

A Study on the Elements of Ideological and Political Education in College English Textbooks — Taking Advanced English as an Example

Fuyao Deng

Chongqing Jiaotong University Chongqing, China 400074

Abstract: Guiding outline of ideological and Political Construction in college curriculum points out that ideological and political construction of college English curriculum is an important task to comprehensively improve the quality of talent cultivation and a strategic measure to implement the fundamental task of establishing moral education in colleges and universities. As the teaching and learning support of college English, teaching materials are the basic guarantee for teaching and learning. Therefore, the combination of ideological education and language teaching is a new problem facing the university English course under the current situation. This paper analyzes the current situation of the integration of university English teaching materials and ideological and political education by exploring the elements of ideological and political education in Advanced English-a textbook used by English majors. With an expectation to provide a reference for further promoting the ideological and political education in universities.

Keywords: College English textbooks; Ideological and political education; Advanced English

1. Introduction

College English teaching should be actively integrated into the school ideological and political teaching system, and the concept and content of ideological and political education should be organically integrated into the curriculum. And the teaching materials, written in a specific socio-cultural, political and historical context,^[1] themselves carry values and ideologies^[2] (Curdt -Christiansen & Weninger 2020; Feng 2019). Meanwhile, Hammond(2018) proposed that English majors and college English courses are a significant part of higher education, and they should fully explore the ideological and political education resources contained in English teaching materials, so that English course ideological and political education and ideological and political courses go in the same direction.^[3] It can be seen that the core of the ideological and political education in English course is that teachers should play a dynamic role in the course teaching process, focusing on students' development. Advanced English, as one of the core courses of English majors, it carries the vital task of the construction of ideological and political education.^[4] (Halliday, 2014) It is a common problem for English teachers in colleges to find approaches to improve the design of the textbook, innovate classroom teaching methods, and cultivate students' ability to compare Chinese and Western cultures.

2. The Elements of Ideological and Political Education in Advanced English

On the path of exploring the integration of ideological and political education and college English teaching, textbooks play a non-negligible role as a carrier that assists teachers to put a good use in the function of educating people.^[5] (Graves, 2019) This section takes volume 1 of the third edition of Advanced English edited by Zhang Hanxi as an example and select several units to explore the elements of ideological and political education contained in the textbook.

2.1 Classification Criteria of Elements of Ideological and Political Education

Based on previous researchers, ideological and political elements in textbooks can be classified from three levels: national, social and individual. At the national level, it can include patriotism, national spirit, cultural confidence and so on. Social aspects include equality and justice, law-abiding and professional ethics, etc. Finally, at the personal level, it can be summarized

as: diligence, integrity, and critical thinking ability, etc.

2.2 Analysis on the elements of ideological and political education in Advanced English

Although most of the texts in college English textbooks are mainly western literature works, there are still numerous ideological and political elements worth exploring in these works. The key point is that if teachers can teach and guide college students correctly, these textbooks based on western literature works can also become carriers to cultivate talents with patriotism. The following will take Advanced English, volume 1 of the third edition, edited by Zhang Hanxi, as an example to analyze the ideological and political elements of English course.

2.2.1 The Topic of Lesson

The first lesson mainly tells the story of Koshak's family and his friends' heroic struggle against the powerful Hurricane Camille, replaying the two themes of death and courage in Hemingway's works. As one of the college English texts, this work reflects the ideological and political elements. First of all, teachers can explain the solidarity and responsibility of the Koshak family in the face of the hurricane. At the same time, teachers can also combine the current events to connect the coronavirus epidemic with the theme of this paper, so as to highlight the national righteousness and national feelings. Secondly, in the process of the Koshak family's tenacious struggle against Hurricane Camille, teachers can incorporate moral elements such as tolerance, collaboration, solidarity.

Lesson 2 describes how the people of Hiroshima have built a modern city with a strong ethnic identity in what was once a desolate and traumatized land. Hiroshima presented to the world a city of economic development, but it is still difficult to hide the damage caused by the atomic bombing on the city. The ideological and political elements of this course are also obvious. On the one hand, on the basis of understanding the suffering caused by the atomic bomb to the people of Hiroshima, students can deeply think about the moral elements such as harmony but still difference and reconciliation. On the other hand, it will also urge students to think about the collision between Chinese traditional culture and the development of modern science and technology, as well as cultivating students' critical thinking ability.

Similarly, the fourth lesson contains similar ideological and political elements. This lesson describes a famous trial in American history known as the "Monkey Trial". The essence of this trial is a head-to-head clash between fundamentalists and modernists, a contest between science and ignorance and a battle to spread truth. This course combines case with process justice, sense of right and other elements, in order to cultivate students' sense of social responsibility, sense of justice and awareness of defending fairness. At the same time, students can have a comprehensive understanding of Chinese and Western judicial systems.

2.2.2 Exercises after text

The time of college English classroom teaching is very limited. Through in-depth observation of the textbook, it can be seen that the after-class exercises in the textbook are composed of four parts: oral presentation, questions, paraphrase, practice with words and expressions and translation.

First of all, after the explanation of the text, the teacher guides the students to summarize the main idea and encourages students to present it orally. Take lesson 4 "The Trial that Rocked the world" for example, through the explanation of the text, the teacher guides the students to thoroughly understand the main idea of the text: science will conquer ignorance and truth will conquer fallacy. Based on this central idea, teachers ask students to list the events in Chinese and foreign history in which truth and falseness contest in the form of oral expression, which can not only improve students' language skills, but also cultivate their intercultural communication ability and in-depth thinking ability.

Secondly, through questions and paraphrase, students can cultivate their higher-order thinking ability, so that they can exercise their brain while completing tasks, even train students to think rationally and dialectically.

Finally, by supplementing translation exercises about Chinese culture, students can better tell Chinese stories and spread Chinese culture in English. Thus, students can have an access to learning excellent traditional Chinese culture to some extent while improving their English level by using English vocabulary and grammar.

3. A brief evaluation on the ideological and political aspects of the textbook design of Advanced English

3.1 Superiority

Through the in-depth analysis of the first volume of the third edition of Advanced English edited by Zhang Hanxi, it can

be seen that this textbook possesses rich contents and novel forms of exercises after-class. On the one hand, the topics involved in the textbooks more or less include college life, family, anecdotes of celebrities and cultural differences, etc., which all contain ideological and political elements at the national, social and individual levels. Through the exploration of ideological and political elements of different topics, the purpose of ideological and political education in college English can be achieved. On the other hand, it can improve students' scientific innovation ability, intercultural communication ability and critical thinking ability.

3.2 Limitation

As mentioned above, most contents of college English textbooks are mainly western literary works. Not only Advanced English, but also most college English textbooks pay more attention to “Western elements and culture”, resulting in the lack of local culture content, giving rise to the weak cultural awareness of college students’ mother tongue, and meanwhile exerting a disadvantageous impact on the cultivation of college students’ intercultural communication ability. There is no denying that cross-cultural communication awareness and communication ability are bidirectional. On the one hand, students need to understand cultural differences between China and the West. On the other hand, as a Chinese, realizing how to spread Chinese traditional culture is quite crucial.

4. Summary

Advanced English plays an indispensable role in the courses of English majors, and the texts of it serve as an intangible and invisible hand, affecting the value orientation of college students imperceptibly. Therefore, on the one hand, the design of the teaching material is required to be properly integrated into the essence of Chinese culture. It is of the utmost importance to provide more opportunities for students to cultivate their love for Chinese outstanding civilization culture with more decisive socialist faith and patriotism. On the other hand, how to embody these ideological and political elements in classroom teaching is what teachers should attach importance to. Thus, teachers are obliged to carry out teaching design around these elements, consciously integrate ideological and political content in each link of teaching, and assist students to build up their ideals and beliefs. In short, the function of ideological and political education in college English teaching has not been fully explored and embodied, and there is still a long way to go in the comprehensive construction of ideological and political education in college English curriculum.

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