counseling: theory and practice*. China Publishing Group Co., Ltd./World Publishing Corporation.
- Krumboltz, J. D. (1996). A learning theory of career counseling. In M. L. Savickas & W. B. Walsh (Eds.), *Handbook of career counseling theory and practice* (pp. 55–80). Davies-Black Publishing.
- Li, X., & Gu, X. (2024). Breaking barriers and upgrading of foreign language talent training under the impact of AIGC technology. *Journal of Foreign Languages, 02*, 75–83. <https://doi.org/10.16263/j.cnki.23-1071/h.2024.02.011>
- Li, Y. (2024). Analysis on the development trend of college students' career education research based on CiteSpace in recent ten years. *Heilongjiang Education (Theory and Practice), 05*, 5–8.
- Liu, F. (2022). Research on the construction of college students' career education system. *Shanxi Youth, 13*, 139–141.
- Max Research. (2024). *Universities make it clear that foreign language programmes be abolished*.
- Pan, L., & Sun, L. (2018). Topics, trends and features of career education research in international academic research. *Educational Research, 11*, 144–151.
- Shanghai Education Commission. (2012, November 19). *12th Five-year action plan of Shanghai students' career development education*. [https://edu.sh.gov.cn/xxgk2\\_zhzw\\_ghjh\\_01/20201015/v2-0015-gw\\_3022012007.html](https://edu.sh.gov.cn/xxgk2_zhzw_ghjh_01/20201015/v2-0015-gw_3022012007.html)
- Shi, L., & Jiang, Y. (2020). Reflections on 40 years of English education in China and its implications for the construction of English majors under the new liberal arts Background. *Foreign Language Education, 41*(03), 61–66. <https://doi.org/10.16362/j.carol.carroll.nki.cn61-1023/h.2020.03.011>
- Super, D. E. (1980). A Life-Span, Life-Space Approach to Career Development. In *Journal of*

*Vocational Behavior* (Vol. 16).

- Wahab, M. Z. (2024). Evaluating the Impact of Service-Learning Malaysia-University for Society (SULAM) on Student Learning and Community Engagement. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 13(3), 2080–2096. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v13-i3/22077>
- Wang, P., & Yang, X. (2023). The model evolution and mechanism innovation of career education in foreign universities. *Journal of Xuzhou Institute of Technology (Social Science Edition)*, 06, 89–97. <https://doi.org/10.20068/j.cnki.jxitsh.2023.0079>
- Wang, P., & Yang, X. (2024). Introduction, exploration and reflection: a review of research on career education in Chinese universities. *Journal of Xuzhou Institute of Technology (Social Science Edition)*, 01, 102–108. <https://doi.org/10.20068/j.cnki.jxitsh.2024.0008>
- Wu, Y. (2019). New mission, grand pattern, new arts and technology, university of foreign languages. *Frontiers in Foreign Language Education Resear*, 02, 4–7.
- Xiang, M. (2020). Notes on foreign language education reform in the context of constructing new disciplines. *Chinese Language*, 01, 19–24. <https://doi.org/10.13564/j.carol carroll nki. Issn 1672-9382.2020.01.003>
- Xu, X., & Xu, Z. (2023). Research on the latest progress of career education in the UK -- based on case studies of Cambridge University and Cambridge City, UK. *Journal of Huaiyin Teachers College (Natural Science Edition)*, 22(01), 63–68. <https://doi.org/10.16119/j.carol carroll nki issn1671-6876.2023.01.004>
- Zhang, T., & Liang, J. (2023). Survey on the current situation of the career planning of college students and the coping strategies. *Heilongjiang Science*, 14(11), 134–140.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Questionnaire on the integration of career education into foreign language major programmes**

**There are 22 statements in this questionnaire. Note for 13-18, please ask respondents of different professional status to answer one of them. Each statement is rated on a scale of 1-9 on the Likert Scale, with 1 being very poor and 9 being very good.**

#### **1 Cultivation process**

##### **Cultivation plan**

1. The training objectives are in line with the orientation of the school, adapt to the needs of social and economic development, and reflect the all-round development of students' moral, intellectual, physical, American and labor.
2. The training program conforms to the national professional standards and reflects the output-oriented concept.

##### **Specialty construction**

3. The training program strengthens practical teaching, highlights the foundation and application of experimental and practical training content, and focuses on cultivating students' application ability.

##### **Practice teaching**

4. Strengthen practical education, build practical teaching system, and promote practical teaching reform.

##### **Innovation and entrepreneurship education**

5. The working system and platform of innovation and entrepreneurship education
6. How innovation and entrepreneurship education is integrated into the whole process of talent training and professional education.

#### **2. Student development**

##### **Academic achievement and overall quality**

7. Students' basic theory, knowledge range and innovation ability.

##### **International perspective**

8. Students' overseas exchanges, study visits, internships, competitions, participation in international conferences, and study abroad.

#### **3. Teaching effectiveness**

##### **Achievement**

9. Achievement of the training goals for foreign language professionals.

##### **Adaptability**

10. First-time employment rate of graduates.
11. Employment quality of graduates.
12. The performance and achievements of graduates in their career development.

##### **Satisfaction**

13. Satisfaction with learning and growth of recent graduates or current students (students only).  
or
14. Satisfaction of college leaders and teachers with the teaching work of school education (to be filled in by college leaders and teachers only).  
or

15. Satisfaction of the employer (fill in by the employer only).  
or  
16. Parents' satisfaction with the teaching of school education and students' learning and growth (parents only).  
or  
17. Alumni's satisfaction with the school's teaching and student learning and growth (alumni only).  
or  
18. Education experts' satisfaction with school education teaching and student learning and growth (education experts only).

**Professional identity**

19. Students' recognition of foreign language major program.

**4. Career and employment**

**Career education is integrated into the direct evaluation of foreign language majors**

20. Students' career planning ability.  
21. The improvement of students' occupational quality.  
22. The employment competitiveness of students.