

# A Citespace Analysis of International Studies on Romanian Foreign Language Education Reform in Universities\*

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Given the institutional similarities between Romania and China in history, its experience in the field of foreign language education reform in colleges and universities can be used for reference in the reform of foreign language teaching of higher education in China. With the help of Citespace, this paper presents a visual statistical analysis of 47 SSCI international journal articles on foreign language reform in Romanian universities and gives some suggestions on foreign language education reform in Chinese universities from four aspects: teaching environment, content, technology and cooperation.

*Keywords:* Romania, foreign language education, citespace, international journal literature

## 1. Introduction

Romania entered European Union in 2007. Since then, its core goal in higher education has become to cultivate new talents to adapt to the global situation in the 21st century and to realize the integration with European higher education and science and technology (Zhang & Xiong, 2016). According to the barometer data of higher education quality published by the Romanian higher education quality supervision agency in 2010, the importance of mastering English has been generally recognized by students and potential employers. According to the English Proficiency Survey and Evaluation Report, Romania is considered to be one of the countries with the highest English popularization rate and the most standard English pronunciation among non-English-speaking countries in the European Union (Tirban, 2013), which shows that Romania has achieved remarkable results in cultivating students' English proficiency.

Because of the similarities between Romania's university management model in the socialist period and China's, the measures taken by Romania to deal with the new challenges brought by the market economy to education can be used for reference for the further deepening of China's higher education reform at present. At present, there have been a few studies on Romanian education reform, but most of them have taken a macro perspective, such as the introduction of education management system covering different stages (Liu & Xiao, 2004), while the research on higher education only emphasizes education management, reform of university governance model and allocation of higher education resources (Ren & Lu, 2020). Research on foreign language

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teaching reform in Romanian universities is insufficient, the published core journal papers in China on the reform and enlightenment of Romanian college English education are mainly an introduction to the current situation of foreign language teaching in one or several universities (Liang, 2003; Zhang, 2013), which fail to provide a comprehensive summary of studies focusing on the reform of foreign language education in Romanian universities in recent 20 years.

Therefore, with the theme “foreign language teaching reform in Romanian higher education”, this paper has searched the articles of international high-quality educational journals from 2000 to 2020 in the WOS core collection and obtains 47 English articles. Using Citespace knowledge map analysis, the paper visually presents the diachronic change trend of research topics in Romanian higher education foreign language teaching reform in recent 20 years from multiple levels; at the same time, the paper makes a qualitative analysis of the research topics in the key literature, intending to provide some implications and suggestions for the reform of foreign language education in Chinese universities.

## 2. Knowledge-mapping of Romanian Higher Foreign Language Education Literature

Using Citespace knowledge-mapping statistical analysis software, this paper makes a visual analysis of 47 English articles in international journals from three aspects: discipline distribution timeline and high co-citation literature network, as well as the keywords timezone, outlining the research topics and evolution trends of foreign language reform of higher education in Romania in recent 20 years.

### 2.1 The Discipline Distribution Timeline

By visualizing the distribution of disciplines and journals cited in foreign language education journals of Romanian universities, we can better identify the research focuses. Figure 1 shows the diachronic distribution of disciplines and fields of literature.

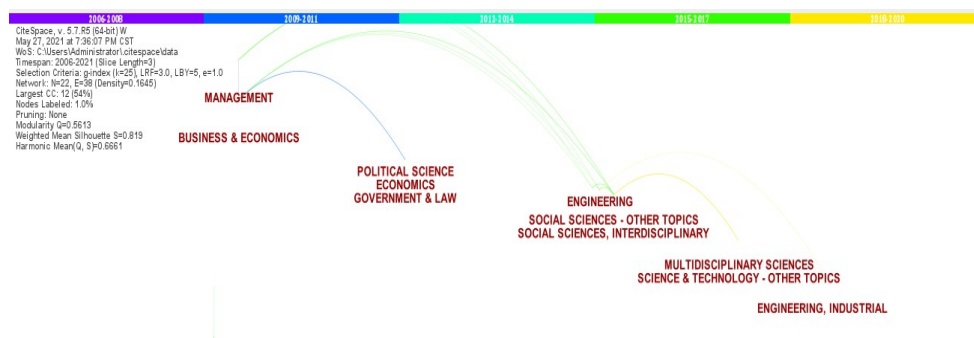


Figure 1. Timeline of discipline distribution in foreign language education of Romanian universities.

From the distribution of literature disciplines in Figure 1, it can be seen that the research literature related to foreign language education in Romanian universities is mainly distributed in the fields of education, linguistics, social sciences, political economy, management, psychology and engineering. In the first 10 years of the 21 ST century, Romania’s foreign language education research mainly focused on Business and Economics, which is closely related to foreign language education. From 2009 to 2013, it gradually transitioned to more professional social science fields such as Political Science and Law. From 2014 to 2017, it showed a more obvious interdisciplinary trend within humanities and social sciences and gradually extended to the engineering field of

natural sciences. From 2018 to 2020, the related research of higher foreign language education in Romania is more closely related to engineering science. The strengthening of the relationship between foreign language education and engineering science is mainly due to the increase of online foreign language learning research based on information and communication technology, which will be discussed in more detail in the qualitative analysis of key documents below. On the whole, foreign language education research in Romanian universities presents three major trends: interdisciplinary development, professional enhancement and scientific and technological relevance improvement.

## 2.2 Co-cited Literature Network and Keywords Evolutionment

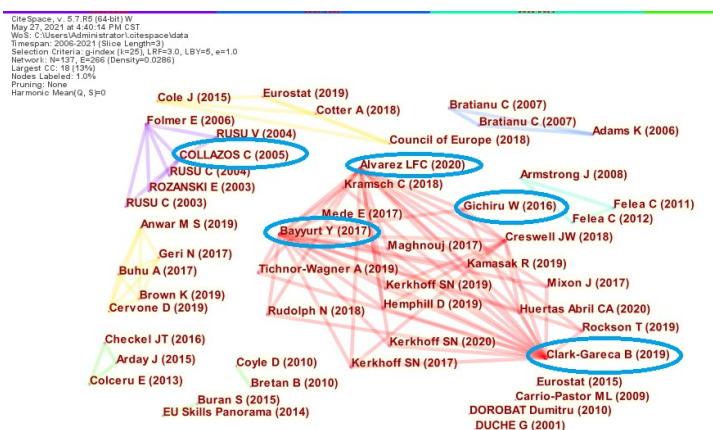


Figure 2. Co-cited literature network of foreign language education research in Romanian universities.

Figure 2 shows the co-cited literature network of foreign language education research in Romanian universities. It can be seen from the figure that there are 137 nodes and 266 connected lines, and the density of the whole network is 0.0286, which indicates that the overall concentration of co-cited documents is not high. According to the number of nodes connected, five papers with high co-citation frequency are circled in the graph. Combined with the centrality of co-cited documents, the top 9 key documents with centrality are obtained (see Table 1).

Table 1.

### Ranking of Highly Cited Literature on Foreign Language Education in Romanian Universities

No.	Centrality	Author	Article	Year
1	16	Bayyurt Y	Foundations of an EIL-aware Teacher Education	2017
2	16	Alvarez LFC	Intercultural Communicative Competence: In-Service EFL Teachers Building Understanding Through Study Groups	2020
3	9	Clark-Gareca B	Chinese and American EFL teachers' beliefs about curricular and pedagogical practices: cross-cultural similarities and differences	2018
4	7	Gichiru W	Reflections on Building 'Glocal' Competence	2016
5	7	Felea C	among Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers	2012
6	7	Felea C	Wiki Tools in Teaching English for Academic Purposes- An analysis of student learning behavior pattern	2013
7	7	Armstrong J	A review of current and developing international practice in the use of social	2008

			networking (Web 2.0) in higher education	
8	7	Holotescu C	What do We Know about the Use of Social Media in Medical Education?	2012
9	7	Conole G	A Literature Review of the Use of Web 2.0 Tools in Higher Education	2010

As shown in Figure 1., the discipline distribution of the literature shows the development trend of foreign language education research, and the titles of the seven key articles shown in Table 1 can also demonstrate the increasing attention to E-learning in foreign language education research (Armstrong & Franklin, 2008), which is embodied in the great importance attached to online ESP or academic English research based on Web 2.0 (Felea & Stanca, 2013; Felea & Stanca, 2012). In addition, a new key research topic presented in table 1 is the cultivation of cross-cultural communication ability on a global scale (Gichiru, 2016), which is included in the integration of cross-cultural ability cultivation to teaching practice and curriculum design (Clark-Gareca & Gui, 2019), and the research on the cognitive degree of foreign language teachers on the diversified development of English as an international language EIL in the world (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2017). So far, the research on foreign language education in Romania's colleges and universities has added two keywords: "cross-cultural competence" and "teaching diversity based on interdisciplinary, professional and new technologies".

### 3. Qualitative Analysis of Foreign Language Education Reform in Romanian Universities

The literature on foreign language education reform in Romanian universities has been statistically analyzed with the help of Citespace, it roughly outlines the development path of foreign language education reform in Romanian universities in recent 20 years, The following will make a qualitative analysis of the contents of highly cited documents, This paper mainly combs the key topics of Romanian higher foreign language education reform around the two major themes of environment and content, science and technology and cooperation.

#### 3.1 Create a Personalized and Relaxed Foreign Language Teaching Environment

Along with the deepening of globalization, the educational goals of different countries and regions are partially converging, and the cultivation of world citizens who can have a global vision and carry out cross-cultural exchanges has become a common educational goal all over the world (Apple, 2011). Facing the challenges of homogenization of educational evaluation and information explosion, we can use information technology to analyze students' social and cultural identity to provide individualized teaching per their aptitude and help students acquire and internalize information resources in multiple channels by establishing a relaxed and flexible network foreign language learning environment.

Since 2012, the curriculum and syllabus of Romanian higher education have been adjusted. The curriculum emphasizes cross-cultural ability training, the combination of multidisciplinary and professional knowledge, flexible and personalized learning paths, and the adoption of teaching modes based on new technologies. In 2011, Michael W. emphasized the homogenization of higher education in the world caused by globalization, pointing out that the single dominant culture is spreading on a global scale, while other local cultures are gradually marginalized. Under this background, how to position foreign language teaching to cultivate students' global vision and maintain their enthusiasm for local culture and respect for cultural diversity is an important issue in the field of foreign language education research. At the level of educational policymaking, we should fully consider the dialectical and complex relationship between school education and external social, ideological and economic

conditions (Anyon, 2014). In the training of teachers, it is necessary to enhance front-line foreign language teachers' clear understanding of the nature of globalization, and require teachers to have a deeper understanding of students' language backgrounds and social and cultural complexity. In this way, teachers can design culture-related curriculum content and carry out corresponding teaching practices (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Another way to deal with the challenge of educational homogenization is to rely on information technology to create a relaxed network foreign language learning environment with multi-modality, multi-opportunity and multi-channel. One of the keywords in the highly cited literature is ICT-based online foreign language teaching. Professor Cristina Felea from the Department of Business Information Management of Babes-Borai University in Romania published several articles to report the effectiveness of wiki platform in academic English teaching, emphasizing that online learning teaching combined with wiki platform can better match the multidimensional characteristics of language teaching itself.

### **3.2 Teaching Content Designing and the Cultivation of the Cross-cultural Ability**

The knowledge society emphasizes the people-oriented educational concept more, and the core function of teachers is no longer to transmit knowledge but to educate people. More attention has been paid to the decentralization, individuation and flexibility of the educational process. For foreign language teachers, to improve their ability in strategy, content and method, they should not only become ESP teachers but also become language educators with knowledge and language integration (Cately, 2011).

#### *3.2.1 Change foreign language teachers' cognition of cross-cultural knowledge*

Fernandez proposes to teach language through content language integrated learning-CLIL by introducing topics related to subject content (Fernández, 2009). In the field of foreign language education in colleges and universities in China, the instrumentality and humanity of English have always been the focus of debate. At present, when cultures influence each other and merge, foreign language teachers have to incorporate their unactivated perception of the target language culture into foreign language teaching practice (Álvarez, 2020). As for the improvement of foreign language teachers' cross-cultural communication ability, Liddicoat pointed out that teachers' perspective on cultural thinking affects their way of teaching culture (Liddicoat, 2002). According to Alvaraz's interview with the language teachers, they usually agree that their understanding of culture presents a cultural view based on facts and tourism knowledge, and most teachers admit that culture only plays an introductory role in language teaching. The challenge for incorporating cross-culture ability cultivation into foreign language teaching include that teachers lack group consensus on cultural understanding, and the collective discussion on a specific interpretation of cultural connotation and how to cultivate cross-cultural communication ability is not enough. At the same time, it is unrealistic to assume that foreign language teachers can integrate the goal of cultivating cross-cultural communication ability into foreign language classrooms only through internal reflection (Lafayette, 2003).

#### *3.2.2 Enhance EIL awareness of English as an international language*

The change of the cognition of culture teaching can help teachers overcome the egocentric stage in the process of developing cross-cultural sensitivity and re-examine the traditional views on the relationship between language teaching and culture. Specifically, improving EIL awareness of foreign language teachers can be regarded as one of the methods to integrate the cultivation of cross-cultural communication ability into foreign

language teaching classroom practice. Professor Yasemin Bayyurt and Professor Nicos Sifakis pointed out that in the 21st century, the core of teacher education is no longer to passively accept the required teaching knowledge but to learn to make various decisions related to teaching independently based on internalized information knowledge. Improving EIL-English as an International Language means that foreign language teachers should understand the different perspectives of interpreting and analyzing the spread of English on a global scale, and also be aware of the different views in the English language community on the role and status of non-native English speakers and the comprehensibility of their non-standard English. Against the background of the spread and evolution of English all over the world, the English teacher's role as standard English guardian may need to be reevaluated or even completely changed (Sifakis, 2014; Sifakis & Sougari, 2005).

#### **4. Collaborative Teaching of Academic English based on Web 2.0 in the Post-method Era of Higher Foreign Language Education**

While changing the training objectives of higher education, the Internet has also improved the flexibility and accessibility of education and increased learning opportunities. Faced with the dilemma that traditional foreign language teaching can't meet the needs of improving cross-cultural communication ability, the emergence of Network 2.0 may help the reform of foreign language education in colleges and universities, and improve students' multi-dimensional ability training through more collaborative ways (Conole, 2010).

##### **4.1 The Necessity of "Post-method" Collaborative Learning in Higher Education**

At the end of the 20th century, under the influence of social constructivism, Romanian higher education began to emphasize the transition to a student-centred collaborative teaching paradigm on the platform of information technology. Romania's education reform project for 2013-2016 proposes to strongly support higher education to integrate information and communication technology more effectively in teaching practice. Most online foreign language teaching resources aim to enable students to master common language learning strategies, build scaffolding for cultivating interdisciplinary general abilities, and devote themselves to building a diversified network environment that can meet students' needs. "Post-method" refers to the prior analysis of the learning environment, Macroscopically expanding learning opportunities, promoting negotiation, fostering language awareness and improving learner autonomy and reflection (Hazratzad & Gheitanchian, 2009; Carver, 1983), while emphasizing collaborative learning, which requires learners to discover knowledge and turn it into reconstructed concepts, and continuously extend the knowledge system through active dialogue with teachers and classmates (Noveanu & Potolea, 2008).

Collazos gives the definition of collaborative learning, which means that participants participate together and solve problems through coordinated actions (Collazos et al., 2002). The process of collaborative learning itself has research significance, and students can better understand collaboration itself through collaborative learning; moreover, evaluating the four dimensions of collaboration: innovation, creativity, interpretation and consistency shows that collaboration ability is very consistent with the current goal of higher education (Katz, 1999).

In the era of Network 2.0, foreign language education in colleges and universities should pay more attention to how to make full use of the characteristics of collaboration, sharing and interaction of social media to improve students' participation and feedback enthusiasm in online foreign language learning.

#### 4.2 Advantages of Online Collaborative Learning Platform Based on Web 2.0

As far as the specific practice of building an online foreign language learning environment is concerned, the wiki-based online academic English teaching platform developed by Professor Cristina (2013) has proved to be an applicable approach. Romanian institutions of higher learning have offered academic English courses at the undergraduate level, Professor Cristina has conducted a systematic and comprehensive diachronic empirical study on how to use the network platform technology to better realize the collaborative teaching of academic English, and they found that students' online learning ability is partly improved with the close observation of teachers, informal interaction with students and the continuous influence of teachers on students' learning activities. However, the statistics of students' participation data show that students generally lack the ability of time management and are unwilling to join the learning activities that require strong self-learning ability. Felea (2014) suggested that students' general learning ability and academic literacy can be improved through interdisciplinary content training.

The rapid development of the Internet and information and communication technology has brought a great impact on the traditional education model, The accessibility of network teaching resources breaks the monopoly position of teachers on valuable information, but the resources on the Internet are distributed in a discrete and fragmented way, which lacks systematicness. For students who do not have the knowledge structure of internalizing information into a system, they cannot well transform seemingly rich resources into their knowledge system. At the same time, the accessibility of online teaching resources undoubtedly increases the difficulty of teaching. Teachers should teach students the ability to identify, screen, classify and sort out various resources on the Internet, and gradually build fragmented knowledge into a systematic knowledge framework suitable for their own needs. The teaching process of realizing this goal must include the flexible application of network technology, and only by employing the new opportunities brought by the Internet to education can we meet the new challenges brought by the Internet to education. At the same time, the rapidly developing concepts of sharing, collaboration and cooperation have changed the original knowledge production mode, and the two-way interaction between teachers and students has been replaced by the multi-directional interconnection interaction between teachers, students and students, and teachers and students, which can greatly increase the channels for promoting innovation and creativity. One of the concepts frequently mentioned in the Romanian research literature on mixed teaching of academic English is "informal learning", which is subversive to the traditional foreign language teaching classroom. However, if we think from the perspective of language acquisition, "informal language learning" may be more in line with the natural process of language acquisition. On the whole, the new collaborative foreign language teaching based on Web 2.0 in Babiche-Boyai University in Romania can better adapt to the current student-centred teaching mode and more flexibly adapt to the curriculum teaching with different teaching forms, contents and evaluation methods.

### Conclusion and Implications

In this paper, the knowledge-mapping statistical software Citespace is used to quantitatively analyze the international research literature on foreign language education in Romanian universities in the past 20 years, screen out the key co-cited literature, and outline the keyword evolution of research topics. According to the visual analysis, since entering the 21st century, Foreign language education research in Romania presents the

following main trends of development: integrating disciplinary knowledge into language teaching, student-centred collaborative learning, the cultivation of cross-cultural communication ability, and the strengthening of mixed teaching relying on the information technology platform.

Through qualitative analysis of the selected key documents, this paper gives some suggestions on the reform of foreign language education in colleges and universities in China . First, use big data to subdivide the needs and cultural backgrounds of student groups; promote language teaching with the integration of disciplinary knowledge, and foreign language teachers with specific subject knowledge are responsible for academic English teaching for students in this subject, which can not only enhance students' sense of identity with foreign language teachers but also help foreign language teachers to expand diversified personal development paths and gradually become educators integrating knowledge and language. Secondly, with higher foreign language education entering the "post-method era", using the online education platform to create a multi-modal, multi-opportunity and multi-path relaxed foreign language learning environment is very important for cultivating foreign language comprehensive talents suitable for the new era. Through group-based collaborative foreign language learning and building bridges between complex cultural issues and language content that students can understand and produce, the cross-cultural ability to establish connections between mother tongue culture and target language culture can be improved. Cultivate high-level compound talents with global vision, enthusiasm for local culture and respect for cultural diversity.

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