

Exploring the Localization Path of Bilingual Education in Chinese Universities under the Context of Globalization

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Abstract

With the accelerating internationalization of higher education in China, bilingual education has become a crucial approach for cultivating internationally competent talents in universities. However, challenges such as weak faculty, insufficient course resources, and monotonous teaching models hinder its pro-motion. Based on a comprehensive review of the current status of bilingual education, combined with typical cases and reform practices, this paper proposes five localization paths: faculty development, innovation in teaching models, curriculum resource development, construction of diversified assessment systems, and university-industry collaboration mechanisms. These strategies aim to provide references for improving the quality of bilingual education in Chinese universities.

Keywords

Bilingual Education; Internationalization; Localization; Higher Education; Teaching Reform

1. Introduction

In the current era of globalization, higher education worldwide is trending toward integration and cooperation, with international exchanges becoming increasingly frequent. Against this backdrop, Chinese universities have widely adopted bilingual education as a key component of educational internationalization (Deng, 2025; Zeng, 2023). Offering bilingual courses not only enhances students' professional English proficiency but also cultivates their international perspectives and intercultural communication skills. However, since bilingual education is a relatively recent development in China, many challenges remain in its implementation. Therefore, exploring a localization path that aligns with China's educational realities while integrating international perspectives has become a vital subject in higher education reform.

2. Current Status of Bilingual Education Development in Chinese Universities

2.1. Policy Promotion and Educational Philosophy Updates

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has successively issued policy documents such as the Education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan and the Minutes of the New Era Undergraduate Education Work Conference, explicitly calling for accelerating bilingual teaching and internationalized curriculum construction. These policies emphasize bilingual education's role in cultivating interdisciplinary and internationally minded talents. With the deepening implementation of national strategies like the “Double First-Class” initiative and the Belt and Road Initiative, bilingual education has evolved beyond a mere reform tool to become a key lever for enhancing China's higher education soft power (Deng, 2025; Chen, 2023).

Additionally, an increasing number of universities have incorporated bilingual education into undergraduate teaching quality evaluation criteria, specifying requirements such as the proportion of English-taught hours in curricula. Some regional universities have leveraged international exchange projects by introducing foreign teachers and joint training programs, advancing bilingual education from conceptual guidance to practical mechanisms, thus establishing a positive development momentum.

2.2. Innovation in Teaching Models

To adapt to evolving educational philosophies, bilingual teaching models have continuously broken from tradition, aiming to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. Student-centered approaches such as problem-based learning (PBL), flipped classrooms, and blended teaching are gradually integrated into bilingual courses, driving pedagogical innovation. For example, the “Financial Derivatives” course introduces PBL, requiring students to analyze cases, research materials, and present findings bilingually, thereby enhancing language skills alongside critical thinking and intercultural understanding (Wu & Zhang, 2025).

Meanwhile, the incorporation of information technology supports bilingual education's flexibility and reach. Platforms such as MOOCs and SPOCs enable blended teaching, and smart classroom systems facilitate interactive learning. These efforts transform bilingual teaching from “knowledge transmission” to “competency construction,” increasing its adaptability and vitality.

2.3. Broad Expansion across Disciplines

Initially concentrated in foreign-related majors like economics, management, and law, bilingual education has expanded into medicine, chemistry, mechanical engineering, computer science, and other technical disciplines, achieving a leap from language orientation to professional depth. Implementation in engineering courses such as

“Analytical Chemistry” and “Mechanical Drawing” not only enriches students’ professional English vocabulary but also improves their ability to access and utilize international academic resources (Pan et al., n.d.; Huang & Chai, 2025).

Some universities have integrated bilingual teaching with research training and practical labs, promoting synergy between multilingual competence and professional skills. For instance, a medical school incorporates English academic paper reading into its “Clinical Diagnostics” course, easing students’ transition into international academic norms. Furthermore, multidisciplinary courses such as bioeconomics and medical-engineering integration offer broader platforms for bilingual education.

2.4. Challenges and Problems

Despite positive momentum, bilingual education faces significant challenges in practice:

1. Unbalanced faculty structure and insufficient bilingual teaching capacity: The shortage of “dual-qualified” teachers proficient in both subject expertise and English leads to unstable course quality and occurrences of “literal translation” teaching, adversely affecting outcomes (Chen, 2024; Liu, 2024).
2. Outdated textbook systems lacking localized content: Most courses rely on original English textbooks that poorly align with Chinese contexts, limiting applicability and localization development (Mu & Zhang, 2024; Jiang & Jiang, 2024).
3. Diverse student abilities hinder personalized teaching: Students’ varied English proficiency and professional understanding cause difficulties in pacing, reducing engagement and effectiveness (Wu, 2024; Yu, 2023).
4. Insufficient supporting mechanisms and lack of incentive and assessment systems: Universities lack systematic arrangements in teacher performance evaluation, course assessment, and outcome appraisal, leading to low teacher motivation and difficulties in continuous course improvement (Chen, 2024; Yin, 2021).

3. Localization Paths for Bilingual Education in Universities

3.1. Strengthening Faculty Development

Establish a comprehensive bilingual teacher training system addressing language proficiency, professional competence, and pedagogical skills. This includes encouraging overseas academic visits and in-house bilingual teaching capacity building to form a “language – profession – teaching” composite faculty team (Mu & Zhang, 2024; Deng, 2025).

3.2. Promoting Teaching Model Innovation

Adopt student-centered diversified teaching models, combining online-offline blended learning, task-driven instruction, and case analysis to enhance student initiative and class participation. For instance, the flipped classroom approach in

“Financial Derivatives” effectively stimulates student motivation (Wu & Zhang, 2025).

3.3. Developing Localized Curriculum Resources

Encourage faculty participation in creating localized bilingual textbooks and integrate quality domestic and international resources to build knowledge systems tailored for Chinese students. The “Cross-border E-commerce Practices” bilingual course exemplifies improved adaptability by introducing local cases (Yu, 2023). Additionally, develop open and shared bilingual teaching resource platforms to facilitate resource circulation and co-construction.

3.4. Constructing Scientific and Diversified Assessment Systems

Emphasize balanced evaluation of language and professional abilities by incorporating formative and process-oriented assessments to comprehensively measure students’ language expression, course comprehension, and practical skills (Chen, 2024; Jiang & Jiang, 2024). Utilize feedback mechanisms and learning portfolio tracking to optimize instructional design and realize personalized teaching.

3.5. Constructing Scientific and Diversified Assessment Systems

Leverage platforms such as Sino-foreign cooperative education, joint overseas courses, and international summer schools to promote international joint construction of bilingual curricula. Some universities share resources and conduct co-teaching with overseas partners, enhancing students’ comprehensive qualities in global contexts (Wu, 2024; Deng, 2025). Industry partnerships introduce bilingual practical projects, strengthening students’ real-world application capabilities.

4. Typical Case Studies and Experience Reference (Condensed)

4.1. Teaching Reform in Economics Courses at Beihang University: Organizational Coordination through Interdepartmental Collaboration

Mu & Zhang (2024) highlight that a key feature of Beihang’s bilingual economics reform is the strong organizational coordination and interdepartmental cooperation. The “course group” system encourages joint curriculum design and content restructuring, optimizing faculty assignments based on bilingual competence and professional knowledge. This teamwork model overcomes traditional “solo teaching” constraints, alleviating individual teachers’ workload and ensuring institutional support for bilingual education (Mu & Zhang, 2024).

4.2. Localization Practices in the “Analytical Chemistry” Course: Enhanced Language Support and Resource Integration

The bilingual reform in this STEM course addresses language barriers and abstract

content by restructuring course sequences, integrating localized lab cases with English materials, and fostering an English environment through discussion sessions and English abstract writing. This practice underscores the necessity of systemic optimization beyond mere language switching, covering content, methods, and evaluation (Li, 2023).

4.3. Fusion of Flipped Classroom and PBL: Activating Student Subjectivity and Enhancing Language Use

Wu & Zhang (2025) explore a combined “flipped classroom + PBL” approach in the “Financial Derivatives” bilingual course. Pre-class video and reading preparation are followed by case-based in-class group discussions led by instructors. This approach simultaneously develops students’ professional knowledge, logical thinking, and English expression, significantly improving engagement and satisfaction. The model offers flexible paradigms applicable to other disciplines (Wu & Zhang, 2025).

5. Future Trends and Research Directions

As higher education internationalization deepens and technological tools evolve, bilingual education is set to enter a more systematic and diversified development phase:

5.1. Deeper integration with national strategies to serve high-quality development demands

Bilingual education will closely align with initiatives like the Belt and Road, free trade zones, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, emphasizing regional economic and international exchange alignment to form a “profession + foreign language + strategic orientation” teaching model.

5.2. Integration with intelligent education to drive pedagogical transformation

Leveraging AI, big data, and smart teaching platforms, bilingual education will progress toward personalized and intelligent instruction. Learning analytics, smart recommendations, and real-time feedback enable precision teaching and interaction. Virtual simulation and multimodal interaction will enrich professional language use and intercultural communication scenarios (Wang, 2022).

5.3. Continuous policy and institutional improvement to standardize teaching quality

Universities will strengthen institutional guarantees covering course approval, faculty training, quality evaluation, and certification. A national bilingual course certification system is anticipated to standardize curriculum criteria, teaching guidelines, and performance metrics, advancing bilingual education from policy advocacy to

normative implementation (Zhao & Liu, 2024).

5.4. More precise talent cultivation emphasizing integrated competency development

The goal of bilingual education will extend beyond language skills to holistic enhancement of language, professional, and intercultural competencies. Modular curriculum design, interdisciplinary integration, and international exchange will enhance students' professional expression, global vision, and international understanding, fostering truly competitive talents.

6. Summary

Bilingual education reform is a crucial measure to enhance the international competitiveness of China's higher education and a key pathway to cultivating talents with a global vision and professional competence. Currently, bilingual education is transitioning from an exploratory stage to one focused on improving quality and efficiency. Although progress has been made, challenges remain in teacher development, teaching materials, and instructional support, requiring continuous reform and investment.

Looking ahead, bilingual education should align closely with the national modernization goals of education and China's practical context, pursuing a development path that is "rooted locally and oriented globally." This includes strengthening top-level design and policy support, leveraging technology to innovate teaching and share resources, promoting internationalization of faculty, and improving evaluation and incentive systems. By synchronizing the localization and international integration of content, methods, resources, and systems, bilingual education can achieve high-quality development.

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