A Research Proposal on an Empirical Study of Foreign Language Teachers' Information Literacy in Shandong Province

LIU Lili[a],*

[a] School of Foreign Languages, Taishan University, Taian, China.
*Corresponding author.

Abstract

With the increasing advancement of global information technology in education, educational informatization has become a necessary road to the development of education. The information technology has been affecting foreign language teaching in every aspect, which has experienced three phases so far, from the assistance of college English teaching using information technology, the integration of the two aspects, to the current deep fusion. The interaction between foreign language teaching and information technology is an ecological evolutionary process, and information technology, as an exotic species, will unavoidably transform and affect the evolution of the whole system. Therefore, it has become a crucial obligation for foreign language teachers to choose, accept and infuse when encountering the information technology. No doubt to say, whether the fusion of IT and foreign language teaching can be effective largely depends on a group of teachers possessing excellent information literacy. Teachers have the final decision in choosing what kind of technology will be used, how long and how well technologies will be employed in the actual teaching activities. They have been playing a vital role in the transformation and advancement of classroom ecosystem. However, the academic research conducted in recent years mainly concentrated on the mode of fusion, teaching designs as well as the students' self-study, while few attention has been drawn to the foreign language teachers' information literacy in the process of fusion between foreign language teaching and information technology. Based on this, the research proposal will delve into the development and difficulties concerning the deep infuse between foreign language teaching and information technology, as well as the transformation of research paradigm. And lastly, the purpose and significance also will be illustrated so as to infer some practical suggestion to foreign language teachers.

Key words: Information literacy; Foreign language teachers; Deep infusion

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In recent years, the academic circle has been doing research on the foreign language teachers' development of information literacy. In this case, some findings have been achieved. The research combining foreign language teachers and information literacy started in 2004 (Lu 2018). In the following seven years, the research presented a general rising trend. After that, the number of published papers has declined. What is more, the quality of the papers also needed to be improved.

Concerning the research methods, they can be divided into empirical research and non-material research. According to the statistical outcomes (Lu), the number of empirical papers is 43, accounting for 32.1 % of the total number. These papers employ empirical research methods like questionnaires and interviews designed for the experimental subjects, understanding the current situation of foreign language teachers' information literacy and acquiring the first-hand material based on which the related suggestion will be come up with. For example, Li Jiyan put forward five tips to help improve college English teachers' information literacy after conducting research concerning 508 college English teachers in Shandong and Hebei province respectively. And the rest

papers are non-material study taking up 67.9%, mainly analyze the urgency and necessity of improving the information literacy of foreign language teachers, discuss the connotation and contents of information literacy, then, put forward the approaches and strategies that can be used to hoist the information literacy of foreign language teachers. However, in the existing research, there are only five papers focusing on the related theory bases, which barely accounting for 3.73% of the total number. These research papers cover theories including life-long learning theory, constructive theory and ecological theory, etc. The best research that combines both theory and information literacy is conducted by Feng Xia atl. Based on the life-long learning and constructive theory, they indicate that foreign language teachers should stick with study even graduation, furthermore, they shall construct new knowledge actively and independently. The research angle introduced by Yue Ruiling is quite exotic, which, based on the ecological views, holds the point that the foreign language teachers shall make changes actively so as to cope with the challenges brought by new ecological factors, namely, the information technology.

With the increasing advancement of global information technology in education, educational informatization has become a necessary road to the development of education. The information technology has been affecting college English teaching in every aspect, which has experienced three phases so far, from the assistance of college English teaching using information technology, the integration of the two aspects, to the current deep fusion. The interaction between foreign language teaching and information technology is an ecological evolutionary process (Sun, 2013), Zhu Yuncui (2017) claims that the teachers are the subject, and the students are the object, the teaching ecological environment is the intermediary agent. All of the three components constitute the whole ecological system of college English teaching. Besides, information technology, as an exotic species, will unavoidably transform and affect the evolution of the whole system. Therefore, it has become a crucial obligation for college English teachers to choose, accept and infuse when encountering the information technology. No doubt to say, whether the fusion of IT and college English teaching can be effective largely depends on a group of teachers possessing excellent information literacy. Teachers have the final decision in choosing what kind of technology will be used, how long and how well technologies will be employed in the actual teaching activities. They have been playing a vital role in the transformation and advancement of classroom ecosystem. However, the academic research conducted in recent years mainly concentrated on the mode of fusion, teaching designs as well as the students' self-study, while few attention has been drawn to the college English teachers' information literacy in the process of fusion between college English

teaching and information technology. Based on this, the research proposal will delve into the development and difficulties concerning the deep infuse between college English teaching and information technology, as well as the transformation of research paradigm. And lastly, the purpose and significance also will be illustrated so as to infer some practical suggestion to college English teachers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Group Characteristics of College Foreign Language Teachers

With the subject nature of liberal arts and attribute of combing both eastern and western minds, we may find that no matter the foreign language learners or the practitioners all have the following characteristics:

2.1.1 Formation Characteristics

Considering the attributes foreign language learning needs as well as the psychological and gender difference between men and women, female students have accounted for the high percentage, about 60%, even higher, in foreign language faculties and departments. Therefore, foreign language practitioners still follow this trend. Female foreign language teachers outnumber largely male foreign language teachers. What's more, among numerous studies (Lu & Hou, 2020)conducted concerning foreign language teachers, the main force of college teachers are from age 30 to 39, among whom those who have taught at least 15 years take up the largest percentage. Besides, few teachers have PHD degrees.

2.1.2 Thinking Features

The nature of humanities decides that most of foreign language teachers possess typical thinking mood of humanities, like focusing on considering questions from the aspects of culture, history, philosophy, morality and ethics. They generally lack the scientific thinking by using data, resources and logical reasoning to solve problems.

2.1.3 Domain Characteristics

In the field of foreign language teaching, the teaching load is burdensome and the capacity of scientific research is weak (Zhao, 2012) hence, the teaching and scientific research do not have a coordinated development. Another thing that is worth noticing is that team work is largely needed and the team of teaching and scientific research which have been conducted is short of synergistic effect, sharing and centripetal force.

2.1.4 The Evolution of Connotation Concerning Information Literacy

The concept of information literacy has been advancing with the times. As educational informatization has been developed both in scope and breadth, for college foreign language teachers, information literacy has become from a plus to an essential item. The evolution of information

literacy has been changing with the development of times.

Early in 1974, president Paul Zurkowski, the American Information Industry Association, pointed out that: "information literacy is the combination of technology and skill which can employ numerous information tools and main information resources to solve problems." At this phase, information literacy has been regarded as a single technology. With the increasingly maturity of information technology, the connotation of information literacy has got richer, possessing both epochal character and practicability.

In China, the first paper on college teachers' information literacy started in 1997. In the paper, scholar Yao Qinhua probed into the development of college teachers' information literacy, in which the information literacy mainly signifies the capacity of bibliographic retrieval and usage of information resources. In 2002, Chen Weiwei（Chen, 2002）, in the research concerning information literacy's connotation, level, and cultivation, pointed out that information literacy includes four aspects in information awareness, information knowledge, capability and information morality as well as three levels comprising fundamental information literacy, self-complacent information literacy and information literacy of self-actualization. Based on what Chen Weiwei wrote about, Mu Xiangwang （Mu, 2006）. added the definition of information emotion, namely, the aspiration and confidence for information technology as well as the joy after application. Apart from that, he also distinguished between literacy awareness meaning if a person wants to and dares to use information and information emotion which means the attitude and interest to information. Later, Zhong Zhixian (Zhong, 2013). reinterpreted the formation of information literacy, believing that it is comprised of three ingredients, namely, information awareness, information capability and information ethic. The three elements make up an entirety in which the information awareness is the essence, information capability is both the basic and essence, and information ethic is an assurance. Ming Hua (M, et al 2019). pointed out that the concept of information literacy has transformed from a static outcome to a dynamic process, from a single subject centering around library to multi-subjects theme including pedagogy, psychology and information technology. Besides, Ming Hua also extracted four main features: comprehensiveness, instrumentality, criticalness and process.

From the evolution of the connotation of information literacy, its essential ingredients: information awareness, information capability and information ethics, have been prolonged and saved. The emphasis has been paid to information awareness from the early 20th century proved its immaturity. No doubt to say, each aspect of the information literacy has transformed with the innovative development of technology, for example, in the beginning of 21th century, information capability stressed the teachers' abilities of retrieval, stock and classification. While under the deep infusion phase of information technology and courses, the connotation of information literacy can be defined as the capacities of acquisition, criticism, assessment, identification and employment. As for the information ethics, it has extended from the moral and legal problems of acquiring and using information to information security awareness and privacy consciousness. These changes have been not only labeled as the development of times, but also the detailed presentation of infusion that has been moved into great breadth and depth.

2.2 Challenges of Improving Information Literacy
As for the field of foreign language teaching, the information literacy level of foreign language teachers decides the process in the informatization of foreign language teaching. Considering both the group characteristics of foreign language teachers and the evolution of information literacy's connotation, in the phase of deep fusion, the improvement of information literacy for foreign language teachers has the following challenges.

2.2.1 The Challenges brought by Reality Predicament
The forming characteristics of foreign language teachers are obstacles when boosting their information literacy. Confined by family life, teaching and academic research, a high proportion of foreign language teachers shows a state that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. What is more, currently the furious contradiction between teaching and learning which has brought out a large number of smartphone addicts unwilling to study seriously in the class has forced teachers to devise more interesting courses to compete for attention with phones. The desires of reforming the traditional teaching pattern, integrating informational elements and designing foreign language class with more attraction and epochal character are extremely urgent. In this case, to explore an effective new-style teaching mood in a short time is a big challenge for college foreign language teachers.

2.2.2 Mind and Informational Capacity Challenges
Besides, long term exposure to humanities also decides that it is not an easy thing to accept, understand and employ information technology. Surveys conducted in recent years show that college foreign language teachers generally have a strong sense of information awareness. For example, most teachers have realized that the process of informatization is drastically affecting the foreign language teaching, making an effort to employ the information technology in the foreign language classroom. The group characteristic containing middle aged teachers decides that the group members are open to the development of information technology, willing to acquire fresh new things and frontier technology

information, but with inadequate information capacities. More detailed information can be summarized as follows: a high proportion of teachers has a good understanding of basic information knowledge, like the Internet operating system and office software, while a few teachers can expertise in them or even know things concerning the fundamental information knowledge. As for information knowledge of foreign language discipline, like scientific research statistics software, big data, or the usage of digitized foreign language teaching resources, most of the teachers are limited to knowing or hearing about but not employing. Besides, with regard to the application of information technology to teaching, it is confined to acquiring subject information, teaching resources from the Internet, which can be used to help realize multiform interactions, the assignment of homework and so on, through Wechat, QQ (Wechat and QQ are instant messaging apps that being widely used by every walk of life) or teaching platforms. All of these practices can be used to liven up the classroom atmosphere, hence accomplishing teaching tasks. But in the current deep fusion phase of informatization, these practices mentioned above are far more enough. Information technology is still having a decisive role in foreign language teaching, accompanying by little application of infusion. It is certain that the informational teaching of foreign language currently is in the primary stage of infusion.

2.2.3 The Challenges of Ossified Teaching Paradigms

Longer years of teaching experience has accumulated profound experience for foreign language teaching, while it also helps to develop teaching paradigms, like ossified teaching types, fixed teaching methods etc. The teaching paradigms may derive from older generation of teachers or the continuity of teaching habit developed for many years. They have an enduring and profound effect, which need to be reformed completely so as to be changed. Changing teaching paradigms can offer advantageous conditions for the enhancement of information literacy.

Above all, in terms of the information literacy of college foreign language teachers under the current situation, a strong sense of information awareness can be felt, yet the teachers lack information abilities, and scarcely can they acquire frontier and hot information knowledge, what is more, the information ethics needs to be strengthened. The outer environment built to improve information awareness can be bettered. In addition, the integral improvement from theory to practice is needed.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Questions

Based on the survey concerning specific informational behaviors of college foreign language teachers, this proposal aims to reflect their current situation of information capacity and awareness, then offer

suggestions so as to boost their information literacy. The concrete questions include the following ones:

As for the information awareness and capacities, what are the current situation for college and university foreign language teachers nowadays ?

(b). Are the differences obvious in some facets like gender among college and university foreign language teachers ?

(c). How to improve the information literacy of college and university foreign language teachers ?

3.2 Research Methods and Tools

The proposal will mainly use questionnaires aided by online interviews for the college and university foreign language teachers to probe into the hidden reasons behind the current situation. The questionnaire will divide into two parts. The first part mainly covers personal information of the respondents, including gender, age, professional titles, education background, length of teaching, hierarchy of schools, and overseas experience. The second part includes information awareness and capacities in two dimensions.

3.3 Research Participants

The propose aims to study foreign language teachers from local colleges and universities in Shandong Province of China.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The data will be collected through online questionnaires, then analyzed using SPSS 19.0 to get a descriptive analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis and Discussion

This part mainly aims to solve the research questions based on data analysis and talk about the drawbacks of the study.

4. CONCLUSION

This survey will probe into the current situation of information awareness and capacities of local college and university foreign language teachers in Shandong Province, China. Through questionnaires and interviews, this survey tires to put through practical solutions to enhance the information literacy of local college and university foreign language teachers.

Under the background of increasing deepening of infusion of information technology and education, the teachers are in the dominant position because they are the designers, performers, inducers and leaders of classroom teaching. What is more, they are also the constructors, supervisors and assessors of the strategies to improve their information literacy. As the foremost resource of education development, teachers shall keep up with the trend of the times to face the challenges brought by AI technology, etc.

REFERENCES

Alder, L. A. (1989). *Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report.* American Library Association.

Chen, W. W. (2002). The Connotation, Levels, and Cultivation of Information Literacy. *E-education Research, 23*(11), 7-9.

Guo, Z. M. (2007). The Connotation and Cultivation in the Informational Age. *E-education Research, 28*(11), 16-19.

Kai, L., & Hou, Y. D. (2020). Local College Foreign Language Teachers' Information Literacy Survey and Improvements in the Big Data Time - a Study Based on Data Collected in 14 Colleges in Guangxi Province. *The Chinese Journal of ICT in Education, 6,* 68-72.

Ming, Lin, & Luo. (2019). The Global Comparison between the Connotation and Structure. *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences), 2,* 59-65.

Mu, X. W. (2006). *The Comment on the Connotation and Cultivating Methods of Information Literacy.* Assembly Documents of China Association for Science and Technology, 1997-2000.

Qin, M. J., & He, G. J. (2009). The Discussion of College English Teachers' Information Literacy Connotation. *Foreign Language World, 5,* 18-25, 41.

Ren, C. L. (2004). The Teachers' Information Literacy and Its Cultivation. *Jiangxi Educational Research, 12,* 45.

Sun, X. H. (2013). A Study on Teacher's Computer Self-Efficacy When Integrating Information Technology into College English Curriculum: The Research Based on the College English Reform in Liaocheng University. *Shanghai International Studies University, 5.*

Wang, G. Y., & Wang, X. J. (2017). College English Teachers' Information Literacy: Current Situation and Countermeasure. *Library Theory and Practice, 6.*

Zhang, G. Y., & Wang, X. J. (2017). College English Teachers' Information Literacy: Current Situation and Countermeasure. *Library Theory and Practice, 6.*

Zhao, F. Y. (2012). The Structural Characteristics and Cultivating Strategies for Local College Foreign Language Teachers. *Higher Education Research in Heilongjiang, 4,* 86-88.

Zhong, X. X. (2013). Facing Lifelong Learning: The Connotation, Evolution, and Standards. *Distance Education in China, 8,* 21-29, 95.