



The Integration of Ideological and Political Elements into English Reading Course

MENG Yanzhi^{[a],*}

^[a] School of Foreign Languages, Xinxiang Medical University, Xinxiang, China.

* Corresponding author.

Received 2 December 2022; accepted 5 February 2023

Published online 26 February 2023

Abstract

Against the background of implementing ideological and political education, foreign language teachers should deeply explore the ideological and political elements such as excellent cultures, broad views on the world, positive outlook on life, correct values, and integrate them into language teaching. English reading course is a main platform for English majors to train their basic language skills. It involves not only the training of language skills, but also the guidance of students' correct learning methods, the improvement of critical thinking ability and the cultivation of their humanistic quality. This study expounds the necessity and feasibility of implementing ideological and political education in English Reading course. Taking the teaching design of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* as an example, this paper discusses the ways to integrate ideological and political elements into the course from the aspects of teaching content, teaching objectives, teaching process, teaching methods and teaching assessment, to achieve the goal of whole person education.

Key words: Ideological and political education; English reading course; *Silent Spring*

Meng, Y. Z. (2023). The Integration of Ideological and Political Elements into English Reading Course. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 26(1), 12-17. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/12915> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12915>

1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that the ideological and political work in colleges and universities is related to

the fundamental issue of what kind of talents colleges and universities cultivate, how to cultivate talents and for whom. We should adhere to building morality and cultivating people as the central part, let the ideological and political work run through the whole process of education and teaching, realize the goal of educating people from overall aspects, and strive to create a new situation in the development of higher education. As an integral part of humanistic education in higher education, foreign language courses in college and universities are both instrumental and humanistic (Wang, 2016). The core of humanism is people-oriented, carrying forward people's value, cultivating people's comprehensive quality and putting stress on people's all-round development. The humanity of foreign language courses provides inherent advantages for curriculum ideological and political education.

Foreign language is a special perspective for people to understand the outside world. It provides a new vision of the world. When learning a foreign language, students will inevitably be under the influence of all kinds of cultures, which will affect the development of students' culture, spirit and morality. Teachers should integrate ideological and political elements into foreign language teaching, so that students can better understand the diversity of world cultures, and genuinely become a bridge between different cultures. At present, with the rapid development of "We Media", students are vulnerable to various social ideological trends. It is expected that they have the habit of independent thinking, the ability of analysis and criticism and the courage to pursue truth, which highlights the importance of value guidance and the necessity of curriculum ideological and political education in foreign language teaching. Based on the above analysis, the present paper starts from the necessity and feasibility of implementing ideological and political education in the course of English Reading. Taking the teaching design of *Silent Spring* as an example, this paper explores some reasonable ways to integrate ideological and political

elements into English reading teaching, which involves the aspects of teaching content, teaching objectives, teaching process, teaching methods and teaching assessment. The author hopes this will be beneficial for cultivating students' patriotism, strengthening their feelings of family and country, and enhancing their cultural self-confidence to achieve the goal of whole person education.

The medical university where the author works is an independent undergraduate university of western medicine. The disciplines cover seven categories: medicine, science, engineering, literature, laws, management and education. The English major is set up to cultivate students with a solid foundation of English language knowledge, extensive knowledge of humanities, strong ability to use English language and certain basic knowledge of biomedicine. The students should be able to skillfully use English and professional knowledge in medicine. They will become English talents engaged in foreign affairs, oral and written language translation, English editing, teaching and scientific research in the fields of public health, medical information management, English education and international exchange. The cultivation of English majors can rely on the strong medical education background of medical university and highlight the distinctive feature of cultivating students' medical English ability. In foreign language teaching, infiltrating medical humanistic education through literary reading can effectively help students understand diseases and patients, enhance their empathy consciousness and intention of humanistic care, and improve students' medical humanistic quality.

2. THE NECESSITY AND FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN ENGLISH READING TEACHING

2.1 The Necessity

Nowadays quality education is highly stressed and higher education has put the quality requirements before the goals of professional knowledge and ability that foreign language majors should possess. Foreign language majors should have correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, good moral quality, patriotic spirit and international vision, sense of social responsibility, humanistic and scientific literacy, cooperative spirit, innovative spirit and basic discipline literacy. This requires that in the training of foreign language talents, teachers should guide students to treat diversified cultures objectively and dialectically, and cultivate foreign language talents with cultural self-confidence.

In the process of teaching, the author finds that through learning and training in middle school, college students

have laid a certain foundation of English language skills. However, students' language application ability is relatively poor. This is mainly reflected in the following aspects: medium-level listening and reading abilities; poor output in oral and writing, especially in oral expression, lacking fluency and accuracy; in English writing, the problems of logical thinking, language expressions and diction accuracy are quite prominent; students' thinking ability is poor; self-study ability and group cooperation ability need to be further improved. In addition, in the information age, college students have many ways to get access to all kinds of information, but they do not have a deep understanding of social problems, and their thoughts are easy to be biased, so they need to be guided correctly. Based on the above analysis, the implementation of ideological and political education into English reading teaching is quite necessary.

2.2 The Feasibility

The English reading course is a compulsory course for English majors in Colleges and universities. The major task of this course is to improve students' reading ability. In the undergraduate period, the key to language learning for students is to master basic language skills. English reading course is the main platform for English majors to carry out basic skills training in the basic stage. It not only involves the teaching of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, the cultivation of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation skills, but also includes the expansion of students' knowledge and the improvement of critical thinking ability, the guidance of correct learning methods and the cultivation of their humanistic quality.

As for the language objectives, this course aims to improve students' pronunciation, intonation and reading skills; revitalize students' vocabulary and grammar knowledge and make it a practical skill of language communication through a lot of practice. Besides, the reading course is also to improve students' ability to read and interpret materials from three aspects: understanding, appreciation and application. The course also makes it available for students to learn various language phenomena, understand various stylistic features, rhetorical devices, translation skills and writing methods, further consolidate the language foundation and improve their language communication ability. Students should be able to complete practical tasks in correct and appropriate language, and improve the logic of written and oral output and the appropriateness of language expression.

In addition to language objectives, the ideological and political education goals is also of great significance. Through the study of this course, students should fully understand different cultures, broaden their horizons and have cross-cultural awareness. They should cultivate the spirit of independent thinking, the ability of analysis and criticism, the attitude of seeking truth and the habit of innovative thinking. Meanwhile, the ability of improving

self-learning ability, group mutual assistance ability, information extraction and processing is also quite important. As English majors in medical university, they should be able to acquire medical humanistic knowledge and improve medical humanistic quality with language discourses as the carriers. From a macro perspective, students should have the ability to further understand the world, explore the world and better understand themselves; be able to establish a correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, strengthen cultural self-confidence, and become inter-disciplinary talents who not only have an international vision and patriotic feelings, but also can tell Chinese stories well.

Due to the humanity of foreign language courses, the teaching contents involve human and society, human and nature, human and legal system, etc. These ideological and political elements can be properly integrated into the teaching process. English reading course can take many teaching forms, such as debate, presentation, role-play, which also provides a good platform for the implementation of ideological and political education. To sum up, it is feasible to implement curriculum ideological and political education in English reading course.

3. WAYS TO INTEGRATE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION INTO ENGLISH READING COURSE

With the publication of Professor Wen Qiufang's series of papers in domestic and foreign journals, the output-oriented approach has attracted the attention of educators and scholars in the language teaching field. Production-oriented approach (hereinafter referred to as POA) is a localized foreign language teaching theory put forward by Chinese foreign language educators represented by Wen Qiufang. The theoretical basis of Wen's hypothesis draws on the research results in the field of second language acquisition, such as input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), output hypothesis (Swain, 1985), interaction hypothesis (Long, 1983) and social cultural perspective. POA advocates the close combination of input learning and output application, with organic linkage between them, no obvious time interval. The theory advocates the "learning-centered principle", and holds that the design of the teaching should serve the occurrence of effective learning, whether the teaching objectives for each class have been achieved, and students' learning result in the classroom is the focus of teaching. Another core concept of POA is "learning-using integrated principle". Wen Qiufang (2015) proposed that "learning" refers to "input", including listening and reading; "using" refers to "output", including speaking, writing, interpreting and translating. In order to avoid the disadvantages of the separation of learning and using, it is proposed to "use" while learning, "use" in learning, combining the two as a whole. Based

on the teaching concepts of POA, this study will explore the ways of integrating ideological and political elements into English reading course from the aspects of teaching content, teaching objectives, teaching process, teaching methods and teaching assessment.

3.1 Teaching Contents

The topics of English reading course are quite verified, including history, geography, culture, society, religion, economy, education and so on, which provides very rich materials for the implementation of ideological and political education. Teachers need to deeply explore the ideological and political elements in the teaching content, find the melting point between the two, cultivate students' humanistic quality, national and family feelings in language teaching, and enhance their cultural identity and cultural self-confidence. In this paper, the author takes the article *Silent Spring* as an example to illustrate the ways of integrating ideological and political education in English reading course.

The reading material *Silent Spring* is excerpted from Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*. Rachel Carson is an American writer who thinks rationally and recognizes the value of ecological problems and human survival issues. *Silent Spring* is considered as her classic masterpiece, which was published in 1962. The book reveals the indisputable fact that human abuse of pesticides leads to ecological disasters, expounds in detail the harms of pesticide DDT to the environment, and rings the alarm that human beings will be punished by nature for polluting and destroying the environment. This work has established her pioneer position in the research of contemporary ecological culture and the practice of ecological movement, and won her an international reputation. Since its publication, this book has directly led the American government, academia and social people to pay close attention to ecological issues, so that an ever fading wave of environmental awareness and ecological protection movement have been set off in the United States and even the whole world.

The excerpts in the textbook have distinct theme and clear structure. Using a variety of descriptive methods and rhetorical devices, Rachel Carson demonstrates the severe problems of environmental crisis caused by chemicals like DDT and writes an argumentation worthy of repeated analysis, deliberation and appreciation. In the teaching design, the author takes the theme of ecology problems reflected in the text as the starting point and main line to carry out various classroom activities. Meanwhile, she integrates the ideological and political content related to this theme in order to achieve the best teaching effect of the organic integration of language learning and the ideological and political education.

To be more specific, *Silent spring* is a classic and popular science article with the theme of ecological crisis. So the teaching activities are carried out from two

aspects: the unique stylistic characteristics of the text (large amount of information, strong logic, prominent characteristics of causal analysis; vivid, poetic and lyrical language) and the theme (popularizing ecological knowledge, awakening people's ecological consciousness and calling for ecological protection).

The focus of classroom teaching includes discourse level: key vocabulary and expression, paragraph and text structure, writing skills and stylistic features, etc.; and theme exploration level: the author's ecological thought and its influence, etc. Among them, discourse analysis is closely combined with rich supplementary materials for students to read after class as a means to comprehensively enhance students' basic language skills. The exploration of the theme of the text is conducted in the form of classroom group discussion and extracurricular extended reading. Based on carefully studying the text, each study group will have an in-depth discussion on the given topic "environment and disease", carry out some researches, write a report, and share it with their classmates in class. This fully exercises the students' comprehensive ability of reading, speaking, writing, thinking and doing research. More importantly, by group discussion and reading extensive extracurricular materials, students can deepen their understanding of the theme of the text. Meanwhile, by integrating China's status quo, students will understand the current situation of China's ecological status, consciously and voluntarily form the awareness of ecological protection, and clarify their responsibilities and obligations in solving ecological problems to realize the dual effects of students' language learning and quality cultivating.

In a word, the reading material has a clear theme, which involves environmental protection issues. This theme is highly consistent with the current "building a beautiful China" and "building a community with a shared future for mankind". Besides, environmental problems are closely related to medical knowledge, especially diseases caused by environmental problems. Students can apply their medical knowledge to practical language communication activities, highlight professional characteristics and improve language communication ability. Through the study of the text and related materials, students can not only improve their language ability, but also enhance their awareness of environmental protection and cultivate their high sense of responsibility.

3.2 Teaching Objectives

Teaching objective is both the starting point and the terminal point of teaching activities. All teaching activities should focus on teaching objectives. The teaching objectives of English reading course involve not only the language knowledge and competence, but also the emotional aspect. As for the reading material *Silent Spring*, the learning contents mainly include language learning, background knowledge, text appreciation and

so on. Language learning includes vocabulary, grammar and language points; background knowledge includes information about the author, her works and their significance, use and harms of DDT and other pesticides; text appreciation includes the structure of the article, the theme of the work, stylistic features and writing methods.

Through the learning of this reading material, students will first receive certain training in language. They should master key vocabulary and expressions, especially relevant words concerning environment and disease; get to know some new language phenomena, and be able to apply what they have learned into practice. As for text appreciation, they should understand the structure and general idea of the article, and be able to infer the author's position and attitude; understand the characteristics of popular scientific articles on environmental protection and the writing mode of expository articles. To improve their writing ability, students can learn how to write expository articles by using comparison-comparison, causal analysis, examples and other explanatory devices; learn writing techniques such as contrast, alliteration, rhetorical questions, parallelism and metaphor.

In terms of ideology and political education, students should understand Rachel Carson's ecological ideas and the influence and practical significance of her works. The author's rigorous academic attitude, determination and perseverance to seek the truth are really worth learning. After learning this article, students should enhance their awareness of environmental protection; clarify the urgency of ecological and environmental protection and the necessity of building a community with a shared future for human being. They should pay attention to the relationship between environmental problems and diseases, explore solutions to problems, and improve their medical humanistic quality. Through autonomous learning and group cooperation activities, they would improve the ability of independent thinking and problem solving, and enhance the awareness of teamwork.

3.3 Teaching Process

The teaching process involves the design of various teaching activities, which requires the selection of appropriate teaching theories and ideas according to the learning situation. The teaching design of *Silent Spring* is based on the "production-oriented approach" proposed by Chinese professor Wen Qiufang. This approach requires teachers to set the genuine language communication scenario and design specific output tasks for students to complete step by step. Following the teaching process of "motivating-enabling-assessing", this approach advocates to encourage students to carry out selective learning in the way of combining learning with application, and conduct immediate and delayed assessments on students' output. While improving students' language ability, it also aims to cultivate students' overall abilities such as investigation and research, seriousness, responsibility and so on.

The teaching design is to stimulate students' interest by setting the output tasks based on the real language communication scene, encourage students to carry out investigation and research on environmental problems, consult relevant literature, and write investigation reports in combination with the basic medical knowledge they have learned. The teacher selects typical samples of the first draft of the student report. Students are guided to find the problems in the samples, try to explain and learn to use the relevant language points by means of student-student mutual assessment and teacher-student cooperation assessment. Students are required to revise and polish the sample according to the language points explained by teachers so that they can finally achieve high-quality output. Specifically, the teaching process includes three aspects: motivating, enabling and assessing.

Such a teaching design can fully exercise students' language application ability, and maximize students' potential, improve their logical thinking ability, and realize the unity of humanism and instrumentality. In addition, students are required to complete the output tasks in groups. In the process of data access, investigation and research, students not only improve the ability of literature search and accessing, but also improve their ability of teamwork.

3.4 Teaching Methods

The traditional English teaching method is teacher-centered, mainly explaining words and grammars, and students just listen to the teacher passively. Now teachers can adopt diversified teaching methods to fully mobilize students' initiative to learn. English reading course adopts online-offline mixed teaching mode to realize real-time online discussion and flipped class. Students need to use online resources to complete learning tasks such as preview before class, consolidation after class, submission and assessment of homework. Online teaching realizes students' autonomous inquiry learning through autonomous learning, online discussion, presentation and sharing. Offline teaching is carried out through group activities, classroom display, teachers' feedback and so on. Teachers will use some modern teaching technologies to assist their teaching. Students should make courseware for classroom presentation and recording videos. All these require teachers and students to keep up with the pace of technological development and establish the concept of lifelong learning, which also reflects the integration of ideological and political education into language learning and teaching.

3.5 Teaching Assessment

The teaching assessment for the students' learning is multiple assessment, combining qualitative assessment and quantitative assessment forms, individual self-assessment, inter group mutual assessment and teacher's final assessment. At the same time, it uses the homework

testing function in the online apps to realize quantitative assessment, stimulate students' participation and learning enthusiasm, and comprehensively, objectively and effectively evaluate students' learning process and effectiveness. The specific assessment method is that students and teachers vote by filling in the online questionnaire to select the best research report and the best oral presentation group. The standards for the research report include that whether the articles in the students' investigation report have a clear theme; whether it embodies the relevant ecological thoughts; whether the logic is reasonable and clear; whether the argument is persuasive; whether the writing methods such as causal analysis are properly used. The standards for the oral presentation include whether the oral presentation includes an introduction to the efforts made by the mentioned person and its influence; whether the expression is authentic; whether the pronunciation is accurate.

The teaching assessment presented above integrates formative assessment and summative assessment methods, reflecting the basic idea of "focusing on students' learning process". It adopts the method of dynamic assessment, ensure that teachers in each teaching period give immediate feedback to students' performance, timely reflection on their teaching, correspondingly adjust teaching activities, and reflect the teaching philosophies of "promoting teaching through assessment" and "promoting learning through assessment". Students' online learning can be evaluated by using the functions of homework, examination, discussion in the online apps. This visual quantitative assessment can evaluate students' learning process and effect comprehensively, objectively and effectively. In offline classes, teachers give timely feedback on students' assessment and reflect on their classroom teaching mainly through classroom questioning and classroom observation. Summative assessment is mainly conducted through tests, which is also a quantitative assessment of students' learning effectiveness. In addition, diversified assessment forms are adopted. After students complete the output tasks in groups, they evaluate the report by means of typical samples of group members' self-assessment, mutual assessment between groups and teacher-student cooperative assessment, find problems and put forward suggestions to solve the problems. Students would revise the report and finally achieve high-quality output.

4. CONCLUSION

The teaching design of English reading course is in line with the original intention of ideological and political education—to fully integrate language teaching and education, and reflects the design concept—to improve students' language and cultural understanding ability, aesthetic appreciation and analysis ability and

comprehensive language application ability through reading. In addition, combined with the current situation and countermeasures of the ecological environment problems in the world nowadays, it integrates the ideological and political contents suitable for the theme, which is an example of the full integration of ideological and political education and reading teaching, and has achieved good teaching results in teaching practice.

REFERENCES

- Ding, Y., & Kong, X. G. (2016). The infiltration of medical humanism in literary reading-taking Russel Baker's *In My Day* as an example. *Continuing Medical Education*, 30(4), 95-97.
- Higher Education Committee of Ministry of Education. (2018). *National standard for teaching quality of undergraduate majors in colleges and universities*. Higher Education Press.
- Huang, H. Y. (2018). An experiment on the application of production-oriented approach to intensive reading course. *Journal of Jiaying University (Philosophy & Social Sciences)*, 36(1), 94-97.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman.
- Long, M. (1983). Native speaker/non-native speaker conversation and the negotiation of comprehensible input. *Applied Linguistics*, 4, 126-141.
- Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. *Principles and Practice in Applied Linguistics: Studies in Honor of H. G. Widdowson*, 125-144.
- Tang, L., & Zhu, Y. Q. (2020). On the connotation and practical path of "curriculum ideological and political" education for English Majors. *Survey of Education*, 9(21), 22-24.
- Wang, S. R. (2016). Interpretation on the key points of Guidelines on College English Teaching. *Foreign Language World*, 3, 1-10.
- Wen, Q. F. (2016). "Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment"—a new assessment established by "Production-oriented Approach". *Foreign Language World*, 5, 37-43.
- Wen, Q. F. (2015). Constructing theoretical system for "Production-oriented Approach". *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 47(4), 547-558.
- Wu, Y. (2021). From humanistic quality to cultural confidence: Integration of ideological and political education into integrated English course. *Journal of Suzhou Education Institute*, 24(6), 55-58.
- Yang, L. M. (2020). *Contemporary college English*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Zhou, H. H. (2016). Yearning for poetic dwelling—Ecological cultural thoughts in silent spring. *Tangdu Journal*, 32(2), 56-60.