

Moral Teaching Practice in the Course of *An Overview of Chinese Culture* for English Majors

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Abstract

To address the current challenges of imbalanced cultural input between Chinese and Western cultures and the phenomenon of “Silence of Chinese Cultural Output” among English major students, this paper focuses on the English course of *An Overview of Chinese Culture*. It explores in detail how to improve the effectiveness of moral education in English major courses by integrating moral education and nurturing students’ abilities. The discussion covers three dimensions: the pre-class preparation stage, including syllabus design, teaching materials, and educational resources; the in-class teaching stage, including blended online and offline teaching, group collaboration, and integration of local culture; and the post-class consolidation stage, including intercultural and cultural competitions, practical activities, and evaluations. Furthermore, specific strategies and approaches for moral education in English major courses are proposed, with a focus on teachers’ role of guiding student, and effective feedback analysis.

Key words: Curricular moral education; English major; *An Overview of Chinese Culture*; Course teaching reform

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In the context of globalization, it is an essential responsibility and mission for university students, especially those majoring in English, to use English as a medium to showcase the profound and extensive Chinese culture to the world. The *Guidelines for the Construction of Moral Education in Higher Education Curricula* issued by the Ministry of Education in June 2020 emphasizes that curriculum construction should guide contemporary university students in deeply understanding the essence and contemporary value of the Chinese outstanding traditional culture, which promotes benevolence, emphasizes the people, upholds integrity, pursues justice, advocates harmony, and seeks unity¹. Integrating moral elements into English major curriculum teaching in a subtle and systematic manner is a primary task and obligatory subject for moral education reform in English major courses at universities. This paper, based on the teaching practice of the course *An Overview of Chinese Culture* for English majors, summarizes the experience of integrating moral education into the curriculum. It aims to provide reference and guidance for moral education in English major courses.

1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTEGRATING MORAL EDUCATION INTO THE COURSE *AN OVERVIEW OF CHINESE CULTURE*

The course serves as a forefront in implementing the mission of moral education for English majors. As a field of study that involves frequent exchanges and collisions between Chinese and Western cultures, English majors are often influenced by Western ideologies. *An Overview*

¹Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2020, June 1). *Notice on the issuance of the "Guidelines for the Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Curriculum"* [EB/OL]. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A08/s7056/202006/t20200603_462437.html

of Chinese Culture is a course that teaches humanistic knowledge and values about various aspects of Chinese society and culture, delivered in English, hence, there are many commonalities between the education of Chinese traditional culture and moral education. The incorporation of excellent traditional culture in English teaching can provide rich opportunities for moral education. It helps enhance students' competence to express Chinese culture in English, develop their understanding of traditional culture, ignite a sense of national pride, and strengthen their Chinese cultural confidence.

1.1 “Silence on Chinese Culture Output” and Telling the Chinese Story to the World

Currently, it is common to find “silence on Chinese culture output” among college students in both English language learning. This term was first coined by Cong Zong in the *Guangming Daily* (Cong, 2000), referring to the inability to express Chinese culture in English during cross-cultural communication. Based on a survey conducted by Lan Jun among 71 senior English major students and 30 teachers from three universities in Xi'an regarding the phenomenon of “silence on Chinese culture output” (Lan, 2010), It was found that 97% of English major students believed that they were unable to clearly express content related to Chinese culture in English. The imbalance between the input of Western and Chinese cultures in English teaching at universities was attributed to this phenomenon. Yuan Xiaolu, Zhao Juan, and Wang Hui conducted a study on 3,891 English major students from comprehensive, normal, language, and science and engineering universities (Yuan, Zhao, & Wang, 2021), examining their language expression abilities in disseminating Chinese culture in English. The results showed that the total number of class hours dedicated to Chinese culture-related courses in various universities was relatively low, and the improvement of students' ability to inherit Chinese culture required increasing the content of Chinese culture in classroom teaching, textbook arrangement, and assessments, as well as creating a favorable learning atmosphere for Chinese culture and effectively utilizing the feedback function of assessments. Integrating moral education into the course “A Glimpse Chinese Culture” is an inevitable trend in the contemporary era. While universities' English majors offer a series of compulsory and elective courses centered around English and American cultures, such as “Selected Readings from English and American Newspapers,” “American Literature,” and “Introduction to English Literature,” there are very few courses related to studying traditional Chinese culture. The course aims to impart excellent traditional Chinese culture to English major students, cultivating their patriotism and cross-cultural thinking abilities. By strengthening classroom teaching and post-class guidance on Chinese excellent traditional culture based on the course, we can not only promote

English major students' understanding of China's national conditions and traditional culture, fully leveraging the positive transfer effect of their mother tongue culture but also encourage them to apply what they have learned and tell the Chinese story effectively in cross-cultural communication.

1.2 Practicing Virtue Education and Cultivating Cultural Confidence

Integrating moral education into the course is an urgent need for higher education institutions to practice virtue education and cultivate students with a strong sense of cultural confidence. Due to the unique nature of the English major, it is crucial to provide education and influence from the mother tongue culture to enhance English major students' comprehensive understanding, interpretation, and reflection on their mother tongue culture. The course focuses on teaching Chinese excellent traditional culture, aiming to enhance students' comprehensive understanding of our society and culture, improve their traditional cultural literacy, and cultivate their awareness of multiculturalism.

By incorporating curricular moral education reforms through the course, it is required that subject teachers actively explore the connection between teaching excellent traditional culture and moral education. They should relate moral knowledge to students' daily lives and establish emotional connections with students to convey socialist core values. Furthermore, it is essential to fully utilize the positive influence of excellent traditional culture, promoting the realization of the mission of virtue education. Implementing curricular moral education in the course can help English major students enhance their traditional cultural cultivation, strengthen their national self-confidence and cultural heritage consciousness, and improve their abilities in cross-cultural reasoning.

Incorporating moral education into the course could enhance cultural confidence through English teaching. The disciplinary nature and talent development goals of the English major determine the necessity of implementing moral reforms in English major courses. As English major students acquire foreign language knowledge and skills, and explore Western literature, history, and philosophy, the continuous integration and collision of Chinese and Western cultures subtly influence students' worldview, outlook on life, and values. In the classroom teaching of the course, which covers topics such as philosophy, art, literature, sports, and architecture, Chinese culture can serve as the foundation for curricular moral education. By leveraging the unique advantages of teaching content, the concepts of benevolence, emphasis on the people, the doctrine of the mean, the spirit of hard work, and the moral qualities of honesty and integrity can be seamlessly integrated into English teaching. In the course, by utilizing the excellent traditional culture that propels the continuous development of the Chinese

nation, moral education can be conducted. On one hand, it helps students comprehensively grasp the basic national conditions and cultural knowledge, enhance their humanistic literacy and traditional cultural cultivation. On the other hand, it cultivates students' patriotism, strengthens their confidence in national culture, and guides them to promote Chinese excellent traditional culture in cross-cultural communication activities.

2. THE INTEGRATION OF CURRICULAR MORAL EDUCATION AND ENGLISH MAJOR COURSE TEACHING

In the new era, numerous scholars in the field of foreign language teaching have conducted extensive theoretical research on curricular moral education. Du Gangyue and Sun Ruijuan identified three strategies for implementing curricular moral education based on the phenomenon of the lack of moral elements in English major course teaching: enhancing the moral awareness and competence of English major teachers, enriching the content of moral elements in English major textbooks, and strengthening the overall construction of moral education in English major courses (Du & Sun, 2019). Zhang Jingyuan and Wang Na explained the connotation, teaching principles, and practical paths of curricular moral education in English major courses from the perspective of the disciplinary nature and educational essence of humanities and social sciences. They emphasized that curriculum moral education in English major courses should pay more attention to "hidden education" (Zhang & Wang, 2021). Hu Jiehui proposed that curricular moral education in foreign language disciplines should be based on educational policies, curriculum theories, and the perspective of foreign language disciplines, and should clearly define teaching goals, strengthen the systematic design of teaching content, emphasize the progressive nature of process design, and highlight the integration of assessment and feedback (Hu, 2021). Xu Jinfen believed that the construction of curricular moral education in English major courses should focus on student development, combine disciplinary attributes with institutional characteristics, and fully explore and expand the moral elements of teaching materials in English major courses through the three steps of "analysis, selection, and supplementation" (Xu, 2021).

In response to the practical teaching of English major courses, Aina, using postcolonial criticism theory, explores and demonstrates the feasibility of using the film "Avatar" as moral teaching material in the "English and American Literature" course. (Ai, 2021) Ding Feng et al., based on the theory of "holistic education," conducted curricular moral education practices in the core course "Communicative English" at a foreign language and foreign trade university in Guangdong. They proposed

that emphasis should be placed on cultivating students' professional competence and humanistic qualities from four dimensions: cultural foundation, autonomous development, social participation, and international perspective (Ding, Wang, Ouyang, et al., 2021). Gao Lina and Ge Houwei, using the core course "Introduction to Linguistics" in the English major as an example, integrated socialist core values, Chinese identity, exploration and innovation spirit, and awareness of a shared future for humanity into the teaching of phonetics, pragmatics, and syntax, among other knowledge points (Gao & Ge, 2022). Zhang Lei, using two units from the core course "Basic English 3" as an example, focused on demonstrating the use of curricular moral education in daily report teaching activities and instructional design. They then analyzed and summarized the experiences and deficiencies of curricular moral education in the "Basic English 3" course (Zhang, 2022).

In summary, on one hand, previous research based on teaching practice has mainly focused on language theory and skill-based courses such as "Introduction to Linguistics," "Basic English," and "American Literature," with less attention given to English courses related to native culture. On the other hand, previous studies have made significant and effective discussions on the theoretical interpretation, necessity, effective strategies, implementation paths, and exploration of teaching practices in English disciplinary education. These discussions provide valuable references for exploring the practical path of incorporating moral education into the course of *An Overview of Chinese Culture*.

3. THE CONSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MORAL EDUCATION IN THE COURSE.

As a school-level course reform in the Foreign Language College, *An Overview of Chinese Culture* is offered to second-year undergraduate students majoring in English. The course is taught entirely in English and is categorized as an elective course within the major. The course uses the textbook *A Glimpse of Chinese Culture (Revised Edition)* published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, written by Liao Huaying, focusing on Chinese excellent traditional culture as the teaching content. The course aims to enhance students' English language skills, improve their understanding of traditional culture, and stimulate their national pride and cultural confidence. It also aims to cultivate a sense of cultural responsibility and inheritance consciousness. Since 2020, the course has undergone two rounds of moral education practice. The specific implementation path is as follows:

3.1 In the pre-class preparation stage: the two rounds of reforms in the course focused on adjusting

the course syllabus, secondary development of teaching materials, and the development of an educational resource corpus.

Initially, before the teaching reform, the course's teaching objectives mainly focused on knowledge and skills development. In accordance with the connotation and requirements of moral education in the curriculum, the overall moral education objectives of the course were explicitly stated in the syllabus. These objectives aimed to enhance students' ability to express Chinese culture in English, cultivate their understanding of national culture, and strengthen their awareness of cultural inheritance, innovation, and communication. The goal was to produce applied foreign language professionals who possess a global perspective and patriotic sentiments, as well as cross-cultural critical thinking abilities and a spirit of reflective thinking. Each chapter in the syllabus incorporated ideological and political education objectives. For example, in Chapter 5, the moral education objective related to technology was set to deepen students' understanding of China's technological achievements, such as the high-speed train (CRH) and 5G technology, and enhance their awareness of promoting technological development, innovation, and national pride.

Next, active exploration was conducted to discover the moral education resources embedded in the teaching materials of the textbook. For example, in Chapter 3, which focuses on art, the main teaching content is the basic introduction to Kunqu Opera. The instructor set the ideological and political education objective for this chapter as enhancing students' artistic cultivation, strengthening their awareness of inheriting and promoting China's intangible cultural heritage in the field of art, and fostering national confidence and pride. Additionally, considering that the students in the class lacked the ability to deeply explore cultural differences and multicultural awareness, the instructor incorporated a classroom role-play session comparing Chinese and Western dramas into the teaching design. By using stage images and video clips from Kunqu Opera's *The Peony Pavilion* and the musical *The Phantom of the Opera*, students were encouraged to reflect on the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western theatrical cultures in terms of stage design, costumes, musical instruments, and performance styles so as to help students develop a sense of national cultural pride and confidence.

Furthermore, in accordance with the needs of the course content, relevant language resources were selected and a self-built resource corpus for nurturing students was established. The composition of the self-built *An Overview of Chinese Culture* resource corpus includes bilingual versions of literary and philosophical classics, government work reports, speeches by important leaders on significant occasions (all in bilingual format), as well as texts from sources such as *China Daily*, *Xuexi Qiangguo*, CGTN, and Xinhua News Agency. Next, Chinese word segmentation

and part-of-speech tagging were performed using the Corpus Word Parser tool, while English part-of-speech tagging was done using the Treetagger 3.0 tool. Texts of different themes were annotated for discourse analysis. Subsequently, the Tmxmall platform was utilized to establish parallel alignment at the sentence level between the Chinese and English texts. Finally, with the help of the corpus retrieval tool ParaConc, a bilingual parallel corpus was created and directly applied to the lesson preparation stage. Through the keyword retrieval function of the corpus, the instructor gained a deep understanding of the moral implications within the indexed lines and sections where the keywords appeared, extracting the course's moral elements for the pre-class stage from the corpus. Additionally, the parallel corpus was divided thematically into categories such as philosophy, literature, science and technology, tea culture, culinary culture, architecture and local cultural features of Shaoxing.

3.2 In-class stage: the classroom serves as the main battlefield for implementing the moral aspects of the course.

Firstly, relying on the online learning platform --- Xuexitong, the course adopts a blended learning approach combining online and offline instruction. Through the Xuexitong, the instructor publishes learning requirements and teaching tasks for each chapter (such as pre-class warm-up tasks, post-class assessments, etc.). The platform automatically records students' learning duration and test scores. Additionally, the instructor establishes group chats for learning groups consisting of four students each, with one student elected as the group leader. The instructor provides feedback on group presentations and assignments through the group leaders and reminds individual students who are not performing well, ensuring the information is conveyed to all group members. The instructor fully leverages the positive nurturing role of competition in learning, organizing and guiding students to participate in cultural-related contests such as the National College Students' Intercultural Competence Contest (The 5th SFLEP Cup), where they achieved First Prize nationally, and the Zhejiang Provincial Higher Education Society Cup for Telling Chinese stories to the world in English, achieving excellent results.

Moreover, English major students must take on the responsibility of inheriting and promoting local indigenous culture. Therefore, this course integrates the main content with the locally built cultural education sub-library of Shaoxing, incorporating Shaoxing regional culture and its distinctive features in the teaching practice. For example, in the teaching of Chapter 2, Literature, a visit to the former residence of Lu Xun is arranged. In Chapter 3, Art, there is a calligraphy appreciation activity focusing on Wang Xizhi's *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection*. In Chapter 8, Culinary Culture, the teaching emphasizes Shaoxing yellow wine and conducts

a comparative teaching method to contrast Chinese and Western wine culture. In Chapter 9, Traditional Architecture, there is a special teaching topic related to the ancestral home of Zhou Enlai. These activities deepen English major students' understanding and identification with the essence of local culture, strengthening their confidence and determination to protect and inherit local cultural characteristics.

3.3 In the after-class stage: the focus of the course's moral education reform in *An Overview of Chinese Culture* lies in leveraging the advantages of extracurricular ideological and political education and adjusting the teaching evaluation criteria.

Firstly, the two rounds of ideological and political education practices in this course have demonstrated the positive effects of conducting extracurricular practical activities and "learning through competition." This semester, there were two extracurricular practical activities: "Investigating the Current Situation of Shengzhou Bamboo Weaving Protection and Inheritance" and "The Overseas Dissemination and Adaptation of *Dream of Red Mansions*". Students could choose one of these topics to conduct research and give group presentations. According to student feedback, these practical activities effectively improved their cross-cultural critical thinking skills, innovative abilities, and English proficiency.

Secondly, the main instructor encouraged and led the class students to actively participate in cultural competitions as a group. Among them, the English major students from the 2021 level won three first prizes in the 2023 Zhejiang Provincial College Students' Intercultural Competence Contest and three first prizes in the National College Students' Intercultural Competence Contest. They also achieved excellent results in the Zhejiang Provincial Contest for Telling Chinese Stories in Foreign Languages.

Additionally, any teaching reform must consider teaching evaluation. The evaluation methods for this course consist of summative assessment and formative assessment. Summative assessment has shifted to supporting the overall teaching objectives of the course, with open-ended questions designed to assess the completion of curricular moral education objectives. The allocation of question weightage between core and non-core chapters is optimized. The formative assessment of this course combines online and offline components and includes peer assessment, self-assessment, and teacher assessment. "Formative assessment under the 'Internet+' paradigm is a dynamic evaluation of the entire learning process, aiming to refine and improve the evaluation of the teaching process. It helps students strengthen their ideals and beliefs and enhance their abilities" (Zhang, 2020). The moral assessment in the formative evaluation mainly focuses on extracurricular practices and subjective questions in the online platform- Xuexitong's chapter assignments, pre-learning tasks, and review tasks.

4. REFLECTION ON PROMOTING THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORAL EDUCATION IN ENGLISH MAJOR COURSES

Implementing the construction of moral education in English major courses, and effectively improving the educational outcomes, is an ongoing exploration that requires constant refinement. It is also a responsibility and mission entrusted to English major teachers in the new era. Through two rounds of teaching reform in the "Introduction to Chinese Culture" course, practice has shown that skillfully combining pre-class design, classroom activities, and post-class feedback is an effective measure to enhance the effectiveness of moral education in English major courses.

4.1 Pre-class Stage: Enhancing the Capability of Moral Education and Building a Teaching Team

The core of constructing moral education in English major courses lies in continuously improving the moral education awareness and capabilities of professional teachers. Teachers, as the central figures in implementing moral education in courses, their knowledge reserves in moral education, familiarity with course content, and skillful integration of moral elements directly influence the implementation of moral education in courses. Firstly, teachers should systematically master and continuously update their professional theoretical knowledge, improve cultural and political literacy, and develop student-centered moral teaching activities and evaluation methods in conjunction with textbooks and course content. Secondly, teachers should keep up with the pace of the times, national policies, and social hot topics, continuously optimizing their knowledge structure. The improvement of moral teaching abilities can also be achieved through peer exchanges and guidance, such as observing excellent teachers' courses, participating in thematic seminars on moral education, and engaging in various teaching competitions related to it. Furthermore, it is crucial to build a systematic teaching team for moral education in English major courses. By seeking evaluations and suggestions from curricular moral education teachers or other subject teachers regarding the effectiveness of moral education in courses, the main teachers of the courses can gradually optimize the design of moral education through self-reflection and peer discussions, thereby realizing the systematic construction of moral education in English major courses.

On one hand, it is possible to invite moral education teachers to participate in and guide the implementation of moral education. As professionals in moral education, teachers have a solid theoretical foundation and rich teaching experience in moral education. They can provide constructive suggestions in areas such as formulating moral goals, secondary development of teaching materials,

exploration of moral elements in the curriculum, and design of teaching activities. On the other hand, the school can integrate teachers' strengths based on the courses they teach and their professional orientations, promote complementary division of labor in the moral education of English major courses. For example, establishing a shared platform for moral education resources across the entire college, arranging for teachers of similar courses to engage in concentrated research on educational teaching design and the construction of teaching platforms.

4.2 In-Class Stage: Emphasizing “Implicit Education” and focusing on “Student Development.”

The key to conducting moral education in English major courses is to subtly guide students. English major courses are different from moral courses. Due to the positioning of the courses, teaching content, and limited class hours, it is not feasible to extensively conduct moral education within professional courses. It is even more inappropriate to rigidly impose moral education. Instead, the moral and ethical elements should be organically integrated into the teaching of professional knowledge so as to inspire students, bringing behavioral and ideological changes. In classroom teaching activities, professional course instructors should “find the appropriate path to organically integrate moral and ethical elements, without undermining the knowledge system of the course or affecting its coherence, achieving a harmonious blend of imparting professional knowledge and shaping values” (Zhang, Sun, & Li, 2022). They should maximize the implicit educational advantages of English major courses and skillfully incorporate value guidance into language input and output activities, so that students unknowingly receive moral education while learning the language and applying knowledge.

Furthermore, under the background of moral education in English major courses, the content of classroom teaching, the online teaching platforms used for classroom interaction, teaching methods, and the selection of classroom activities should be in line with the learning situation and real-life experiences of English major students, focusing on student development. Firstly, the construction of moral education in the curriculum should adopt diversified teaching methods such as cooperative learning, thematic teaching, and comparative teaching, combining online and offline platforms according to the teaching content of different units. This approach maximizes students' participation in teaching and promotes their autonomy, ensuring that students engage in the learning of traditional cultural knowledge with a sound physical and mental state. It stimulates students' critical thinking and examination of moral and ethical materials, thereby achieving internalization of knowledge and value guidance. Secondly, for the class presentation evaluation questionnaires based on students' research,

the connection between the research questions and moral education content can be appropriately enhanced.

4.3 After-class Stage: Skillful Use of Teaching Evaluation, Emphasizing Learning Through Competitions.

The key to the construction of moral education in English major courses lies in how to organically integrate extracurricular moral education with classroom moral education, truly and silently instilling the spirit of excellent traditional culture and the core socialist values into students' hearts. In the teaching process, professional course teachers should combine teaching practice and teaching evaluation to comprehensively review the course content, appropriately adjust the integration points and specific methods of moral education elements, and further optimize teaching design.

The evaluation of the teaching effectiveness of moral education in the curriculum should involve students, main lecturers, instructors, and professional teachers of similar courses (or moral education teachers). Firstly, the main lecturers can require students to write mid-term and final course summaries and conduct sampling surveys or one-on-one interviews with students. By combining students' self-evaluation and course evaluation, analyze the changes in students' moral literacy before and after studying the course.

Secondly, after the completion of each unit and the entire course, the main lecturers should write teaching reflections based on students' performance in classroom teaching and extracurricular practice, with particular emphasis on summarizing the teaching design with good moral effects.

Thirdly, the main lecturers can invite instructors to record students' progress in moral cultivation and cultural confidence before and after studying the course based on students' daily life performance and communication with them.

Fourthly, the main lecturers can invite professional teachers of similar courses (or moral education teachers) to enter the classroom and evaluate the moral education effectiveness of the course based on classroom observations.

Also, the moral construction of English major courses should particularly emphasize learning through competitions. Taking the teaching practice of the course as an example, teachers can lead students to participate in cross-cultural competitions in groups, breaking through the limitations of teaching venues and classroom time. This helps English major students to experience the charm of culture from multiple perspectives and channels, stimulates their learning enthusiasm in classroom activities, and enhances their sense of responsibility in promoting the dissemination of Chinese excellent culture in cross-cultural communication.

In addition to cultural competitions, English teachers can also design extracurricular practical activities in conjunction with college student innovation and entrepreneurship projects, summer practice activities, and the China International “Internet+” University Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition. These activities allow the nurturing function of traditional and local cultures to permeate the process of students completing extracurricular practice assignments and project applications.

5. CONCLUSION

In the context of multiculturalism, carrying out moral education practices in the course of An Overview of Chinese Culture is an inevitable trend (Liu & Yao, 2023). This paper summarizes and reflects on the two rounds of moral teaching practice in the course from three dimensions: the curriculum preparation stage involving curriculum outline adjustments, secondary development of teaching materials, and the construction of educational resource corpora; the classroom teaching stage involving blended online and offline teaching, group cooperative learning, and the integration of local culture; and the consolidation stage after class involving learning through competitions, conducting extracurricular practices, and optimizing teaching evaluations.

The practice has shown that in order to comprehensively promote the moral construction of English major courses, it is necessary to establish a team for integrating ideology and politics into the curriculum and a platform for sharing moral education resources. It is also important to enhance teachers’ awareness and competence in moral education. By focusing on students, designing diverse teaching activities and extracurricular moral education activities, a seamless connection between professional talent cultivation and moral education can be achieved. Building on the evaluation of moral teaching effectiveness and learning through competitions, it is essential to urge professional course teachers to handle the relationship between teaching professional knowledge and moral education effectively.

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