



# New Perspectives on the Professional Development of Foreign Language Teachers: Refinement and Implementation of the STAR Model

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**How to cite this paper:** Yun Li, Dongxuan Han, Xiaohan Dou. (2024). New Perspectives on the Professional Development of Foreign Language Teachers: Refinement and Implementation of the STAR Model. *The Educational Review, USA*, 8(9), 1193-1199.

DOI: 10.26855/er.2024.09.015

**Received:** August 17, 2024

**Accepted:** September 15, 2024

**Published:** October 14, 2024

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## Abstract

With the deepening of globalization, the importance of foreign language education in the internationalization of higher education has become increasingly prominent. Foreign language teaching faces more complex and diverse challenges, and the professional development of foreign language teachers has become a key issue in improving the quality of teaching, attracting widespread attention. The educational department recognizes that the professional development of foreign language teachers is the core of improving the overall quality of education. However, foreign language teachers still face problems such as high pressure, insufficient information literacy, and imperfect evaluation mechanisms in their professional development. Against this background, this paper proposes a refinement to the original STAR model, adjusting the elements from Situation, Task, Action, and Result to Select, Training, Assessment, and Reject. This model aims to select suitable teachers for training, evaluate their competencies through a competency model, and implement a reject mechanism for those who fail to meet the requirements. Qualified teachers continue their teaching roles, while others are transferred to alternative positions. Teachers who reject the teaching position can return to teaching after retraining and passing the assessment. This paper proposes countermeasures based on this model, clarifying the professional development path for foreign language teachers.

## Keywords

Professional development; STAR model; foreign language teachers; teacher evaluation

## 1. Introduction

In the current context of globalization, the importance of foreign language education is becoming increasingly prominent. As the core force to promote the development of foreign language education, the professional quality and teaching ability of foreign language teachers is closely related to the quality of foreign language education. Thus, enhancing the professional quality and teaching ability of foreign language teachers has emerged as a crucial issue in contemporary education reform.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese Government attach great importance to the development of teachers' professional capacity and have issued a series of policy documents, including the Plan to

Strengthen Basic Education Teacher Force for a New Era (hereinafter referred to as the Plan), the China's Education Modernization 2035 Plan and the Outline of the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and its Visionary Goals for the Year 2035. General Secretary Xi emphasized the importance of high-quality teachers for high-quality education and proposed that teacher development should be at the core of teacher development work. The implementation of the Plan identifies specific requirements in optimizing the development of the teaching force and is committed to providing all-round talent support. This will result in the emergence of more high-quality teachers, providing talent support for building a high-quality education system and realizing the transition from a large education nation to a strong education nation.

With the increasing integration and crossover between disciplines, the professional development of foreign language teachers is also facing new challenges, which are mainly reflected in how teachers can cope with the cross-fertilization of disciplines as well as the new pedagogical needs brought about by such integration. On the one hand, teachers need to explore strategies for effectively integrating foreign language teaching with knowledge of other disciplines, which requires teachers to constantly update and expand their knowledge structure and enhance their interdisciplinary teaching ability. On the other hand, in the face of the teaching demands of cross-disciplinary integration, teachers must improve their professional quality and teaching ability. Therefore, the professional development of foreign language teachers should focus on cultivating interdisciplinary competence in order to adapt to the trend of cross-fusion of disciplines.

Wu Yan (2019), director of the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, emphasized at the Fourth High-end Forum on the Reform and Development of Foreign Language Education in National Colleges and Universities that higher foreign language education in the new era should have a brand new orientation, shifting from the teaching of language knowledge to the organic fusion of the knowledge and ability of multiple disciplines, so as to cultivate "one-percentage-multiple-abilities". This raises new demands for foreign language teachers in terms of professionalism and professional development. They must not only possess a comprehensive understanding of language knowledge and skills but also have an in-depth grasp of professional knowledge in related fields. Additionally, they require both a wealth of theoretical knowledge and practical experience. This necessitates that foreign language teachers formulate clear plans for their own professional development.

Wang Shouren (2018) pointed out that there are a large number of foreign language teachers in China's colleges and universities, but their professional development, teaching development, personal development, and organizational development are not satisfactory. The professional development of foreign language teachers not only relies on individual efforts but also on the overall construction and management of the teacher team. In view of this, this study identifies the need to conduct research on the professional development of foreign language teachers from a new perspective, and in order to solve this problem, this study expands and improves the existing STAR model (involving situation, task, action, and result) in order to promote the professional growth and competence enhancement of foreign language teachers in a more effective way.

## 2. Status of professional development of foreign language teachers

In 2021, the annual report on foreign language education in China pointed out that foreign language education in China has undergone profound changes, including optimization of the professional structure, improvement of the quality standards of education, and reinforcement of international vision. These reforms are aimed at responding to the demand for foreign language talents in the context of globalization, and at the same time require foreign language teachers to enhance their professionalism and international vision. In order to adapt to these changes, foreign language teachers need to constantly update their teaching concepts and methods, and strengthen international exchanges and cooperation, so as to enhance the quality of teaching and the language proficiency of students. China's Ministry of Education, in collaboration with seven other authorities, has issued a plan to build a stronger teacher force for a New Era, which aims to comprehensively deepen the reform of teacher evaluation in the new era and strengthen the construction of a high-level teacher education system. The implementation of the plan signifies the government's focus on strengthening the basic education teacher force. Colleges and universities, for their part, need to optimize the knowledge structure of their teachers, promote the reform of their teaching models, and facilitate their professional development, which includes improving the selection system for college and university teachers, strengthening the construction of grass-roots teaching organizations, and improving the system of teacher training and incentives, among other things.

In addition, Wang Xuemei (2020) in her study on teachers' professional development under the new normal of foreign language education in colleges and universities, suggests that foreign language teachers are facing the popularity of new concepts such as new liberal arts, curriculum ideology, and online teaching, which requires foreign language teachers to adjust and improve their cognition, knowledge, ability, and emotion. She emphasized that the professional development

of foreign language teachers is a dynamic process of knowledge construction, competence enhancement, and emotional identity, especially under the new normal of education, the professional development of foreign language teachers should focus on the concept of integration and emphasize the development of knowledge, competence and emotion.

In recent years, the professional development of foreign language teachers in colleges and universities has received increasing attention, and a professional autonomous development system called the “double-drive model” is being explored and practiced, which emphasizes the combination of internal drive and external boost. Internal drive refers to teachers’ self-reflection and self-improvement, including reflective action research and self-improvement of comprehensive professional quality. External promotion involves the formation of a professional community of teachers, multi-dimensional teacher development, and diversified teacher evaluation mechanisms. This model emphasizes the combination of internal drive and external boosting, aiming to promote the professional growth and comprehensive quality of individual teachers (Zhao Lanxin, 2021).

The professional development of foreign language teachers is an important topic of common concern to the education and foreign language communities, and its development is closely linked to the country’s opening up, development, and reform. To cope with the changes in foreign language education, the government and universities are actively exploring strategies to promote the professional development of foreign language teachers and the improvement of teaching quality. Regarding teacher evaluation, a university has reformed its teacher title evaluation system by implementing a “four-pronged” model. This model enhances the comprehensive quality and professional competence of teachers by standardizing the evaluation process, strengthening the development of teacher ethics, introducing diverse evaluation methods, and promoting digital evaluation; other universities have set up an incentive mechanism of “being able to go up and being able to go down” to break the traditional model of “one evaluation for life”, strengthening the role of colleges in the appraisal of teachers and improving the quality of teaching. This reform initiative has implemented measures such as downgrading, hiring, or transferring teachers who fail to meet the assessment standards, with the aim of enhancing teachers’ sense of responsibility and motivating them to actively participate in the development of the university, as well as fostering a fairer and more equitable competitive environment. The reforms in the teacher evaluation and title assessment systems of the aforementioned schools reflect the current emphasis on and improvement of the teacher evaluation system within China’s higher education sector.

The professional development of foreign language teachers is a complex and multifaceted topic, and although research has made some progress, the depth and breadth of research on this topic still needs to be improved compared to other fields of education. Current research primarily focuses on reforming the teacher evaluation system, optimizing the title assessment system, and developing teacher incentive mechanisms. However, there is not yet a clear and definite concept of the research model of teacher professional development, and research on the model remains relatively limited. In this context, the STAR model (Situation, Task, Action, Result) can be reconstructed and improved by assigning new meanings to the letters to align with the new normal of foreign language education. This model will enable foreign language teachers to better adapt and enhance their cognition, knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence.

### 3. Construction and application of the STAR model

The STAR model is renowned for its versatility, allowing for flexible adaptation and extension across diverse scenarios based on specific application contexts and objectives.

#### 3.1 Previous applications of the STAR model

In the field of management, particularly in human resource management, the STAR model is used to assess the behavioral responses of job applicants in specific situations. This approach helps employers predict the future job performance of candidates and make hiring decisions accordingly. Situation refers to the context of the challenge or problem; Task refers to the specific goal to be accomplished; Action describes the specific steps to be taken to solve the problem; and Result is the final outcome of the action. By analyzing these elements, managers can more accurately assess and select the right candidate for a particular position.

In the field of education, the application of the STAR model is more diverse and in-depth. For example, in the area of educational leadership, research has shown that different models of educational leadership (e.g., trait, behavioral, situational, and contingency models) are essential for understanding and managing leadership in educational settings. These models highlight the intricate interplay between situations, tasks, actions, and results, aiding educational leaders in better understanding and responding to diverse educational challenges.

Additionally, as a discipline, educational management encompasses educational management activities, systems, mechanisms, and concepts. The development of educational management not only reflects the evolution of educational

management practices but also in-depth theoretical discussions on educational leadership and management. In this process, the STAR model serves as a practical tool assisting educational administrators in analyzing, designing, and improving educational practices to enhance the quality and efficiency of education.

In summary, the STAR model has emerged as a versatile and cross-disciplinary practical tool. Therefore, this paper will refine and enhance the original model for application in the field of foreign language teachers' professional development.

### 3.2 Construction and application of the STAR model

The use of the new STAR model in the field of foreign language teacher development is a relatively new endeavor, and given the similarities between the fields of human resource management, pedagogy, and foreign language teacher professional development in terms of assessment needs, structured analysis, performance orientation, professional development, and decision support, the logic of the application of the STAR model can be migrated across the fields. In order to meet the specific needs of the field of foreign language teachers' professional development, the STAR model is now constructed and optimized, i.e., each letter is given a new meaning, changing from Situation, Task, Action, Result to Select, Training, Assessment, Reject, and based on these four aspects, the teacher professional development model diagram to clarify the process.

The overall framework is illustrated in Fig. 1:

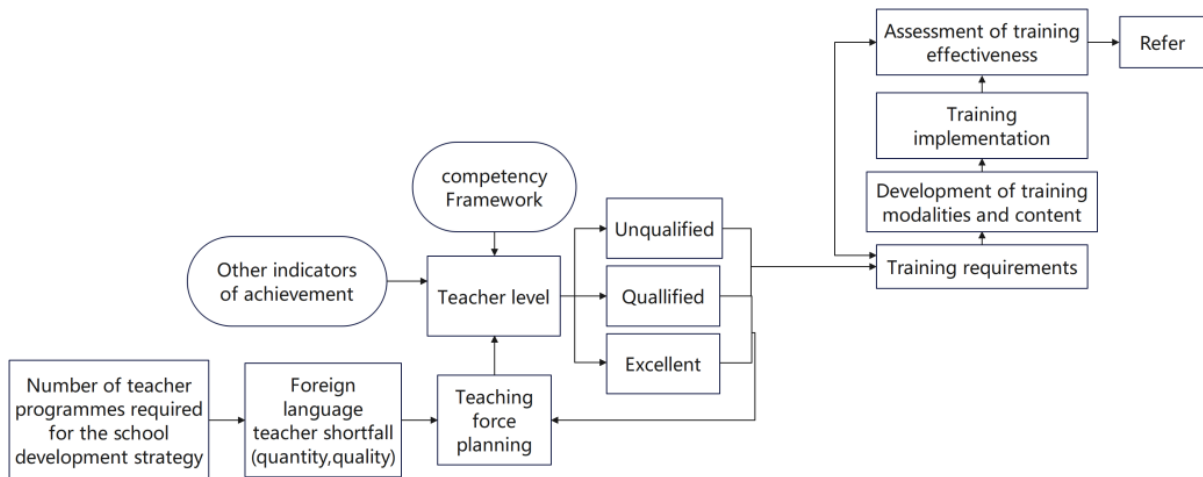


Figure 1. STAR model improvements.

#### 3.2.1 Select

Based on the school's development strategy and teaching needs, the existing foreign language teaching force has been thoroughly analyzed, the current talent demand gap of the school has been clarified, and the short-term and long-term goals of foreign language teaching force construction have been established, so as to carry out the planning of the teaching force. Teachers are evaluated through work indicators and competency assessment and are categorized into three groups: excellent, qualified, and unqualified. Teachers evaluated as excellent are selected to continue teaching tasks; teachers evaluated as unqualified and qualified are required to undergo pedagogical training, and training methods and contents are designated by analyzing the enhancement needs of each teacher in the competency assessment; after completing the training, teachers who fail to be qualified are transferred to another post by evaluating the training effect. Teachers who do not meet the required standards after training will be transferred to alternative positions based on their training performance evaluation.

#### 3.2.2 Training

Based on the results of the competency assessment, teachers in the foreign language teaching force are classified into three categories, those with unqualified, qualified, and excellent assessment results. By analyzing the current status and development needs of teachers in each sub-competency within the competency model, targeted training content is developed and training objectives are defined, including learning business knowledge, improving teaching skills, and sharing successful management experiences and methods, etc.

In terms of training methods, a combination of centralized, decentralized, and self-help approaches can be adopted to

establish a multi-level training system for foreign language teachers through pre-service training, further training domestically, study visits abroad, and regular academic presentations. Additionally, sharing teaching resources and experiences and learning from each other can be facilitated through teacher professional development communities, such as Teachers Pay Teachers, Teachers Notebook, and other online platforms. Through these ways, foreign language teachers can better enhance their teaching ability and professionalism to meet different training needs.

### 3.2.3 Assessment

A competency model is the sum of the competency characteristics required to assume a particular task role, including all the important skills, knowledge, and behaviors that influence an individual's success. In the professional development of foreign language teachers, the approach based on the competency model should not only take into account the teachers' external performance, such as teaching achievements, linguistic proficiency, and teaching methodologies but also incorporate into the evaluation system the teachers' intrinsic characteristics, such as their moral qualities, personality traits, academic competence and managerial ability.

**Table 1. Core Professional Competencies for Foreign Language Teachers**

<b>Core professional competencies</b>	<b>Sub-capacity</b>
<b>Verbal ability</b>	Oral expression
	Listening comprehension
	Reading ability
	Writing ability
<b>Teaching ability</b>	Programme design
	Classroom management
	Evaluation feedback
<b>Educational technology capacity</b>	Application of technology tools
	Digital teaching resources development
	Online teaching
<b>Communication skills</b>	listening ability
	power of expression
	Persuasiveness
<b>Cooperation capacity</b>	Teamwork
	Coordination capacity
	Leadership

In conducting the teacher rating assessment, it is possible to identify the core professional competencies required of foreign language teachers, including linguistic competence, pedagogical competence, educational technology competence, communication competence, and co-operation competence, which will be the key indicators for evaluating teacher ratings. A competency model can help develop a specific and quantifiable evaluation system. By subdividing each competency into different sub-competencies and behavioral indicators, the performance and achievements of teachers can be assessed more accurately. For example, language competencies can be subdivided into oral expression, listening comprehension, reading skills, and writing skills, etc., and each sub-competency can be assessed through specific tests.

When conducting a comprehensive assessment, it is necessary to set specific assessment standards and scoring criteria for each sub-competency, and design corresponding assessment tools and methods, such as conducting oral interviews to assess the candidates' pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy, and expressive ability; simulated meetings to assess the candidates' ability to listen to and understand others' viewpoints in actual communication; case studies to assess the candidates' ability to deal with team conflicts or coordinate different opinions; simulated classroom to assess the candidates' classroom management strategies and ability to guide students' learning, and so on. Candidates will be assessed on

their ability to handle team conflicts or reconcile different opinions through case studies; and on their ability to manage classroom strategies and guide students' learning through classroom simulations. Candidates need to meet the basic standards in all core competencies to be considered qualified.

Ultimately, candidates who most closely align with the competency model requirements will be selected based on the assessment results, and constructive feedback will be provided to all candidates to aid in their understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement.

### 3.2.4 Reject

Teachers, as part of the education sector, typically enjoy relatively stable job security, which may lead to a lack of competitive pressure and motivation on the part of some teachers, resulting in the phenomenon of "Just filling seats" in their work. To address this issue, schools need to introduce relevant transfer mechanisms, which are key to ensuring the efficient operation and continuous improvement of the teaching force. For teachers who do not meet the training requirements, consideration needs to be given to the use of reject mechanisms, for example, transferring them to other posts, such as administrative posts or student counselors, to ensure that the quality of teaching and the achievement of educational objectives are maintained. If teachers have the idea of returning to their teaching jobs, they can undergo retraining and return to their teaching positions after passing the tests.

## 4. Conclusion

Today, as foreign language education in colleges and universities shifts towards connotative development, language educators are deeply experiencing changes and challenges. Introducing the STAR refinement model in the field of foreign language teachers' development is a useful attempt to better select, train, and evaluate teachers, providing a new perspective and development path for the professional development of foreign language teachers. This can help to improve the professional quality of teachers, optimize the structure of teachers' teams, and push forward the sustained improvement of the quality of education.

In the process of practical application, universities need to flexibly use the STAR refinement model according to the actual situation, combined with the needs of teachers' professional development, so as to give full play to its maximum utility in teacher management. At the same time, it is also necessary to pay close attention to national policies and education development trends and update the model in time to meet the requirements of education reform. This will promote teachers' professional development, improve the quality of education, and realize the dream of a strong education nation.

## Funding

This paper was part of the project of Exploring Innovative Models for Enhancing the Professional Abilities of University-level Foreign Language Educators supported by 2022 Higher Education Research Project of China Association of Higher Education (Grant No. 22WY0305).

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