Research on Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into University Public English on the Basis of Project Teaching Method

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Abstract: As a basic compulsory course, public university English has the characteristics of long hours, large span and wide coverage. It is also a course that most directly faces the diversification of current social thoughts. This course is rich in the exchange and collision of Chinese and Western politics, cultures, and ideas, which plays an important role in improving students' ability to judge the right and wrong of Western cultural values under the background of Chinese and Western cultural conflicts. It is of great and practical significance to carry out "moral education" in public English course, but there exist various problems of the ideological and political education in this course. Based on project teaching mode, exploring the ideological and political elements in the textbooks and designing a series of project tasks that match with the English communication scenes, "moral education" of university public English course helps students improve their language competence and interdisciplinary knowledge skills, and their ability to interpret Chinese culture is also enhanced, which is the realization of the goal of strengthening moral instruction and cultivating young university students through ideological and political education in English Course.

Keywords: ideological and political elements; university public English; project teaching method

1. The Necessity of Ideological and Political Education in University Public English

President Xi Jinping pointed out at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities in 2016, "It is necessary to integrate moral education into the education of ideology, cultural knowledge and social practice. It should run through basic education, vocational education and higher education." In May 2020, in the Ministry of Education's document *Guidelines for Ideological and Political Construction of Colleges and Universities*, it is pointed out that comprehensively promoting the ideological and political construction of courses is to help students establish the right world outlook, view of life, and values, which is the proper meaning and the necessary content of talents training[1]. Moral education is quite different from ideological and political courses. It needs to construct the educational pattern for all courses and all students. Therefore, teachers and all courses play an extremely important role in the ideological and political construction of the curriculum. "Moral education" requires the integration of ideological and political education with the teaching of various courses. It is a brand-new concept and method of ideological education, which means to highly integrate professional knowledge with ideological and political elements.

As an significant part of culture, language works as the carrier of culture and it is the unity of knowledge and humanity. It is feasible for teachers to explore ideological and political resources in English courses. All students except English majors must learn university public English as it is a compulsory basic course. They take this course in the first and the second academic years and get the credits. Public English course involves topics of different fields, such as culture, history, technology, medicine, education, etc. In the process of imparting language knowledge, teachers consciously integrate and infiltrate ideological and political elements in English teaching to inspire students to understand foreign cultures and explore the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, cultivating students' cultural awareness and patriotism.

2. Problems of Ideological and Political Education in University Public English Teaching

2.1. Negative Environmental Factors

The ideology and politics of university public English course face a more complex objective environment than other courses. Public English course is the carrier of the teaching of English language and culture, and it is also a platform for expressing and exchanging ideas and thoughts. As a humanity education course, public English enjoys a very wide audience. Most of the teaching resources of this course come from Western counties. Especially nowadays, English textbooks pursue the original taste, so many articles of the teaching materials are the original texts of English-speaking counties. Western ideology and values in the articles will undoubtedly impact university students' values. Young students can be easily influenced by Western ideological thoughts when they learn these English articles. It is quite possible that students blindly worship other countries' culture and abandon China's excellent cultures. They may blindly follow Western ideology and ignore their own mainstream ideology and traditional values.

2.2. Teachers' Limited Knowledge and Ideological Understanding

In order to further strengthen and improve the construction of ideological and political theory in colleges and universities, Chinese government has issued a series of political education work documents and guiding opinions. It is clearly required that teachers should improve their ideological and political quality, professional knowledge and teaching competence. Colleges and universities across the country responded actively to the call of Chinese government and provided all-round support for teachers' continuing education, professional learning and educational research. However, some colleges and universities have not attached enough attention to it and the management of supporting mechanism has not been established. In some private colleges, teachers undertake heavy teaching tasks, which lead to their limited energy to study ideological and political theory. Consequently, teachers' educational competence of ideology and politics fail to keep up with the requirements of higher education in the new era. Some public English teachers only focus on the relevant professional knowledge of the courses they teach and the research fields they involve. They know little about knowledge in other disciplines, resulting in their narrow view and the serious imbalance in the development of professional knowledge and skills. Some teachers do not pay enough attention to ideological and political education. They hold the view that moral education is the duty of professional workers, such as counselors and teachers of ideological and political courses. Therefore, they just impart knowledge and skills of English language in their teaching, ignoring the education of ideology and politics and the cultivation of students' moral integrity. They fail to develop students' correct world outlook, view on life, values and the good habits of well-mannered behaviour.

2.3. Boring and Monotonous Teaching Content of Ideological and Political Education

The integration of public English teaching with ideological and political education is not deep enough. In English textbooks, there are a large number of humanistic elements which are closely related to ideological and political education, but it is not easy to mine them. Many teachers have not excavated and designed the ideological and political elements, so the moral education is both boring and mechanical. This leads to the disconnection of English course with ideology and politics as well as students' not being interested in the learning.

Currently, ideological and political education of public English course in most colleges and universities is relatively simple in the teaching form. Teachers apply ideology and politics into English course mechanically in order to finish the task of moral education. Those ideological and political contents are often abstract and detached from the actual situation. On account of this, teachers should expand and update the content of ideological and political education from a new perspective. According to students' aptitude, teachers should flexibly infiltrate ideological and political elements into the teaching step by step, which will resonate with students and promote the English teaching.

3. An Overview of Project-based Teaching and its Application in University English Courses

3.1. An Overview of Project-based Teaching

Kilpatrick proposed the concept of "project teaching" in 1918. Project-based teaching is a

brand-new teaching mode with the emphasis on students' initiative and active participation in the learning process. He views that students learn knowledge for the purpose of solving problems[2]. This teaching mode is a process in which English language learning is transformed into the interpretation of life scenes and life experiences by setting up real and effective project activities[3].

Project-based teaching differs from other traditional teaching methods. It emphasizes that students improve relevant skills, enhance their application ability and the comprehensive competence of culture, emotion and values reshaping. There are four procedures in project-based teaching. The first one is the determination of the projects. On the basis of students' interest and life experience, the teacher decides on suitable projects that are well matched with the subject background according to the content of the English course teaching. The second procedure is the design of projects. The teacher refines the selected project further and finishes the division of groups. Group members know about their respective specific work and formulate a detailed activity plan. The teacher ought to provide some related materials and necessary websites for students so that they can make adequate preparations for the upcoming project. The third procedure is the implementation of the project. Group members work together to carry out exploration activities as planned. They can seek help from teachers and peers in time for problems encountered to find the solutions. They should pay equal attention to the search and consolidation of English materials and strive to improve their ability of English expression and language skills during the implementation of the project task. As students have to deal with a lot of school assignments, so they have to work on their projects on weekends. The last procedure is the presentation and evaluation of the project. Students present the project task in various forms. Attention should be paid to the accuracy and completeness of language expressions[4]. The evaluation must be diversified, including the teacher's evaluation, group self-evaluation and group mutual evaluation. It should not only focus on the language knowledge, project conception and the content, but also on the teamwork spirit and participation of members in the whole project process.

3.2. The Literature Review of the Application of Project Teaching in University Public English Course Teaching

The author searches CNKI with the keywords "project teaching" and "university English", and finds that scholars' research on the application of project-based teaching in university English can be mainly divided into two categories.

The first category is about the application of project-based teaching mode in English for special purpose. Yang Lijuan analyzes the application mode of ESP. She believes that project-based teaching can effectively solve the problems of the imbalance between input and output in the current English teaching. The contradiction that students' application ability cannot meet the needs of social talents can also be solved[5]. Zhang Junna explains the specific application of the project-based teaching method in British and American culture courses. She holds the viewpoint that this mode can fully mobilize the initiative and enthusiasm of students to learn British and American cultures. And at the same time, students' ability of independent thinking as well as the ability to analyze and solve problems can also be cultivated[6]. Ye Qing discusses project-based teaching mode in the academic English writing from the aspects of optimizing teaching content, designing writing projects, constructing writing scenarios, and evaluating project results. She believes that this teaching mode enables students to strengthen their academic English writing ability and lays a solid language foundation for the professional study and future career development[7]. Liu Fangqiong explores the project-based teaching in the accounting English course. She discusses the implementation procedures and constructs a practical evaluation plan for ESP projects, which provides some reference for the cultivation of applied accounting talents[8].

The second category is about the application of project teaching in university public English course. Zhao Dandan et al. elaborate the application of public English teaching from the perspective of cross-border classroom theory. In their opinion, cross-border integration on the basis of project teaching can promote the reform of English course greatly[9]. Zhang Zhaoxia and He Na point out that the internet+project teaching method can effectively boost students' English reading, writing and comprehensive ability[10]. Guo Li combines project-based teaching with task-based teaching organically, allowing students to learn English in a real language environment. His teaching greatly promotes students' language learning skills and comprehensive English ability[11]. Zhang Qing and Yang Caifei conduct a four-semester action research on university public English teaching. They find that Students' interest and motivation to learn English have been significantly stimulated. Their English application ability as well as the cooperative learning and autonomous learning competence has been enhanced. Students are very satisfied with project-based teaching mode[12].

It is easy to find that certain achievements about project-based teaching have been obtained in China, but researchers just focus on the relationship between project teaching and the improvement of English language knowledge and application ability. No previous research about ideological and political education in university public English teaching from the perspective of project teaching is found. Therefore, With the China's emphasis on ideological and political education in all courses, it will be of great practical significance to integrate ideological and political elements with public English language course on the basis of project teaching.

4. Ideological and Political Education in Public English Course on the Basis of Project Teaching

4.1. Mining the Ideological and Political Elements in the English Textbook

Xiao Qiong and Huang Guowen propose that the "ideological and political education" of foreign language is to combine the guidance of values with the teaching of language knowledge as well as the the cultivation of language application[13]. University public English textbooks are abundant in ideological and political elements. As the organizer of the teaching, the teacher should explore adequately the ideological and political elements, and combine them with the content of the language teaching to guide the right values.

Taking the university public English textbook *Experiencing English viewing, listening & Speaking 1* (the fourth edition) as an example, the author carries out the mining of ideological and political elements in accordance with the unit themes, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Ideological and political elements in accordance with unit themes

Unit themes	Ideological and political elements
Passions	1. Feeling the charm of traditional Chinese music 2. Music around the world
Spending Habits	1. Carrying forward Traditional virtues of frugality 2. The comparison of spending habits between China and the West
Career Paths	1. Cultivating the quality of being dedicated to the job 2. The establishment of right values of profession
Talents	1. The cultivation of hard-working and fighting spirit 2. The factors one needs to gain success
Technology	1. The benefits that technology brings to us 2. China trying to develop high technology as fast as possible.
Confidence	1. The importance of inner beauty 2. Factors affecting one's self-esteem
Achievements	1. China's achievements in all fields since the reform and opening up 2. The gap in technology between China and western countries
Health Habits	1. University students' health habits 2. The comparison of living habits between Chinese and Foreigners

The ideological and political elements in Table 1 involve China's traditional virtues and advanced concepts. The integration of these elements with the teaching of English language skills will enrich the teaching content and increase the vocabulary and sentence patterns of Chinese elements. With the aid of their own English competence, students can learn about the cultures of various countries in the world, and at the same time, they can also understand the essence of China's culture and thoughts more deeply. Students' cognition of China's culture and their cultural self-confidence are also strengthened.

4.2. The Project Teaching Design with the Integration of Ideological and Political Elements

The project design is crucial in the whole project-based teaching, and it must abide by the principles of practicability and operability to fully arouse students' enthusiasm for learning and stimulate their interest in knowledge. When deciding on the theme of the project, the teacher should pay close attention to integrating the humanity and instrumentality with the emphasis on the actual function of language. Students can choose various means, such as investigation report, interview, debates, etc. to display the project. When grouping, on the basis of students' free grouping, the teacher should make appropriate adjustments, and offer certain guidance to groups that need help to ensure the project task is completed on time with high quality, so as to achieve overall training of students' comprehensive language application competence.

According to the project design principles and the ideological and political elements in Table 1, the author designs the project teaching plan of *Experiencing English viewing, listening & Speaking 1* (the

fourth edition), as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Instructional design for project-based teaching

Project tasks	Language teaching goals	Moral education goals
Make a news poster to showcase Chinese traditional music	Learn vocabulary and sentences related to music	Guide students to experience and spread China's traditional music
Interview four students on their ideas about frugality	Master expressions about consumption habits and shopping	Instruct students to set up correct consumption view and carry forward traditional virtue of frugality
Make a report about the top three dream jobs in China	Learn the words and sentences related to occupation and professional character	Help students establish the right professional values and cultivate the professional character of dedication
Have a debate on "Talents or hard-working, which is more important for success"	Be proficient in using expressions about talents and ability	Cultivate students' spirit of hard work and fighting
Introduce an advanced technology in China	Be familiar with the adjectives and expressions related to technology	Educate students to study hard to realize a powerful nation of science and technology, and cultivate their patriotism
Give a speech on "Inner Beauty"	Know about vocabulary and expressions related to self-confidence and character	Instruct students to be kind-hearted young generation in the new era
Report China's great achievement in education	Master vocabulary and sentence patterns related to achievement	Enlighten students to enrich their knowledge and contribute to China' education and rejuvenating
Interview four students about their healthy habits	Use vocabulary and expressions of healthy habits	Lead students to develop healthy living and study habits

4.3. Case Analysis of Ideology and Politics in Public English Course Based on Project Teaching

Taking the theme "Talents" as an example, the author makes the teaching plan of ideological and political education on the basis of project teaching. The implementation steps is as follows:

Step one: the confirmation of the project

In view of the current phenomenon that some university students are just muddling along in universities, the task of this project is determined as "carrying out an English debate on the topic 'Talents or hard-working, which is more important for success' with the purpose of cultivating students' spirit of hard work and fighting in the increasingly competitive environment.

Step two: the introduction of the project

The teacher shows students the video in which Tom Thum performs beat-boxing excellently, and then asks "How can he become such a brilliant beatboxer?" Many students will probably answer "his talent". The teacher goes on asking "What other factors do you think affect his success?" Students may list many other factors that lead to success, such as personal efforts, willpower, family environment, etc. In the end, the teacher raises a thinking question "Among these factors, which one is the most important?" and based on this critical thinking, the teacher assigns a project task: have a debate entitled "talents and hard work, which is more important?"

Step three: the implementation of the project

Students are divided into 10 groups to form 5 teams of debating opponents. The viewpoint of the pro side is "Talent is the most crucial factors for a person's success", and the viewpoint of the opposing side is "Hard work is the most important to one's success." The teacher provides topic-related reading materials and videos for students to learn. Each group collects and collates the information they need. They conduct discussion and write the content of the debate. The teacher provides some necessary guidance for students to avoid grammar and expression errors, striving for fluency and precision in language expressions. Students familiarize themselves with and recite the relevant debating material. Finally, these 5 debate teams record the video of the whole process of debating respectively.

Step four: the presentation and evaluation of the project

The teacher plays the recorded debate videos in the classroom. The teacher and students watch and assess the videos together. The evaluation subjects are diversified, mainly including the teacher's evaluation, group self-evaluation and group mutual evaluation. The evaluation focus on the clarity of

opinions in the presentation stage, the specificity of answers in the questioning stage, the clarity of logical thinking in the free debate stage, the generality of the statement in the conclusion stage, the fluency of language expression and the manner in the whole debate, etc. The hundred-point system is adopted for the evaluation, and the final score of the project task takes the average score of the three as an important part of students' daily performance. At last, the teacher makes a summary of this project task and points out the advantages and disadvantages of students' performance. Here are some excerpts from students' debate.

The pro side's viewpoint 1: Talent is the key to one's success. A person with the talent can make an achievement much easier in certain area than those without.

The opposing side's viewpoint 1: Hard work is the key to gain success. As President Xi Jinping says, "Happiness is achieved through hard work".

The pro side's viewpoint 2: At the 2008 Olympics, Phelps won eight gold medals. As a matter of fact, he has the special talent in sport. It is his physique that contributes to his success in sport. We all know that his internal organs are different from those of others. His competitors work as hard as him, but they are not the winner.

The opposing side's viewpoint 2: Einstein couldn't speak at the age of four or five, but he became a world-famous scientist through continuous hard work. Yang Lan (a famous Chinese host) was a stutter when she was a little child. We can even say that she isn't gifted with eloquence at all. To our surprise, She practiced hard with small stones in her mouth and eventually became a famous host.

Through the project task of debate, students' comprehensive English skills have been well trained, and their interdisciplinary knowledge such as making short videos have also been improved. The heated discussion of values enlivens the classroom atmosphere and exercises students' critical thinking. Project teaching facilitates English teaching and ideological and political education to blend mutually and bring out the best in each other.

5. Conclusion

Teachers are the organizer of the classroom teaching. They should make full use of this main place of talents training to explore effective paths for ideological and political education and English course in the teaching practice, so as to achieve the goals of strengthening moral education and improving students' political quality. Based on project teaching method, the ideological and political education of university public English teaching can fully arouse students' interest and enthusiasm in learning by excavating the ideological and political elements in the textbooks and designing a series of project tasks for English communication. The cultivation of subject knowledge dissemination, the development of capability and the guidance of values are organically integrated to provide reference for the ideological and political construction of foreign language courses.

Acknowledgements

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