

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

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**Abstract:** Public English course is an important part of vocational college education. Exploring the practice and research of integrating ideological and political elements into vocational college public English teaching is conducive to giving full play to the role of this course. Project-based teaching is a student-centered and inquiry-based teaching mode. Students complete project tasks through cooperation, communication, discussion, and exploration, from which their relevant knowledge and skills, practical abilities and comprehensive capability are improved. Based on the project teaching method, digging out the ideological and political elements in the public English course can develop students' language skills as well as enrich the vocabulary with Chinese characteristics, and it improves their competence to interpret and spread Chinese traditional culture. Hence, students embrace the sense of patriotism and the international outlook.

**Keywords:** ideological and political elements; vocational college public English; project teaching method

## 1. Introduction

President Xi Jinping pointed out at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities in 2016, "We must adhere to the key link of strengthening moral education and cultivating young people, and ideological and political work must run through the entire process of education and teaching. Teachers of various courses should take their own responsibilities in teaching, so that all kinds of other courses and ideological and political courses go in the same direction, and a large-scale pattern of all-round education for students should be established". "Moral education" emphasizes the comprehensive integration of ideological and political elements with courses teaching, and focuses on the concepts and methods of ideological and political education. Therefore, the most critical problem for teachers is how to explore ideological and political elements in the courses effectively and integrate moral education with courses teaching on the basis of the characteristics of various courses.

As the main place for teaching, classrooms play an vital role in ideological and political education. Teachers should make full use of the classrooms and innovate teaching models constantly. They mine the ideological and political elements in the courses actively to achieve the goal of fostering virtue through education in the process of imparting knowledge. This paper explores the practice and research of integrating ideological and political elements into vocational college public English on the basis of project teaching, hoping to provide a meaningful reference for ideological and political teaching of English courses in the future.

## 2. The Necessity of Ideological and Political Teaching in College English Courses

Language is the carrier of culture. As an important part of culture, language itself is the unity of knowledge and humanity. It is absolutely feasible to mine ideological and political resources in English courses, which determines that English course teaching has the function of ideological and political education<sup>[1]</sup>. English teaching not only conveys language forms and skills but also reflects the culture, ideology and values of the output language. Therefore, teachers infiltrate Chinese elements into English teaching to carry out ideological and political education in courses and develop students' patriotism.

In *The Basic Requirements for Teaching English Courses in Higher Vocational College Education* issued by the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education, it is stated that English is an significant tool for learning cultural and scientific knowledge as well as acquiring knowledge in all aspects and engaging in international communication. It can be concluded that English teaching is the unity of instrumentality and humanity. However, the majority of English teachers have just focused on cultivating and improving student's English learning strategies, basic language knowledge and communication skills for a long time. They lay more emphasis on the instrumentality of English teaching. In recent years, with China's stress and implementation of "ideology and politics in courses education", the goal of "humanity" in English teaching has become more and more prominent. English teaching should cultivate students with patriotism and international vision. College students are supposed to have the competence to interpret and spread Chinese culture and tell Chinese stories well after learning English courses. Higher vocational English courses are rich in content, involving life, literature, thoughts and other fields. The integration of ideological education and English teaching gives fresh vitality to traditional ideological education and enriches the connotation of English courses<sup>[2]</sup>. While learning the language and culture of English-speaking countries, students have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and show the cultural confidence.

### **3. Project Teaching Method and the Previous Studies of its Application in Higher Vocational English Teaching**

#### **3.1. The Overview of Project Teaching Method**

Kilpatrick, a famous educator, proposed the concept of project teaching in 1918, which was gradually perfected in the middle and late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Project teaching emphasizes taking students as the center and changing the traditional teaching mode in which teachers give lectures throughout the whole process. With this teaching mode, the enthusiasm and initiative of students can be fully mobilized. It encourages students to use online resources and various learning strategies to learn in real situation. Adderley proposes that project-based teaching is a kind of teaching mode and the main purpose of students' learning is to solve problems. More over, it attaches more attention to students' learning initiative and participation in the learning process<sup>[3]</sup>. Blumenfel defines this method as an open learning strategy. He believes that the most important thing is not the project result, but the process of students' active participation, problem solving and the process of consolidating and acquiring knowledge at each stage<sup>[4]</sup>.

At present, the understanding of project-based teaching is relatively consist. It is believed that this method is a student-centered and inquiry-based teaching mode. Real and effective project tasks are the driving force to stimulate students' learning motivation. Students consolidate the existing knowledge and continue to learn new knowledge with the help of resources. The project task is completed through cooperation, communication, discussion, and exploration. In this mode, students will not only greatly improve their knowledge, but also benefit a lot in terms of comprehensive literacy, students' sense of achievement and gain in learning<sup>[5]</sup>.

Being different from traditional teaching methods, the core of project-based teaching is that students improve relevant knowledge and skills and enhance their practical abilities as well as strengthen the comprehensive ability to reshape cultural feelings and values while completing project tasks under the guidance of teachers and the concept of "learning by doing"<sup>[6]</sup>. There are several stages in the process of project-based teaching. The first stage is the choice of the project. The teacher decides on the project based on students' interest and the teaching content of the course which is related to certain real-world topic. The second stage is the introduction of the project. The teacher explains the project to students in details so that they understand specific tasks. He/she also analyzes the difficulties might encountered and the corresponding solutions. The essential principle is to promote language communication and interaction in the project-based teaching of college English. The third stage is the implementation of the project. At this stage, group members study cooperatively and discuss the problems. They can seek help from the teacher and classmates to find the solutions. In-depth learning is the characteristic of inquiry-based learning and also the most important value embodiment of project-based teaching. The selection of more English materials, more accurate English expressions, more proficient language ability, etc. may be completed in the unconscious deep learning during the project implementation. The last stage is the presentation and evaluation of the project. The forms of presentation are diverse, and both oral and written expressions are inseparable. Students should pay much attention to the accuracy, completeness and logic of language as well as the perfect combination of body language and technical

assistance in the process. The evaluation consists of formative evaluation and summative evaluation, including group evaluation, individual evaluation, self-evaluation and other's evaluation, etc. In college English teaching, the evaluation of project-based teaching mainly involves in students' language knowledge, language competence, project conception and the completion, and the degree to which the project promotes language learning (whether it can meet the current teaching requirements, and whether it involves deep learning). And it also stresses students' participation and personal growth during the project.

### **3.2. Studies of Project- based Teaching in Higher Vocational English Teaching**

The author searched in CNKI with the keywords "project-based teaching" and "higher vocational English course" and found that researches on the application of project-based teaching method in higher vocational college can mainly be divided into two categories.

The first category is about the application of this method in higher vocational public English Teaching. Cao Luxi points out that project-based teaching not only requires teachers to pay close attention to systematicness but also needs to lay emphasis on the basic knowledge and application of the language<sup>[7]</sup>. Shi Hong analyzes the current problems of public English teaching in higher vocational colleges. She believes that teachers should change their teaching concepts and design logical project tasks with scientific implementation mechanism of project-based teaching to mobilize students' inquiry capacities and improve their comprehensive skills of English effectively<sup>[8]</sup>. Xi Ying and Luo Huan expound the specific implementation plan of project-based teaching applied to higher vocational public English teaching. They think that changing the traditional teaching methods and the concept of dealing with textbooks enable us to realize the goal of higher vocational English teaching in China<sup>[9]</sup>.

The second category is about the application of project-based teaching in higher vocational professional English teaching. Ding Yanqiong views that teachers ought to combine the specific content of courses and plan ahead from the aspects of the project design, the implementation and the evaluation of teaching under the background of occupation ability training. It can help promote students' working capacities for posts<sup>[10]</sup>. After the analysis of the target employment and the needed capacities in the future job, Hu Haiying applies project-based teaching method into the industrial English course. She designs projects closely related to future occupations and strive to tap the potential of students' cognitive development to promote the effective output of language skills and career ability, which will enhance students' autonomous learning and comprehensive professional quality<sup>[11]</sup>. After analyzing the occupation skills of vocational students, Wang Ting discusses the specific application of project-based teaching in industrial English. Both the English teaching and students' practical skills have been improved with the application of this method<sup>[12]</sup>.

From the above analysis, it is not difficult to find that certain achievements about project-based teaching have been obtained in China. However, researchers are just concerned with the application of this mode in the teaching of public English and industrial English in higher vocational colleges. Therefore, this research will have certain significance to explore the practice and research of integrating ideological and political elements into Vocational College Public English Teaching on the basis of project teaching.

## **4. Case Study**

### **4.1. Exploring the Ideological and Political Elements of the Public English Textbooks**

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 cultivation of language application<sup>[13]</sup>. There exist abundant of ideological and political elements in English textbooks. The task of teachers is to dig out these elements and integrate them with the teaching of higher vocational English to infiltrate correct values.

Taking the textbook of *New Practical English Comprehensive Course 1* (fifth edition) as an example, the author explores the ideological and political elements according to the unit themes, as shown in Table 1:

The ideological and political elements in Table 1 involve China's traditional virtues, culture and humanistic spirits. Incorporating these elements into the learning of basic English language skills not only enriches the teaching content but also increases the vocabulary and expressions of Chinese

elements. With the help of their own English competence, students understand the cultures of various countries around the world, and spread China's culture and ideas, allowing them to truly perceive the collision and integration of Chinese and Western cultures at the same time. Teachers infiltrate ideological and political elements in the process of teaching. Students' cognition of China's own culture is strengthened and their cultural self-confidence is enhanced as well.

*Table 1: Unit themes and the ideological and political elements*

| Unit themes              | Ideological and political elements  |
|--------------------------|---|
| Saying Thanks or Sorry   | (1). How to express regrets and ask for forgiveness<br>(2). The spirit of fighting against COVID-19   |
| Concept of Punctuality   | (1). Traditional virtues of honesty and punctuality<br>(2). Famous people's stories about punctuality |
| Weather and Climate      | (1). The effects of climate change on humans<br>(2). How to be an environmentalist                    |
| Faster, Higher, Stronger | (1). The spirit of sports event<br>(2). The Spirit of Winter Olympic Games in 2022 in Beijing         |
| Holiday Celebrations     | (1). Chinese traditional local festivals<br>(2). The festival cultures worldwide                      |

#### **4.2. The Teaching Design of Projects with the Integration of Ideological and Political Elements**

The design of project tasks is a crucial step in teaching, and teachers must follow the principles of operability and practicability so as to fully mobilize students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning. When designing the project task, the teacher should consider the humanity and instrumentality of English language, and pay great attention to its communicative function. Students can choose a variety of means, such as investigation reports, interviews, speeches, debates, etc. to complete the project tasks. The teacher should take into account students' learning difference and English proficiency when dividing the whole class into groups for the projects. He/she should provide appropriate guidance to students who are in need of help so that the tasks can be completed successfully. And the goal of project teaching is to train students' comprehensive ability of English listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Based on the ideological and political elements in Table 1 and the principles of project-based teaching, the author designs project tasks for the public English course, as shown in Table 2:

*Table 2: Teaching design for project-based teaching*

| Project tasks   | Language teaching goals  | Moral education goals  |
|---|--|--|
| Write a thank-you letter to heroes fighting against COVID-19          | Being familiar with the words and expressions of gratitude in the text | Students knowing about the anti-epidemic spirit and spreading the positive power |
| Tell a story of a famous person about honesty and punctuality         | Learning about the vocabulary and expressions of punctuality           | Guiding students to be honest and punctual                                       |
| Make a report about the impact of vehicle emissions on climate change | Being proficient in using vocabulary and sentences related to weather  | Inspiring students to understand the impact of climate change on humans          |
| Make a speech on the topic of the Spirit of Winter Olympic Games      | Mastering the vocabulary and expressions about sports                  | Students learning about the fighting spirit and patriotism of athletes           |
| Introduce a Guangxi traditional festival and its culture              | Understanding the cultural expressions of Guangxi local festivals      | Encouraging students to understand and spread China's culture                    |

#### **4.3. Case Analysis of Ideology and Politics in English Teaching on the Basis of Project Teaching**

Taking the theme "Holiday Celebration" as an example, the author makes the teaching plan of ideology and politics in English on the basis of project teaching. The implementation steps is as follows:

Step One: The choice of the project

According to the reality of the collision between Chinese and Western cultures, the theme of this project is determined as “A Guangxi Traditional Festival and Its Culture”, and students can give the presentation with PPT. The goal of this project is to guide students to understand the traditional festival culture of Guangxi, and to have a correct view of China’s traditional culture instead of just celebrating foreign festivals.

#### Step two: The introduction of the project

According to the topic of this unit, the teacher asks: “Which Guangxi traditional festival do you like best as a student studying in Guangxi?”. In accordance with their life experience, most of the students answer “The Sanyuesan Festival”, as they can enjoy a statutory three-day holiday in this festival. Then the teacher asks “How much do you know about this festival?”. Students from Zhuang ethnic group may know some festival customs, but other students may know little about this festival. The teacher continues to ask “For what purpose is the festival celebrated? What activities are there during this festival?”. According to students’ replies, the teacher sets the project task “introduce a traditional festival in Guangxi”.

#### Step three: The implementation of the project

Students are divided into 10 groups, 4 or 5 students for each group. The teacher provides students with websites to find the related information and advises them to go to the library for some related books, such as *Zhuang Nationality's March 3, Jing Nationality's Ha festival, Cannon Dragon Festival in Bingyang*. They can also learn about the folk customs by consulting native students so that they can obtain enough information they need. Each group collects and collates the information while the teacher provides English translation of some culture-loaded words. The teacher also offers some guidance and modification for students’ PPT so as to avoid unnecessary spelling and grammar errors. They just have one week to finish the project so the group members should work together on weekends and after school.

#### Step Four: The presentation and evaluation of the project

Students should present their projects in class. Each group has the chance of giving the presentation within 7 minutes. The diversification of evaluation is adopted, including group self-evaluation, group peer evaluation and the teacher’ evaluation. The whole evaluation should be involved in the following aspects: the content of the festival culture (activities, diets, clothing, festival significance, etc.), the fluency of oral expression, the layout of PPT, the matching of pictures and text, and so on. After the presentation, the teacher makes a summary of their performance and points out the strength and weakness. The following is part of one group’s presentation.

Excerpt one: Zhuang ethnic group: The Sanyuesan Festival, on March3rd in the lunar calendar, is the traditional festival of Zhuang people. It is also known as the Folk Song Fair. There are several regular folk song fairs for Zhuang people every year, among which the one on March 3rd in the lunar calendar is the most important one.

Excerpt two: Besides, singing folk songs is also an important activity for Zhuang youths to make the acquaintance of each other and have a date. By singing, they express themselves, know each other and build up a relationship. But that is only the first step to a marriage. Only by further contacts after the folk song fair can the couple determine to establish a long-term relationship by getting married.

Excerpt three: On that day, every household makes the five-color glutinous rice, dyes eggs red to celebrate festivals, and some of them will celebrate for two or three days. Folk song fairs are held at a specific venue in different regions. It is often on sloping field. Some villages will build temporary houses with bamboos and cloth to receive singers from other villages.

Through the presentation, students learn about the customs and some main activities, such as: singing folk songs, eating the five-color glutinous rice, welcoming singers from the outer villages, dyeing eggs red, etc. They learn the custom that Zhuang youths make the acquaintance of each other and have a date through the activity of singing songs during the folk song fair. They also learn about the food culture of Zhuang People. In addition, they master the English translation of many culture-loaded words. Students enlarge their vocabulary and get a sense of achievement to a certain extent. Hence, their confidence is raised and interest in English learning is stimulated.

Their comprehensive competence of English listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation have been well practised in the process of doing this project. By watching the presentation of different festivals, students will understand the importance of celebrating various traditional festivals in Guangxi.

At the same time, they will also understand the culture and customs of different festivals, which is an eye-opener for those students from other provinces. The teacher can also remind students to compare China's traditional festivals with those of Western countries when making the summary, which will lead to heated discussions among students and brings a lively atmosphere. As college students in the new era, they learn that China's traditional culture is so rich and colorful. They realize their responsibility to spread China's culture and tell Chinese stories well. Therefore, such a project is conducive to promoting the integration of English teaching with ideological and political elements.

## 5. Conclusions

Classroom is the major place for cultivating talents. As the organizer of the teaching in classroom, it is necessary for the teacher to explore the ideological and political elements in the textbooks and integrate ideological and political education with English so as to achieve the goal of strengthening morality and improving students' ideological and political quality. Project-based teaching emphasizes "learning by doing". Students' initiative can be effectively stimulated if the teacher designs project tasks that combine ideological and political elements with English practical application. They can become talents with patriotism and international vision in the new era when the English knowledge and values are integrated in teaching.

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