



ORIGINAL

Blended Learning Strategies for Golden Curriculum Implementation: Case Study on British and American Stories

Estrategia de aprendizaje mixta para la implementación del currículo de oro: un estudio de caso de historias británicas y estadounidenses

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: in the modern era, developing foreign talents transcends traditional humanistic knowledge, with literature playing a pivotal role amid the challenges of the ‘golden curriculum’.

Objectives: this study aims to explore a blended learning and sorting approach using the ‘selected British and American stories’ program as an example. It seeks to formulate an implementation strategy aligned with the Ministry of Education’s emphasis on ‘golden subjects’ and address the promotion of data-based blended learning.

Method: a mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating curriculum design principles and active engagement strategies. The research involved analyzing the effectiveness of the chosen literature program in fostering intrinsic motivation and flexible learning among students.

Results: the findings indicate that the proposed strategy enhances teaching quality by actively engaging students and improving their learning experiences. Additionally, fair teaching evaluation mechanisms contribute to ongoing feedback and teaching quality improvement.

Conclusions: this paper underscores the importance of leveraging literature in talent development and provides a practical framework for implementing a blended learning strategy that aligns with current educational reforms. The study highlights the potential for literature-based approaches to enrich the educational landscape and enhance foreign talent development.

Keywords: English and American(E&A) Literature; “Golden Class”; Blended Teaching; Pair-Sharing Classroom; Data Mining; Mobile Learning.

RESUMEN

Introducción: en la era moderna, el desarrollo de talentos extranjeros trasciende los conocimientos humanísticos tradicionales, y la literatura desempeña un papel fundamental en medio de los retos del ‘currículo de oro’.

Objetivos: este estudio pretende explorar un enfoque de aprendizaje y clasificación combinados utilizando como ejemplo el programa de ‘historias británicas y americanas seleccionadas’. Pretende formular una estrategia de aplicación alineada con el énfasis del Ministerio de Educación en las ‘asignaturas de oro’ y abordar la promoción del aprendizaje combinado basado en datos.

Método: se empleó un enfoque de métodos mixtos que incorporaba principios de diseño curricular y estrategias de participación activa. La investigación consistió en analizar la eficacia del programa de literatura elegido para fomentar la motivación intrínseca y el aprendizaje flexible entre los estudiantes.

Resultados: los resultados indican que la estrategia propuesta mejora la calidad de la enseñanza al implicar activamente a los estudiantes y mejorar sus experiencias de aprendizaje. Además, los mecanismos de evaluación justa de la enseñanza contribuyen a la retroalimentación continua y a la mejora de la calidad de la enseñanza.

Conclusiones: este artículo subraya la importancia de aprovechar la literatura en el desarrollo del talento y proporciona un marco práctico para aplicar una estrategia de aprendizaje combinado que se ajuste a las reformas educativas actuales. El estudio pone de relieve el potencial de los enfoques basados en la literatura para enriquecer el panorama educativo y potenciar el desarrollo del talento extranjero.

Palabras clave: Literatura Inglesa y Estadounidense (E&A); “Golden Class”; Blended Teaching; Pair-Sharing Classroom; Data Mining; Mobile Learning.

INTRODUCTION

A reform of higher education curriculum quality has been carried out in full swing in all universities and majors across China.^(1,2) E&A literature as the main course of English majors is facing the crisis of being marginalized and gradually declining.⁽³⁾ In the context of the prevalence of pragmatism, universities in China have been offering language skills courses to strengthen students’ instrumental language training, and the teaching methods and contents of the original E&A literature courses are too old, and the credit hours of literature courses are being reduced continuously, especially in science and engineering institutions, the problem of marginalization of E&A literature courses is particularly serious.⁽⁴⁾ Facing the voice of doubt, Professor Wang Shouren of Nanjing University firmly stated, “In terms of teaching English majors, the question is not whether to offer E&A literature courses, but rather what to teach and how to teach it.”⁽⁵⁾ Deepening the reform of teaching mode of E&A literature course is the right thing to promote the construction of “golden course” to perfection.

The National Standard for Teaching Quality of Foreign Languages and Literature (National Standard) issued in 2018 requires foreign language talents to have humanistic and scientific literacy,⁽⁶⁾ which specifies the characteristics of both humanism and instrumentality of foreign language majors. English majors need to clarify that “its core is humanism and humanistic spirit devoted to the shaping of ideal personality, cultivating humanitarian spirit and humanistic sentiment”.⁽⁷⁾ Among them, literature plays an irreplaceable role because of its full of human meaning and enlightening value.

First, literary reading and language learning are intertwined. The Italian literary critic⁽⁸⁾ suggested that one of the functions of literature is “to maintain the living state of language and make it our collective heritage. Through intensive reading, imitation and continuation of classic literature, students’ basic language skills, imagination and creativity will be greatly enhanced. Second, literature brings enrichment to the spiritual world. Confucius said, “If you don’t learn poetry, you can’t speak.”⁽⁹⁾ The one-sided pursuit of the instrumental nature of language learning while ignoring the accumulation of literary heritage will only lead to students’ poverty of thought and lack of words. The Irish poet⁽¹⁰⁾ believes that literature is “the great educational force of the world, the highest creator of all values”. In the age of information explosion and materialistic desire, literature can give students a thorough eye to maintain a noble character. Third, literature reflects the writer’s deep concern for the social reality of a specific historical period and his vivid reflection of the unique life experiences of individuals and social groups. By expressing the common emotions and common spiritual pursuits of human beings, literary works trigger the “feeling of solidarity and companionship” in readers’ hearts, thus “connecting people, all human beings and the real world” and evoking the sentiment of human destiny community.^(11,12,13,14,15)

In the face of the training requirements of English talents in the new era, the teaching of the original E&A literature courses has fallen into the dilemma of “teaching is tasteless, learning is not interesting”. First, the “higher-order” nature of the English major’s “gold course” requires that students be trained to have more solid basic language skills, cross-cultural communication skills and critical thinking skills. The explanation of terms, the outline of works and the “standard” interpretation in order to cope with the exams, and are unable to have a real dialogue with the text through reading, which seriously affects their enthusiasm to appreciate and criticize the literary works.⁽¹⁶⁾ Their cognitive level is only at the primary level of memorization and comprehension, which is far from the advanced cognitive goals such as analysis, evaluation and innovation.

Secondly, the “innovation” of the “golden course” of English majors requires the course content to be cutting-edge and contemporary, the teaching form to be advanced and interactive, and the learning results to be inquisitive and personalized.^(17,18) At present, the teaching is based on teachers’ introduction of literary history, period characteristics, representative writers’ works and “standard” interpretations, and students lack reading of complete literary works, so they cannot be touched to think and understand.⁽¹⁹⁾ The teaching method is based on teachers’ narration, and students are passive recipients of knowledge, lacking participation in class and space for independent interpretation of literary texts.

Thirdly, the “challenge” of the English major’s “Golden Course” requires that the teaching objectives and contents have a certain degree of difficulty and depth, which can lead students to think and discern.^(20,21) At present, teachers of E&A literature classes are accustomed to using outdated textbooks, focusing on teaching easy and frequent test points in exams and content in which they specialize.^(22,23,24) The final assessment is based on regular closed-book written exams, which intensifies the phenomenon of students’ rote memorization.

To sum up, the reform of E&A literature course is inevitable. Teachers urgently need to optimize the teaching design to make the E&A literature course a “golden course” that can load the comprehensive quality of culture, thinking and innovation, and bring the value of rationality back to the teaching of English majors.

STRATEGIES

Data Mining

Data mining is a process of retrieving information hidden in a large amount of data information through a specific algorithm. Compared with other data methods, data mining methods have a wider range of applications, and can be used to deal with structured and non constructive data for data retrieval, so it has great application value. The specific data extraction process is shown in figure 1.

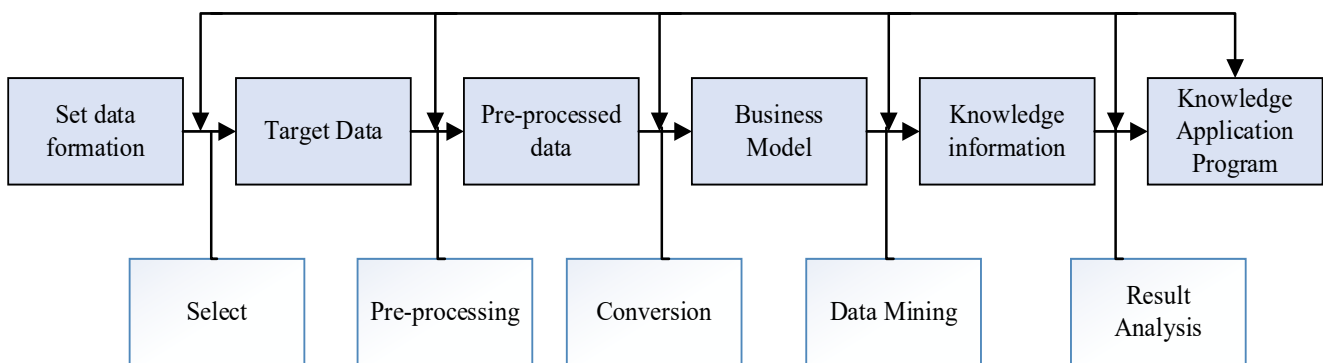


Figure 1. The general process of data mining

The path of “Golden Course” of E&A literature

English and American short stories is an elective course for English major education students in the first semester of the second year, with 16 teaching weeks, 2 hours per week, and 32 hours in total. Based on this course, we are going to explore the new path of creating a hybrid online and offline “golden course” of E&A literature course.

Teaching content

Literature courses are never a simple superposition of chronology, history and works, nor should rote memorization be the way of learning. The teaching of E&A literature courses must return to the reading of literary classics. On this basis, students are inspired to participate in the construction of textual meaning and to enhance their comprehension and appreciation. The American educator Hutchins, when he was president of the University of Chicago, strongly advocated students to read the classics, which had a great impact on the American higher education sector, where utilitarianism was prevalent at that time. According to American literary critic Bloom, deep, sustained reading fully establishes and enhances self-knowledge. Students engage in a dialogue with the text through the act of reading, which is itself a “process of discernment and re-creation.

Teachers should base on the actual learning situation, integrate a variety of textbooks, online course resources and other web-related resources, and reasonably construct teaching contents suitable for students. At present, there are various versions of E&A literature textbooks available. Nine of the national high-quality online open courses recognized by the Ministry of Education in 2017 and 2018 are E&A literature courses (see table 1). These provide conditions for the creation of a hybrid online and offline “golden course” for E&A literature courses. Teachers can uphold a general academic vision, take the basic elements and common literary techniques of short stories as the outline, refer to multiple editions of British and American short story textbooks, use the resources on the online learning platform, and select works by writers of different periods, countries, genders and styles as the objects of text interpretation. They should include both classics and relatively new works. In addition, the selected texts should not be set in stone, but should be dynamically adjusted in the light of national and current affairs and the frontiers of E&A literature research at home and abroad. Each week, students are required to complete the online learning content assigned by the instructor, and to complete an intensive reading of a short story as well as a general reading of an extended reading novel.

Table 1. National Excellence Online Open Courses in E&A literature

Serial number	Course Name	Course Leader	Construction unit	Platform	Year
1	Appreciation of Western Literature Classics	Liu Hongtao	Beijing Normal University	Chinese University MOOC	2017
2	History of Foreign Literature	Jiang Chengyong	Zhejiang University of Technology and Industry	Chinese University MOOC	2017
3	Appreciation of the classics of world Chinese literature	Zhao Xiaoqi	Wuhan University	Chinese University MOOC	2017
4	Literary Appreciation and Criticism	Chen Guoen	Wuhan University	Chinese University MOOC	2017
5	Comparative Literature	Hu Yamin	Huazhong Normal University	Chinese University MOOC	2017
6	Selections from Foreign Literary Classics and Realistic Perspectives	Zou Tao	University of Electronic Science and Technology	Chinese University MOOC	2017
7	Selected English and American Poetry	Huang Zongying	Beijing Union University	Chinese University MOOC	2018
8	English and American Poetry	Xue Jiabao	Yancheng Normal University	Chinese University MOOC	2018
9	E&A literature in the Perspective of Western Modernization	Li Chengjian	Southwest Jiaotong University	Chinese University MOOC	2018

Teaching mode

Before the class, the teacher should divide the students into several learning groups according to the principle of “homogeneity between groups and heterogeneity within groups”, with 3-4 students in each group.

In the first week, the teacher introduces the teaching model and clarifies the evaluation criteria to the students, then teaches the knowledge points of the section, and assigns the corresponding post-lesson intensive reading, general reading, and online learning tasks for the next section. The students, as the main learners, are required to work in small groups to focus on (but not limited to) the elements or literary techniques of the novel explained in this lesson based on a close reading of the text, and to develop their understanding of the close reading of the novel through independent interpretation, extensive literature review and group discussion, and to create a PPT.

Starting in the second week, the first five minutes of the first period of each class will be spent by students in small groups in order to present the author of that novel each week. Afterwards, students will work in small groups to present their understanding of the novels they have read in the previous class on a PPT. The teacher briefly summarized the group presentations in the second learning period, guided students to form more comprehensive and in-depth thinking about the text, and taught the new knowledge points of this section based on checking the pre-reading of online resources, while assigning new close reading and extended reading novels as well as online learning contents.

Evaluation mechanism

The usual grades can be divided into attendance, online resource learning, group presentation, author introduction, class discussion and other parts. For activities that can reflect discernment and “challenge”, such as group presentations and class discussions, the weight of their scores can be relatively increased; while for tasks that are relatively low-order and easy to complete, such as attendance and online learning completion, the weight of their scores can be appropriately reduced. During the group presentation, students should indicate the work done by each member in the PPT to ensure full participation and avoid “free-riding” behavior. The teacher keeps an eye on each student’s participation in the classroom discussion, gives timely and dynamic feedback, and provides guidance and encouragement to students who are not highly motivated (see figure 2).

The final assessment may be changed from a closed-book written examination to a course paper. Students are required to analyze the given short stories in accordance with the basic standards of academic essay writing, taking into account the theories and analytical methods of literary criticism they have learned, and referring to relevant literature. On the one hand, this assessment method can check students’ learning achievements,

i.e., their ability to read, understand and analyze novels, and pave the way for their in-depth study of E&A literature; on the other hand, it can train students' ability to write literary criticism in a preliminary and standardized way, and lay the foundation for their future dissertation writing.

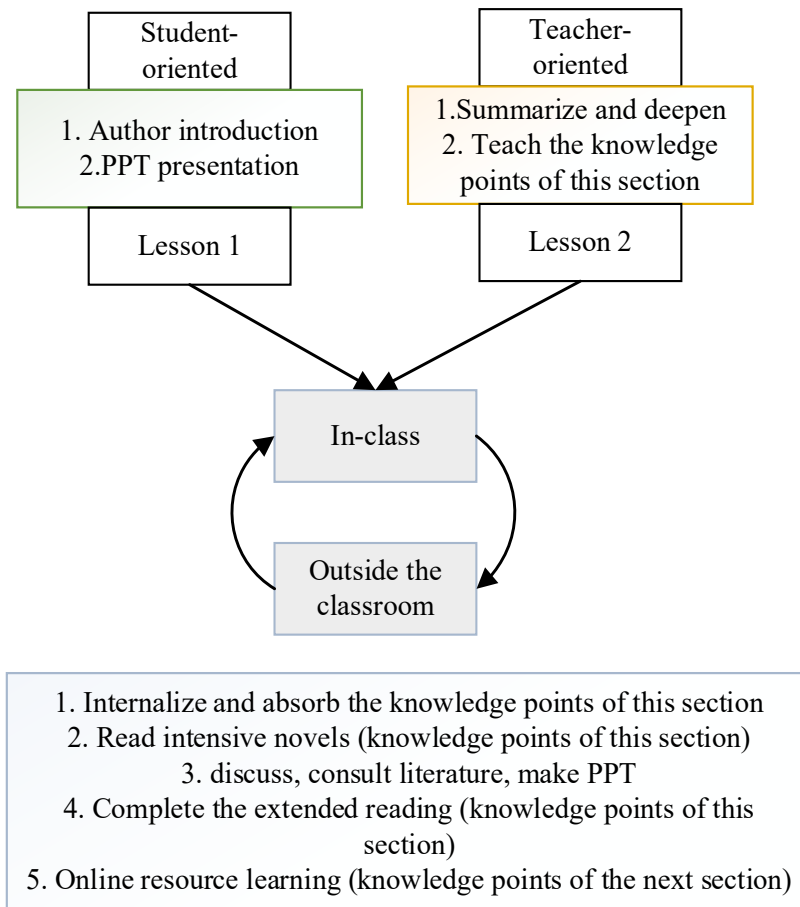


Figure 2. Teaching implementation process of the course of reading selected English and American short stories

Teacher's Role

The teacher of this course should have profound literary cultivation and strong scientific research ability, always pay attention to academic developments, be able to combine literary criticism theories and academic frontiers, explain the appreciation methods of literary works in an in-depth and simple way, guide students to independently analyze the characterization, thematic content and style of the works expressed, and be able to summarize the characteristics of each period of literary history from the representative works. Teachers should lead students to explore and consider the universal issues reflected in the works, to reflect the current society with literature, and to let students feel the realistic value of literature.

In teaching practice, teachers should avoid the initial one-sided teaching and guide the interpretation and learning of the meaning of the text through the problems of depth and breadth, so as to enhance students' literary interest and thinking ability. Teachers should make full use of PPT, photography, film clips, songs and other diversified teaching resources to stimulate and promote their participation in learning. Teachers should also focus on integrating Chinese elements while studying E&A literature, comparing Chinese and Western literature and culture at the right time, and encouraging students to show Chinese wisdom on the stage of world literature. In addition, teachers need to control the rhythm of the course, grasp the connotations of the text, and provide timely nudges and feedback when students' expressions or interpretations deviate, so that students feel that they are always receiving attention from the teacher and are more motivated to participate in classroom activities.

In view of this, teaching design adopts advanced teaching concepts, uses high-quality teaching resources, and repositions the roles of teachers and students. It encourages students to actively participate in cognitive learning, enhances their sense of freedom and responsibility, and establishes an interactive learning model and multi-dimensional evaluation mechanism to enhance the teaching value of British and American literature courses.

CASE STUDY

Data Preparation

The data for this study mainly comes from a database of E&A literature grades, and from a large amount of grade data, we selected four homework courses of 2015-level E&A literature students as the research object, see table 2.

Academic number	E&A literature reading	Fundamentals of English	E&A literature writing	E&A literature listening
15050100101	78	85	69	79
15050100102	78	55	69	74
15050100103	61	56	74	92
15050100104	65	63	78	60
15050100105	88	97	96	99
15050100106	69	72	97	79
15050100107	55	76	68	60
15050100108	1	1	1	1
...

The student with the secondary school number “15050100108” in the report card was deleted from this study by ignoring the tuple because he or she missed the exam. Since this study is mainly about mining the excellent relationship between various subjects, it is necessary to have logical data as support when mining the data for correlation analysis, which requires us to convert student grades to Boolean representation, and the converted grade data is shown in table 3.

Academic number	a1	b1	c1	d1
15050100101	0	1	1	1
15050100102	1	0	1	1
15050100103	0	1	0	0
15050100104	0	1	0	0
15050100105	1	1	1	1
15050100106	0	1	0	1
15050100107	0	0	0	0
15050100108	1	1	1	1
...

The numbers “1” and “0” in the table indicate the presence or absence of a particular item in the course. The four courses mentioned above are the key subjects of this E&A literature teaching reform, and each of them has realized the integrated reform of “teaching”, “learning” and “doing”, and also optimized and improved the course evaluation system. The evaluation system has been optimized and improved, only when the total evaluation of “teaching”, “learning” and “doing” is above 80 points can the course be considered excellent. The number “1” means that there is an excellent item, and the number “0” means that there is no such item. Also, for the convenience of writing, we use the corresponding letters instead for the four courses: a1, b1, c1, and d1 for each of English linguistics, English reading, English translation, and reading of British and American short stories, respectively.

Application of Apriori association algorithm

Support and confidence are the two important factors of association rule mining in data mining, and one cannot be missing without the other. Therefore, if we want to perform association rule mining on the above achievement data, the first task is to determine the support and confidence level. Assume that the minimum support and confidence are 33,3 % and 60 %, respectively. There are 30 transactions in the database, i.e., D1=30, and the Apriori association algorithm is used to find the set of frequent items of D. If in the actual

analysis process it is necessary to generate the candidate 3-item set of set C3, it can also be computed using the above algorithm.

In terms of the computational principle of the Apriori correlation algorithm, all subsets of the frequent itemsets involved in the computation process should be frequent, and if a subset does not meet the frequent requirement, then it should be removed from the set. When mining this E&A literature student achievement data, we found that the first two candidates are not able to satisfy the frequent requirement, so we need to remove them from C3 when performing data mining. In this way, we can disregard their count values when scanning D to determine L3 thereafter. Scanning D in the transaction generates L3, which consists of the set of candidate 3-items with minimum support. At this point the algorithm terminates and all frequent itemsets are found, as shown in figure 3.

After the support calculation is completed, the next step is to calculate the confidence of each non-empty subset of the final frequent terms according to the confidence formula, which is calculated as follows:

- $E3=E2\wedge E4$, confidence= $10/30=76,9\%$
- $E2=E3\wedge E4$, confidence= $15/30=66,6\%$
- $E4=E2\wedge E3$, confidence= $10/16=62,5\%$
- $E2\wedge E3=E4$, confidence= $10/12=83,3\%$
- $E3\wedge E4=E2$, confidence= $10/10=100\%$
- $E2\wedge E4=E3$, confidence= $10/13=76,9\%$

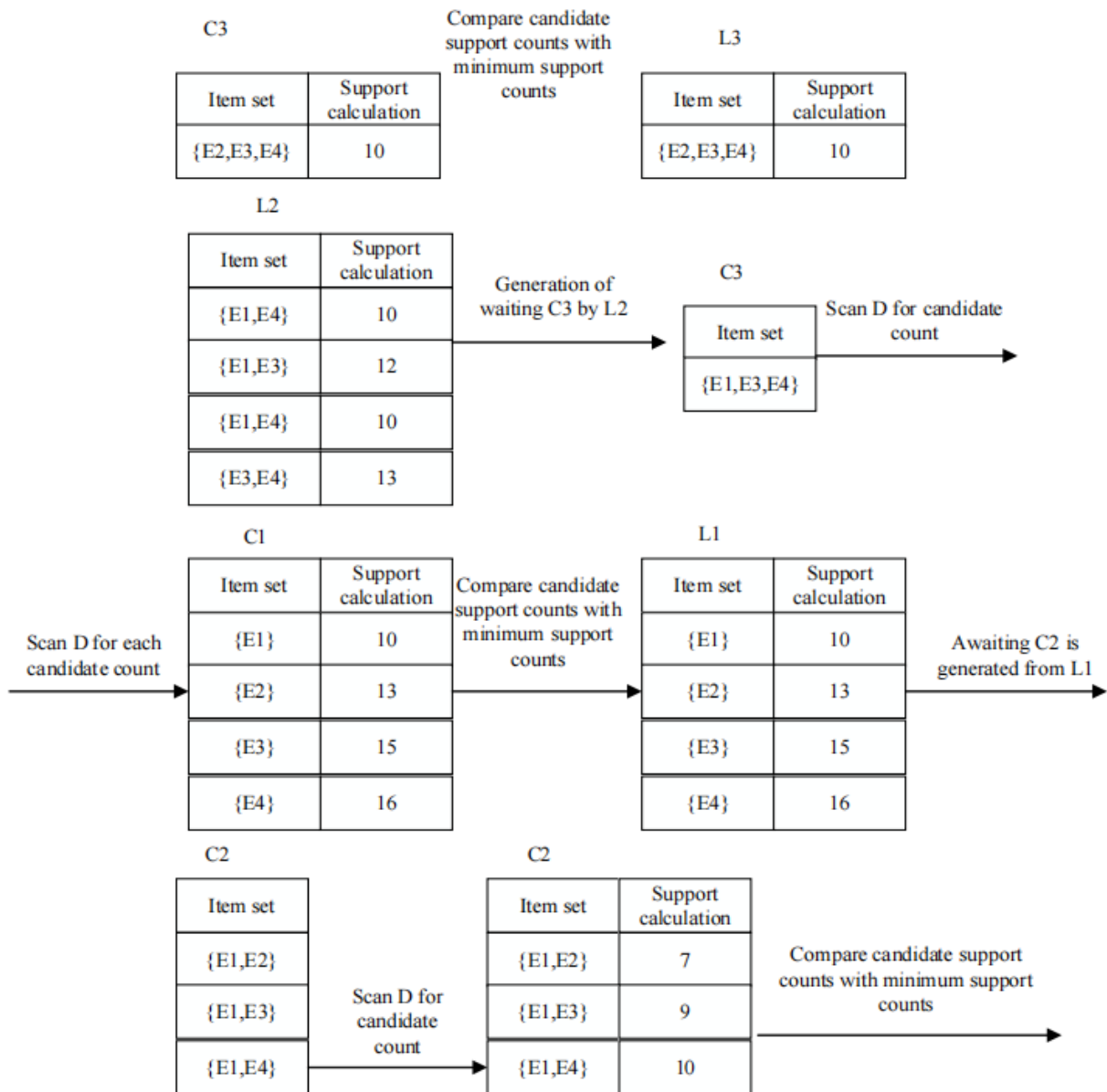


Figure 3. Calculation principle of Apriori association algorithm

We assumed above that the minimum confidence level should be 60 %, and the above calculations are all greater than this value, so all of the above are of reference value, and the resulting association rules are:

- When E3 is excellent, the probability of E2∧E4 being excellent at the same time is greater than 76,9 %
- When E2 is excellent, the possibility of E3∧E4 being excellent at the same time is more than 66,6 %
- When E4 is excellent, the probability of E2∧E3 being excellent at the same time is more than 62,5 %.
- When E2∧E3 is excellent at the same time, the probability of being excellent in E4 is more than 83,3 %
- If E3∧E4 is excellent at the same time, the probability of being excellent in E2 is more than 100 %.
- If E2∧E4 is excellent at the same time, the probability of being excellent in E3 is more than 76,9 %.

As we can see from the results of the above study, among the four courses selected for this study, except for the subject of English linguistics, there are inevitable connections among the other three courses, and each course grade has different degrees of influence on the grades of the other courses. From the results of the data analysis, it is clear that English reading and English translation, as two very important professional and technical courses, have a great influence on the specialized course of reading English and American short stories. Conversely, the influence of English and American short story reading on the two courses of English reading and English translation is smaller. Thus, it can be seen that E&A literature managers need to make English reading and English translation as the main courses when building the curriculum for the Department of E&A literature, while the course of English and American short story reading can be chosen to be offered or not according to the needs of enterprises and employers. The professional courses are opened after the professional basic courses. Combining with the above data, we can think that they do not have much influence on the professional basic courses.

RESULTS

After determining the reform path, we applied it in practice, and investigated the actual recognition of teachers and students for the reform path proposed in this paper. The specific results are shown in figure 4. Figure 4 shows the degree of recognition of the strategy by different teachers. It can be seen that all the teachers surveyed have a high degree of recognition of the strategy.

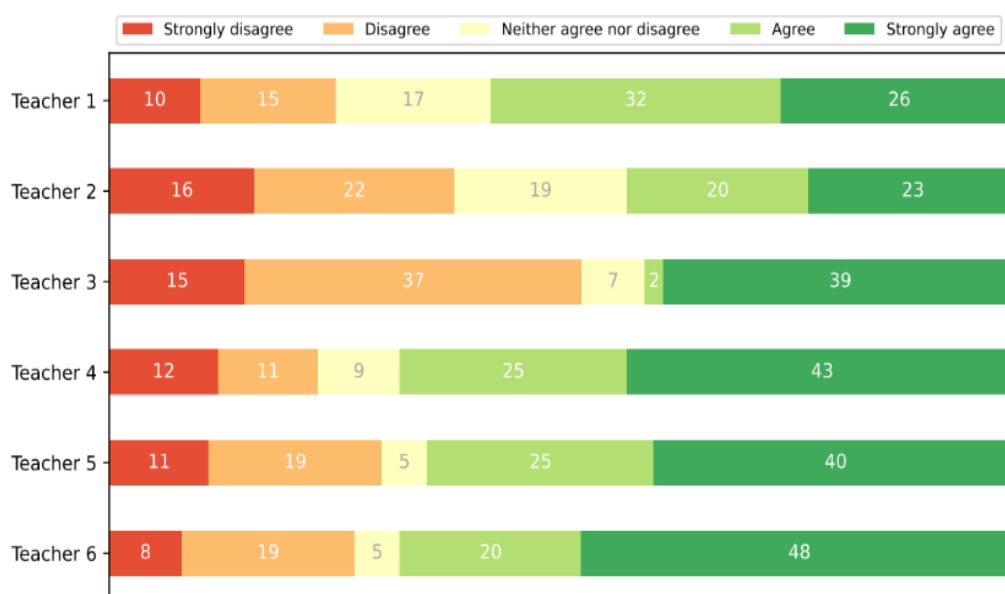


Figure 4. Teachers' opinion about our strategy

CONCLUSIONS

Under the guidance of the “Golden Course” standard and the cultivation requirements of the National Standard, this paper points out the necessity of the E&A literature course, analyzes the problems of the original teaching mode of the E&A literature course, and puts forward a practical curriculum reform strategy based on teaching practice. This paper points out the necessity of the E&A literature course, analyzes the problems of the original teaching mode, and proposes practical strategies for curriculum reform based on teaching practice. In addition, when building the E&A literature curriculum system, we should also consider the connection between basic courses and specialized courses, so that each course in the curriculum system can be connected with each other and make it form an organic whole.

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