

A Case Study on Ideological and Political Perspectives Merged in College English Teaching

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Abstract: The concept of merging ideological and political education into college English teaching was the principle for the amendment of Guide to College English Teaching in 2020. The author adopts it in her college English teaching, helping students not only improve their language and cultural competence, but also promote their humanistic quality and moral traits.

Keywords: Ideological and Political Education; Interactive Teaching; College English

1. Introduction

The ideological and political perspective in every-course teaching has been taken as the most basic principle for the setting of all curricula since it was first put forward by General Secretary Xi Jinping in December, 2016. In 2017 Gao Deyi etc., (43-46) started the transmission from ideological and political courses to ideology and politics of curriculum. Since then the practice and research on it have been spread at universities of our country, with no exception of foreign language teaching. From CNKI, I have found more than 50 papers on the ideological and political education in foreign language teaching from 2019 to 2021. It is evident that more and more foreign language teachers pay an increasing interest in it, as foreign language teaching is an inseparable part in the development of language in China and has become the key index to weigh the national soft power. Therefore, it is utmost important to combine the teaching of foreign languages with ideological and political education.

2. A case study

2.1 Subject status of college English in China

College English is positioned as “the public basic course and core general course compulsory for most non-English majors at the undergraduate level” (Xiang Mingyou, 2020). The original purpose of setting this course was mainly for the university students’ personal development as well as the national strategic requirements. Gradually people have become increasingly aware the key role of ideology and politics in cultivating students’ learning competences and guiding them establishing correct perspectives on value, life and world. Based on it, they can naturally acquire the correct political stand and have strong cultural confidence while learning a foreign language, which would keep them in the right direction in acquiring foreign knowledge and which would have the goal of fostering virtue through education really achieved. Therefore, it is utmost important to adopt the ideological and political education in college English teaching.

2.2 My teaching design

2.2.1 Background information

I am a college English teacher at a normal university, where college English is set for first-year non-English majors

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and the course book is New Progressive College English Integrated Course composed of 6 units, each closely related to university students' living, studying and social activities.

2.2.2 Teaching goal

After knowing students' level of English learning, I set my own teaching goal: Under the scope of cultural context in China, and from the Chinese perspective of seeing the western world, I would guide students to read the texts critically, form their own views on each topic and write down articles based on the ideological and political education in my teaching. In so doing they are expected to improve language competence as well as their ideological cultivation.

2.2.3 Design scheme

The general principle for designing this course is student-oriented, while the teacher guides students to do integrated practice from input (listening / reading) to output (speaking / writing / translating). For each topic I have designed a specific scheme. In the following I will take Working Holiday Abroad to illustrate how I arrange my teaching activities.

2.4 Step one Pre-class activities

Seeing from the aspect of "humanity", I while preparing for the class, explore the deep connotation of the text content, trying to find materials for students' listening and reading, which should satisfy the national concept of educating university students, and which should offer multi-angles for students' understanding.

The ideological and political elements are always contained in the text content, such as the value orientation, emotional conveyance and ideological implication. In this text, the author had suffered serial blows which almost tore her part. To save herself from breakdown, she decided to take a "working holiday", going for a travel in another country while working at the same time. She never expected a sea change in her life from this experience. She turned from a shy person to a more outgoing and confident one, easy to make friends and enjoying her work, from which not only a totally new world was open to her, but she became brave enough to face the unknown future. Thanks to this experience, the author has become a better person. In short, the ideological value orientation of this lesson is that a person can finally become a better self if one is trying hard to defeat all sufferings beyond human control, overcome all physical and psychological pressure and conquer all difficulties. It is also the key to "educate" students.

Based on it, I searched relevant materials, including videos, audios and reading materials, to which I would focus on the elucidation of positive emotion that can reflect Laozi's idea that "To vanquish others require force, to vanquish self requires strength". Guided by that ideology, I chose from a great many materials some typical reading materials and videos for students to read, watch and discuss before class, requiring them to write down their understanding on these materials, choose their favorite part to perform and translate. Such design has thoroughly covered all aspects of English learning, ranging from listening, reading, speaking to writing and translating. Students can take the advantage of this pre-task to improve their language competence, with their emotional virtue cultivated silently and subtly.

2.5 Step two classroom activities

Based on the "instrumental" thinking, I first analyzed the text, asking students to pay attention to the most important part that can reflect the author's intention, and then ask them to see it from our Chinese perspective.

To make the most of classroom time, I mainly adopted the interactive teaching method by leading in questions, which could guide students to think step by step of what has been going on in the text and how they could understand the text, catch the topic, and grasp the ideology. In so doing they can combine their learning with acquisition of foreign language competence together. (Gass & Mackey, 2007)

How did I design and arrange those questions hierarchically to achieve the above goal? Webb (1997) put forward four "question levels" in his Depth of Knowledge Framework (DOK). Level one is acquisition of knowledge, involving memorization of facts and knowing methods; Level two is application of knowledge, meaning to answer questions by using the knowledge acquired; Level three is about analyzing competence, referring to one's strategic ability of thinking to give evidence or make complicated inference and the last level is argument competence, an expanding ability of thinking that enables one to solve realistic problems by using the above knowledge and ability. Based on Webb's DOK, I adopted a progressive mode of "expanding students' competence of dialectical thinking" from the specific western context of the text to the current situation in China, pushing them to think critically and creatively to improve their critical and innovative thinking skills.

On one hand, I made the questions with the core vocabulary in the text, like "Why did the author desire a change in her life?" "How did 'I' do and what changes happened?" "What gains did 'I' get from the working holiday?" Meanwhile, I combine the national development strategy into those questions, leading students to think critically and discuss the undergoing changes in China, including every aspect of our life, like education, economy, politics and diplomacy. In these days COVID-19 is the most common topic, as it has changed the world a lot and influenced China's sustainable development greatly, so I prepared such questions as "What changes have you experienced after the eruption of COVID-19?" "What changes do you know are now happening in every aspect of China such as education, economy, politics and communication with the foreign countries?" and "What gains or losses do you think might happen for the sustainable development of our country and the international society?"

On the other hand, the value elements of "innovating from changes, promoting from innovation and breaking through from promotion" were the basis for the analysis of the text, from which students could have their cross-language and cultural competence cultivated and improved. For example, there is a sentence in paragraph two: "Prior to leaving, I was not in a good place. I had suffered a lot of personal blows and felt emotionally stretched. I lost my grandma, my job and had two car crashes in five months. I needed something to change in my life, and that came in the form of a working holiday visa." The underlined part tells why the author wanted to have a change in her life, and it also indicates one of the most important differences between Chinese and English, i.e. the temporality of English and the spatiality of Chinese. The sequence of events is shown by tense in English, while Chinese sentences are usually arranged sequentially. To

understand the difference, I asked students to translate the underlined sentences into Chinese and compare the sentence order of two languages. Then they analyzed and discussed the differences of two languages, from which they could learn the differences of culture and ideology reflected in it. By doing so, their cross-cultural competence can be improved.

2.6 Step three after-class activities

This step focused on assessment, combining students' self-evaluation with peer evaluation, by which students can improve their ability to reflect, assess and learn cooperatively.

Specifically integrating the core value of the text and emotional orientation, I arranged some extra reading materials and videos for listening and watching. Having finished reading or watching those materials, students discussed with partners and wrote down their own understanding, and also translated their favorite part into Chinese. Then they gave their writing and translation to their partners for evaluation before handing in for my evaluation. Doing like this, students have been leapfrogging each other, generating the positive learning motivation of "emulating those better than oneself", and pushing them to study harder and harder.

3. Conclusion

My "three-step" teaching practice starts from "teaching", and ends in "educating". I abide by the core values in Guide to College English Teaching, digging deeply into the ideological and political elements in the texts and fulfilling the principle of "fostering virtue through education". During my teaching process, I spare no efforts to merge the ideological and political education into the analysis of texts in an unconscious way, and emphasize the leading role of core value. To guide students to learn English from the Chinese cultural perspective, they can have a better understanding of both languages. All my text design are based on firm ideological and political perspectives, which aims at the cultivation of students' positive ideal and conviction as well as their creative thinking competence, with which they can find and respect the differences between China and the West, clear up the misunderstanding between the two and have more and stronger confidence in communicating with the world.

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