Research on the Strategies for Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into "Advanced English" Course in a Blended Teaching Model

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language classrooms in colleges and universities are important positions for curriculum education. In this study, the integration of ideological and political education into the curriculum education in a blended teaching model was explored taking the course of "Advanced English" as an example. Based on case analysis, the teaching of English subject knowledge and the value guidance of cultivating moral people were integrated organically by creating an immersive and panoramic English learning environment throughout online MOOCs, offline task-based teaching, extracurricular project-based learning, and mobile-end learning, realizing the objective of curriculum education.

Keywords: Blended teaching model, Curriculum-based ideological and political education, Advanced English.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China regarded "cultivating people with moral integrity" as the fundamental task of education, pointing out the direction for China's education in the new era, and also putting forward new requirements for the cultivation of talents in English majors in colleges and universities. At the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities held in 2016, Xi Jinping stated that "we should make use of classroom teaching to enhance the improvement of ideological and political theory courses and the affinity and pertinence of ideological and political education, as well as meet the growth and development needs of students. Other courses should match the ideological and political theory courses while seeking specialization, creating a cooperative effect." [1] In May 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guidelines for the Ideological and Political Construction of Higher Education Curriculum", emphasizing the need to integrate ideological and political education throughout the talent cultivation system, comprehensively promote the ideological and political construction of higher education curriculum, and give full play to the educational role of each course, improving the talent cultivation quality in colleges and universities. [2]

"Advanced English" is a core course for senior English majors. The text content includes the works of British and American famous writers covering Western politics, economy, society, languages, literature, education, philosophy, religions and natural sciences, etc., which can expand students' knowledge, cultivate students' ability to analyze and understand famous British and American works, deepen students' understanding of society and life, and enhance students' sensitivity to cultural differences. Since this course text mainly involves Western culture and less mentions the China-related content, teachers of this course need to dig deeper into it to seek combining the knowledge teaching with ideological and political education and transforming the course resources into educational resources, guiding students to form correct values and enhanced ideologies. [3] Blended teaching is an important form of English teaching at present that mainly combines "online and offline" models. Based on this teaching model, a diversified course teaching system can be

established to meet the different learning needs of students. [4] In this context, how to incorporate ideological and political education into the blended teaching model to enhance students' national pride and patriotism and integrate China's excellent traditional culture into practical work has become an important part of the current teaching reform on the "Advanced English" course. [5]

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was carried out on the English major course of "Advanced English" offered by an application-oriented undergraduate university in Shaanxi Province. The course was taught in an online and offline blended model, aiming to provide an immersive and panoramic English learning environment, and enhance students' learning participation and autonomy under the guidance of teachers, realizing the teaching goals of this course. [6] The participants of this survey were junior students majoring in English. Sojump was used for questionnaire distribution and data analysis. The questionnaires were distributed twice, 200 copies in total. Finally, 191 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective rate of 95.5%. At the beginning of the new semester, teachers introduced the course, letting students understand the basic situation and specific implementation details of the course and ideological and political education blended teaching model, and distributed a "Questionnaire on the Current Situation of the Implementation of Course-based Ideological and Political Education". The questionnaire was designed from several aspects: whether students understand the basic concepts of course-based ideological and political education, whether teachers have provided course-based ideological and political education in the teaching process in early stage of the course teaching, how to implement it, what the effect is, and how teachers are expected to improve. After finishing a two-semester course study, teachers distributed the "Questionnaire on Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into the "Advanced English" Course in A Blended Teaching Model" to survey and understand students' views and cognition on this integration. By comparing the entrance test scores and the second-semester final test scores, teachers can know about the impact of this teaching model on students' academic performance and understand whether ideological and political education and language learning can complement each other.

3. INTEGRATING IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL ELEMENTS INTO THE "ADVANCED ENGLISH" COURSE IN A BLENDED TEACHING MODEL

The ideological and political blended teaching mode of Advanced English constructed by this research integrates various online and offline teaching forms to create an immersive and panoramic English learning environment for students, in order to realize the organic integration of ideological and political education and English teaching, and help students learn to tell Chinese stories well with the spirit of family and country, care and self-innovation.

3.1 Design of the Blended Teaching Model

The teaching was divided into parts: resource construction, pre-class import (online), classroom teaching (offline), and post-class assessment (online + offline). Before the start of the school year, teachers set up virtual classes through Xuexitong and uploaded syllabuses, teaching calendars, as well as English writing examples and MOOC videos containing ideological and political elements.

Before class, teachers sent the videos of "Advanced English" MOOC and other MOOCs on the Xuetang Online, as well as the English model essays, videos, political news and other learning materials containing ideological and political elements to the study announcement through Xuexitong, so that students could preview the teaching content in the videos, prepare classroom presentations, and read the model essays. The MOOC platform could automatically record students' learning time, learning progress and academic performance. Students were required to write a learning reflection log weekly, which would be shared regularly in the classroom by groups. In classroom teaching, teachers first asked students to share the video knowledge in groups and make brief reports. Based on students' reports and learning data on the Xuetang online platform, teachers focused on explaining the difficult problems encountered by students during their preview, and helping students learn in depth the cultural knowledge and stylistic features that appeared in the text. Then, teachers and students appreciated articles containing ideological and political elements together; followed by, students discussed in groups the language features, article

layout, writing skills, and the ideological inspiration they had received. Finally, teachers arranged students to evaluate their specific homework or share their reflection logs in their groups, allowing them to help their peers find problems and provide modification suggestions. The purpose was to cultivate students' ability to analyze and solve problems from different perspectives, and improve their critical thinking skills and team-work ability. After class, teachers sent a quiz containing writing knowledge and ideological and political knowledge and assigned essay topics and reflection log tasks through Xuexitong for students to submit their homework. Teachers could timely know students' mastery of classroom knowledge, learning attitudes and opinions through students' answers and homework. Any wrong view or non-compliance essay of students would be corrected by teachers in time. Group members could comment on and score each other's essays and reflection logs online; teachers were also required to comment on and score students' reflection logs. During classroom teaching, teachers would comment on outstanding assignments and the assignments with typical problems in the classroom. These diversified comments integrated ideological and political education, helping students to form correct values.

3.2 The Strategy and Practice of Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into the "Advanced English" Course

Starting from practice, the author takes the text of advanced English course as an example to analyze how to integrate ideological and political elements into Advanced English course.

3.2.1 Improving the Ideological and Political Education Awareness of Teachers

Teachers were required to integrate ideological and political education in a subtle way in the process of imparting professional knowledge. [7] To achieve this goal, all teachers of Advanced English were required to enhance their awareness of ideological and political education. First, the teachers should enrich relevant theoretical knowledge and understand the current international situation and the latest domestic policies; second, school-level lectures or demonstration courses could be organized to share relevant teaching

knowledge and skills, providing teachers with opportunities to learn from expert colleagues about how to conduct ideological and political education. In short, only when teachers realized the importance of ideological and political education in the curriculum would they be motivated to innovate in the teaching content and teaching model.

3.2.2 Looking for Ideological and Political Elements from Selected Teaching Content

The "Advanced English" course has two textbooks with a total of 30 texts. Due to the limitation in teaching hours, the teachers of "Advanced English" selected 12 texts for classroom teaching and ensured that ideological and political education can be naturally integrated into each class. Among the selected texts, the following texts were selected from "Advanced English 1": "Face to Face with Hurricane Camille" describes the heroic struggle of the Koshaks and their friends against the forces of a devastating hurricane. By extending the text content, students were encouraged to share news about the Chinese people's fight against the COVID-19 outbreak to build their cultural confidence and strong sense of national pride. "Blackmail" is about the Duke and Duchess trying to bribe a hotel inspector after a hit-and-run. By reading this story, students were guided to discuss appropriate responses after breaking the law and the social responsibilities of citizens. "Mark Twain - Mirror of America (Excerpts)" shows a panoramic view of American society in Mark Twain's era, and analyzes the impact of the social environment at that time on Mark Twain's literary creation. During the teaching of this text, students were required to critically analyze the progress and problems of American society in the 19th century. "Speech on Hitler's Invasion of the U.S.S.R." is a political speech that strongly condemned Hitler's fascism. Today, hegemonic politics still exist in the world. By sharing relevant news, students were guided to discuss social justice and humanistic spirit.

The following texts were selected from "Advanced English 2": "Pub Talk and the King's English" attempts to illustrate the art of conversation through casual bar conversations. Since the significance of bars to British people are just like that of teahouses to Chinese people. Bar culture and teahouse culture were compared to guide students to understand and spread Chinese culture in English. "Marrakech" shows the suffering of colonial people through different scenes. The

suppression of Marrakech would inevitably remind the Chinese people of the humiliation in China's national history, a history of China falling into a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society. Through historical review, students' national consciousness and determination to achieve national rejuvenation could be greatly aroused. "Love is a Fallacy" tells a humorous love story. By appreciating this love story, students were encouraged to share their views on love and guided to establish a healthy love mentality. "The Sad Young Man" focuses on young American intellectuals who feel alienated, disillusioned and lost after returning from the battlefields of World War I. Based on the life experiences of sad young people, students could discuss the impact of war on people's lives and mentality, thereby helping students establish a correct world view, outlook on life and values.

3.2.3 Innovative Teaching Methods and Course Evaluation

The "Advanced English" course was taught in an "online + offline" blended teaching model. Namely, the language knowledge points were taught through online MOOCs, while classroom teaching focused on explaining difficult points and carrying out ideological and political education and cultural comparison through discussions and speeches. After class, course assessment was conducted through online or offline discussion, speeches, debates and other methods. Various activities or competitions such as debate contests, speech contests, writing contests and translation contests were arranged to attract students' attention to the excellent traditional Chinese culture, enhance their ability to spread Chinese culture in English, and cultivate their critical thinking and correct values.

Taking "Marrakech" in "Advanced English 2" as an example, teachers could introduce that this text was written by the British Nobel Prize winner George Orwell, and by describing the lives of the people in Marrakech, a city in Morocco, Africa under the rule of French colonialism in the 18th century, this text expresses that the author condemns the evil deeds of colonialism and sympathizes with the colonial people. While analyzing the vivid pictures of the evil deeds of colonialism presented by the writer to highlight the theme, teachers could compare to the evil deeds of colonialism suffered by China to arouse students' patriotism and national self-esteem. Teachers could also compare the past and the present and introduce

the growing prosperity of today's China who has gradually achieved national prosperity and national rejuvenation, huge support and assistance to Africa, and profound friendship with the African people, and established a "human community with a shared future" through "The Belt and Road" Initiative.

The theory classroom was mainly used for carrying out text analysis and classroom activities. When appreciating the content of a paragraph, teachers could treat the high-level rhetorical technique of conceptual metaphor as the main line, helping students to identify, understand, and appreciate the conceptual metaphor in this paragraph, and use thematic corpus to look for conceptual metaphorical expressions in important speeches of China's national leader on the "The Belt and Road" Initiative. Through this activity, students could understand the major events of the China and build enhanced confidence in the socialist system; during the explanation of writing methods, students could be required to discuss in groups, summarize from examples, and conduct group discussions on the impact of "The Belt and Road" Initiative on countries along the route, enumerate examples to support their points of view, and find conceptual metaphor expressions related to it in the corpus. Through this activity, students could learn to tell Chinese stories and spread the voice of China by using specific examples. The practice classroom was to arrange the students to interview already employed graduates and senior students who are interns, especially graduates engaged in foreign trade business to know about their experiences of "The Belt and Road" Initiative.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through the summary and analysis of the valid data of the two questionnaires, the results of the admission test and the final test of the second semester are compared, and the research results and analysis are as follows:

4.1 Students' Basic Understanding of the Course-based Ideological and Political Education Before the Course Teaching Began

The results of the first questionnaire survey showed that most students did not have a deep understanding of the course-based ideological and political education. Only 10 participants (accounting for 5.4%) chose "understand a lot"; 123 participants (accounting for 65.5%) chose

"understand generally". Regarding the question of whether it is necessary for teachers to carry out ideological and political education in the course teaching, 168 participants (accounting for 92.31%) chose "necessary". In summary, the vast majority of participants believed that it was necessary for the English teachers to provide ideological and political education in the classroom and had a strong desire for this part of education. However, their understanding of the course-based ideological and political education needs to be improved and strengthened. The survey results also show that students had a comprehensive understanding of the importance of the "Advanced English" course, affirming the significance of "Advanced English" in leading them shape correct views. For example, 140 participants (accounting for 75.1%), reckoned that texts should be used as a carrier to cultivate their critical thinking skills and shape correct outlooks on life, values and world; 27 participants (accounting for 14.2%) deemed that they should master the basic knowledge such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. Regarding the impact of the "Advanced English" course-based ideological and political education on personal outlooks on life, values and world, 38 participants (accounting for 21.2%) thought that the impact was great; 136 participants (accounting for 73.3%) thought that it had a certain impact. To sum up, the vast majority of the participants had recognized the importance of the "Advanced English" course-based ideological and political education except that several students had incomplete cognition of it. Teachers urgently need to improve the talent cultivation effect through course-based ideological and political education.

4.2 The Practical Status of Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into the "Advanced English" Course in A Blended Teaching Model

After two semesters of learning of "Advanced English" course integrated with ideological and political elements under the blended teaching model, the results of the second questionnaire showed that students generally had a positive attitude towards this integrated teaching model, as revealed in the results of the second questionnaire survey. The test results also demonstrate that this teaching model helped to improve teaching effect and students' academic performance. The detailed questionnaire survey results about the blended teaching model of course-based ideological and political education are exhibited below: From the

perspective of students' understanding of this blended teaching model, 73% of students affirmed that the blended teaching was a teaching model that integrates online and offline machines and complements each other; 23.2% of students regarded that the blended teaching was an intersected implementation of online independent learning and offline classroom teaching; regarding students' understanding of the "Advanced English" course-based ideological and political education, 83% of students believed that this blended teaching model was an organic integration of English teaching and ideological and political education. From the perspective of students' learning motivation under this blended teaching model, most students strongly agreed with the effect of this teaching model on mobilizing their learning motivation. 95.2% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the diverse types and rich content of learning activities provided on online MOOCs and Xuexitong APP, and 89.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the linkage of online independent learning, offline task-based teaching, extracurricular project-based learning, and mobile-end learning that provided them with an immersive learning environment and was conducive for them to applying what they had learned and improving the learning results. As Judged from students' learning participation in this blended teaching model, most students (65.6%) were adaptable to this teaching model and participated in various online and after-class learning activities. 81% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their learning participation under this teaching model and expressed that they would continue to pay attention to and participate in the subsequent teaching in this model if arranged. As presented in students' learning effectiveness under this blended teaching model, the vast majority of students (96.3%) mentioned that they felt and recognized the ideological and political elements (such as the traditional Chinese virtues, the core values of Chinese socialism, General Secretary Xi Jinping's message, etc.) incorporated in the teaching process. Core values, , etc.); 68.4% of students said that the integration of ideological and political elements into course teaching was conducive to their in-depth understanding of the theme of the units in the book; 71.7% of students noted that this integration had a positive impact; 81.3 % of students said that the implementation of ideological and political education in English teaching helped to improve the learning effect of English courses; 72.7% of students believed that compared with traditional offline classroom teaching, this blended learning

model was more effective. As displayed in students' satisfaction with this blended teaching model, the majority of students (87.3%) affirmed the talent education effect of the "Advanced English" course-based ideological and political education; 95.1% of students agreed that this teaching model could guide them to become someone with ideals and aspirations; 90.8% of students agreed that this teaching model could guide them to become someone contributing to the country and society; 89.1% of students deemed that this teaching model could guide them shape correct moral outlook; 79.3% of students believed that this teaching model could guide them to become someone carrying forward the traditional Chinese culture; 73.2% of students deemed that this teaching model could guide them spread positive energy; and 68.2% of students deemed that this teaching model could guide them cultivate scientific dialectical thinking.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, a blended teaching model of integrating ideological and political elements into "Advanced English" course teaching was proposed. Over a two-year follow-up study, we explored students' understanding and cognition of this teaching model, as well as the impact of this teaching model on their academic performance. The research results affirmed the implementation effect of this blended teaching model. Specifically, the blended teaching model of "Advanced English" course-based ideological and political education created a positive, immersive, and panoramic English learning environment and combined the advantages of online independent learning, offline task-based teaching, extracurricular project-based learning, and mobile-end learning, helping students to learn independently, mobilize their inner driving force for learning, and also helping to achieve an organic integration of knowledge transfer, ability cultivation, and ideological and political education.

The blended teaching model constructed by in this study is an effective exploration of integrating professional knowledge teaching with moral character cultivation in a combined model of online learning and offline teaching, and has played a positive role in the practice of foreign language education. It should be noted that this blended teaching model does not separate online learning from offline teaching, but combines the integrated and fragmented ways of teaching to create a panoramic learning environment. Therefore, teachers need to follow up and make rational

comments throughout the process while cultivating students' learning independence to master the learning progress. Similarly, professional knowledge and educational concepts cannot be pieced together rigidly. Teachers should silently implement ideological and political education in all aspects of teaching design without increasing burden on students.

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