

An Empirical Study on the Impact of English Proficiency on the Cognition of Foreign Language Curriculum Ideology and Politics Taking Minjiang University as an Example

Qingying Lin¹

¹ College of Foreign Languages, Minjiang University, Fuzhou, Fujian, China

ABSTRACT

1130 non-English majors from Minjiang University in Fuzhou were examined as subjects in this study so as to explore the impact of English proficiency on the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. Results show that: the overall cognitive state of curriculum ideology and politics in college English teaching is favorable; students' English proficiency largely exerts a significant effect on their foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. These findings cast practical light on our college English instruction.

Keywords: Curriculum ideology and politics, English proficiency, Non-English majors, Cognition.

1. INTRODUCTION

In order to implement the fundamental task of "Building Morality and Cultivating People", it is natural that ideological and political education has become the top priority. And since 2020, the construction of "curriculum ideology and politics" has been formally incorporated into the "National Guidelines of Higher Education" [1], for it is the key to cultivating morality and talents, and to fostering builders and successors of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Meanwhile, college English works as an important basic compulsory course in colleges and universities; with many class hours and a long learning time span, excavating the ideological and political education function of such a course can imperceptibly lead students to form a correct view of life, world view and value in a long time, so as to ensure the smooth completion of the training objectives of higher education [2]. Hence the integration of curriculum ideology and politics into foreign language teaching is the most popular research topic.

Today's college English curriculum ideology and politics does not just lie in knowledge imparting, but in promoting the integration of knowledge system education and ideological and

political education while teaching foreign language knowledge and skills, in order to fully realize the organic combination of college English teaching and curriculum ideological and political education, and improve students' ideological and political literacy in rich foreign language teaching. In this sense, as the object of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics, students' cognition is also an essential factor to be considered in the construction of ideology and politics of foreign language curriculum. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the relationship between college students' English proficiency and their cognition of college English curriculum ideology and politics for the sake of complementing and perfecting the relevant research in foreign language curriculum ideology and politics.

2. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Though there is no complete theoretical system of curriculum ideology and politics abroad, it is ubiquitous in higher education. Ethical education is even deemed as the latest and greatest level in accomplished education [3]. Thereby it can be seen that curriculum ideology and politics plays a vital part in foreign education. From multiple perspectives, the types, contents and stages of civic

moral education in a democratic society have been elaborated in some research, which covers general values, respect for human rights and freedom, personal duties and obligations and patriotism education and so on. Grounded on data analysis, a conclusion is reached that it is necessary for modern schools to realize moral education through the activities and contents of the whole education work and through that of teaching disciplines [4]. That is, higher education abroad attaches great importance to the cultivation of students' values, and actively explores some methods and techniques to promote moral education for teaching. Taking into account the shortcomings of school moral education, a study found that the use of value clarification techniques can promote the implementation of moral education in class, mobilize the initiative of teachers and students [5].

Curriculum ideology and politics in English teaching denotes English teachers following the national education policy and training objectives, taking English class as the carrier, fully tapping the moral factors contained in English subject content, and adopting appropriate strategies and methods to implement the goal of moral education in English teaching so that the unity of knowledge and morality, teaching and learning, imparting knowledge and cultivating people can be achieved [6]. Based on the current situation of college English curriculum ideology and politics in most Chinese universities, some scholars have deeply analyzed its existing problems and reasons, which are mainly manifested in the following aspects: the absence of ideological and political awareness of college English teachers; the small proportion of ideological and political content in college English textbooks; teachers and students paying too much attention to professional knowledge in and out of classroom[7]. Generally speaking, the main problems of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics are the lack of ideological and political elements in college English curriculum and the weakening of ideological and political functions.

At the same time, some studies have gone deep into the specific implementation plan of college English curriculum ideology and politics. With regard to the infiltration of ideology and politics in English listening, reading, oral expression and written expression training, teachers are suggested to consciously add relevant ideological and political elements from listening, speaking, reading and writing[8]. It thus can be noticed that the practice of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics

in China has been constantly enriched and improved from the macro level to the micro level.

Although a considerable number of scholars have realized the importance of the construction of college English curriculum ideology and politics and have made corresponding efforts to promote the practice, most of the extant research focuses on teachers, teachers' exploration and utilization of ideological and political resources in college English instruction, teachers' own improvement of ideological and political literacy and sense of responsibility, the optimization of curriculum content and the reform of teaching methods. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to students, the core of college English curriculum ideology and politics. What's more, students' English proficiency, as the assessment outcome of college English instruction, is also related to the effectiveness of the curriculum to a certain extent. With respect to the above-mentioned, this paper attempts to inspect whether English proficiency exerts an impact on the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is dedicated to holding an inquiry into the current state of cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics in terms of freshmen and sophomores in Minjiang University, and to further dissect its merits and demerits. The survey aims to answer the following six questions: (1) How is the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for students in Newhuadu Business School? (2) How is the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for Level-A students? (3) How is the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for Level-B students? (4) Are there any differences in the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for students of Newhuadu Business School, Level A and Level B? (5) Does CET-4 score influence the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics? (6) Does CET-6 score influence the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics?

This questionnaire constitutes three sections: The first section is about subjects' information, including gender, grade, source of students, major, class, the CET-4 written score, and the CET-6 written score. On the basis of Zhang's research[9], the second section is the curriculum ideology and politics in college English teaching, which is

further divided into four parts with 14 question in total: Part A (6 questions) (Teaching Principle and Aim); Part B (4 questions) (Teaching Process); Part C (3 questions) (Teaching Content); Part D (1 question) (Teaching Effect), which shows the present situation of students' cognition of curriculum ideology and politics in college English teaching. Among these 14 questions, the scores are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree), indicating the level of which choice is appropriate in depicting students' feeling of curriculum ideology and politics in college English instruction. Students can combine personal circumstances to make a choice on how much curriculum ideology and politics they accept in the course of the English teaching process. The third section is a subjective question about students' views or advice on curriculum ideology and politics in college English teaching.

In this study, 1130 non-English majors from Minjiang University served as subjects who were divided into different English levels according to their scores of the unified English examination. Each level of students has different English teachers. On account of the different English levels of the students, they receive different English teachers' curriculum ideology and politics in college English learning, which guarantees the authenticity and validity of this study to a large extent. The questionnaire was issued online so as to collect the data of curriculum ideology and politics in college English instruction as much as possible. To make sure the validity of the questionnaire results, the survey was conducted in an anonymous form and the students were required to complete the questionnaires independently. The researcher sent out questionnaires online, filling out a total of 1130 questionnaires, eliminating 17 invalid questionnaires, and the number of valid questionnaires was 1113.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSES

All these collected data were first categorized and then processed with SPSS21.0, and further presented in terms of status quo of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for students with different English levels. Also the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for students with different levels will be compared. Lastly, the impact of CET-4 and CET-6 score on the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics will be demonstrated as follows.

4.1 The Current State of Cognition of Foreign Language Curriculum Ideology and Politics for Students in Newhuadu Business School

According to the statistical data, the average of the four variables in English instruction ranges from 3.6036 to 3.9270 for students from Newhuadu Business School (N=193). Among them, the numerical value of Part D (teaching effect) is the highest (M=3.9270, SD=.8554), which implies that foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for these students obtains favorable effect. Nevertheless, the lowest average is Part C (teaching content) (M=3.6036, SD=.7724), signifying learning materials combined with curriculum ideology and politics are still insufficient in college English teaching. Also, Part A (teaching principle and aim) (M=3.8168, SD=.6179) indicates that these students have a relatively clear understanding of teaching principle and goal of the foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. Besides, the score of Part B (teaching process) (M=3.8377, SD=.7315) reveals that English teachers have made some efforts in promoting ideology and politics education, which will further facilitate the development of students' ideological and moral quality. Moreover, the standard deviations of the four parts are less than 1, showing that students' opinions on these issues are basically consistent.

4.2 The Current State of Cognition of Foreign Language Curriculum Ideology and Politics for Level-A Students

In light of the figures, it can be disclosed that the average value of four variables is between 3.5605 and 3.8700 for Level-A students (N=413), in which the score of Part D (teaching effect) is the highest (M=3.8700, SD=.9384). This means the effect of college English curriculum ideology and politics for these students is relatively fine. Yet the lowest value is Part C (teaching content) (M=3.5605, SD=.7963), denoting teachers need to improve the awareness of combining English teaching with ideological and political education materials in practical class. And Part B (teaching process) (M=3.7711, SD=.7422) shows Level-A students have realized the necessity of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics and have accepted some help in ideology and politics involved in English instruction. Also, Part A (teaching principle and aim) (M=3.6797, SD=.6871)

implies students are relatively familiar with teaching objective and principle of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics and have attached some importance to foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. Furthermore, the standard deviations of the four parts display that most students agree on the above options.

4.3 The Current State of Cognition of Foreign Language Curriculum Ideology and Politics for Level-B Students

The four variables range from 3.3925 to 3.6000 for Level-B students (N=507), among which the highest is Part D (teaching effect) (M=3.6000, SD=.9042), revealing these students are generally satisfied with foreign language curriculum ideology and politics they have received. However, Part C (teaching content) is the lowest (M=3.3925, SD=.7357), indicating there is still a lack of corresponding textbooks connected with ideology and politics used in college English teaching. Simultaneously, Part A (teaching principle and aim) (M=3.5341, SD=.6894) and Part B (teaching process) (M=3.5560, SD=.7488) expose that Level-B students have mastered some knowledge of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics and they deem ideology and politics in college English instruction beneficial to cultivate healthy and positive emotions and therein improve the English learning effect. Meanwhile, the standard deviations of the four parts reveal that discrepancies didn't exist in these students' viewpoints on the variables.

4.4 Differences of the Cognition of Foreign Language Curriculum Ideology and Politics for Students of Newhuadu Business School, Level A and Level B

For the sake of inspecting whether the difference of English proficiency will exert an influence on the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics, the subjects were divided into three groups (Newhuadu students=193, Level-A students=413 and Level-B students=507). And a One-way Analysis of Variance was carried out for the three levels.

Grounded upon the data offered in "Table 1", Newhuadu students perform numerically better in the four parts than Level-A and Level-B students. Also, all the four parts of the three groups show a

statistically significant difference among one another ($p=.000<.01$). Then with multiple comparisons after the Post-Hoc test, a conclusion is drawn that Newhuadu students significantly outdo Level-A students in Part A ($p=.020<.05$), and Level-B students in Part A ($p=.000<.01$), Part B ($p=.000<.01$), Part C ($p=.001<.01$), Part D ($p=.000<.01$), while they do not outperform Level-A students in Part B ($p=.304>.05$), Part C ($p=.518>.05$), and Part D ($p=.472>.05$). It is of no difficulty to find that the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics between Newhuadu students and Level-A students is only significantly different in teaching principle and aims. In addition, it is revealed that Level-A students significantly do better than Level-B students in Part A ($p=.001<.01$), Part B ($p=.000<.01$), Part C ($p=.001<.01$), and Part D ($p=.000<.01$). To put it simply, both students of Newhuadu and Level-A significantly outdo those of Level-B in all four parts of curriculum ideology and politics. On balance, the result signifies that the difference of English level exerts a significant effect on the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics.

Table 1. Comparisons of cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for students of different English levels

Variables	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Part A	N	193	3.8168	.6179	13.504	.000**
	A	413	3.6797	.6871		
	B	507	3.5341	.6894		
Part B	N	193	3.8377	.7315	14.472	.000**
	A	413	3.7711	.7422		
	B	507	3.5560	.7488		
Part C	N	193	3.6036	.7724	7.999	.000**
	A	413	3.5605	.7963		
	B	507	3.3925	.7357		
Part D	N	193	3.9270	.8554	14.213	.000**
	A	413	3.8700	.9384		
	B	507	3.6000	.9042		

a Note: (*P<.05; **P<.01)

b N = Newhuadu students; A = Level-A students; B = Level-B students; Part A = teaching principle and aim; Part B = teaching process; Part C = teaching content; Part D = teaching effect

4.5 The Impact of CET-4 Score on Cognition of Foreign Language Curriculum Ideology and Politics

For the purpose of examining whether the difference in English proficiency will influence the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics, the researcher collected subjects' CET-4 scores. According to Qin's method of defining high-level and low-level groups[10], the researcher divided 1009 subjects into high, medium, and low groups (high score=272, medium score=465, and low score=272).

By means of One-way ANOVA, it is clearly shown in "Table 2" that high-score students numerically do better than other two groups in Part A, Part B and Part D while in terms of Part C, medium-score students do the best. Furthermore, it is uncovered that there exists significant difference in the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics among students with different English proficiency. And the Post-Hoc results imply the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics of high-level students significantly outperform low-level ones in Part A ($p=.000<.01$), Part B ($p=.000<.01$), Part D ($P=.000<.01$), and medium-level students outdo significantly low-level ones in Part A ($p=.003<.01$), Part B ($P=.001<.01$), Part C ($.037<.05$), Part D ($p=.001<.01$). Nevertheless, there is no significant difference between high-level and medium-level students in Part A ($p=.294>.05$), Part B ($p=.177>.05$), Part C ($p=.885>.05$), Part D

($p=.305>.05$). Overall, whether the difference in English proficiency will have a significant impact on the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics is greatly confirmed.

Table 2. Comparisons of cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for different English proficiency (CET-4)

Variables	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Part A	H	272	3.7243	.6664	7.017	.001**
	M	465	3.6703	.6808		
	L	272	3.5186	.6654		
Part B	H	272	3.7990	.7237	9.147	.000**
	M	465	3.7228	.7279		
	L	272	3.5384	.7697		
Part C	H	272	3.5211	.7667	2.399	.091
	M	465	3.5296	.7727		
	L	272	3.4081	.7436		
Part D	H	272	3.8710	.8979	8.062	.000**
	M	465	3.8000	.9202		
	L	272	3.5750	.9086		

a Note: (*P<.05; **P<.01)

b H = High score; M = Medium score; L = Low score; Part A = teaching principle and aim; Part B = teaching process; Part C = teaching content; Part D = teaching effect

4.6 The Impact of CET-6 Score on Cognition of Foreign Language Curriculum Ideology and Politics

With the aim of making clear whether the difference of CET-6 score affects the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics, the investigator collected 167 students' CET-6 scores and similarly divided them into high, medium, and low groups (high score=45, medium score=77, and low score=45).

“Table 3” demonstrates that High-score students get higher average value in Part A and Part D while medium-score students perform better than the other two groups in Part B and Part C, indicating

more medium-score students pay attention to ideology and politics in English learning and believe teachers relate English teaching to curriculum ideology and politics than high-score students. Then by virtue of One-way ANOVA, however, significant difference was not discovered in the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics among students of the three groups, which manifests most of these students share common standpoints in foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. To sum up, it still remains to be further corroborated whether the difference of CET-6 score influence the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics in that the subject quantity seems relatively small.

Table 3. Comparisons of cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics for different English proficiency (CET-6)

Variables	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Part A	H	45	3.7856	.7375	.995	.372
	M	77	3.6944	.7196		
	L	45	3.5712	.7197		
Part B	H	45	3.7407	.8419	.388	.679
	M	77	3.8009	.6914		
	L	45	3.6815	.6724		
Part C	H	45	3.5167	.7564	.148	.862
	M	77	3.5942	.7456		
	L	45	3.5500	.8438		
Part D	H	45	4.0110	.9504	.969	.382
	M	77	3.8310	.8531		
	L	45	3.7560	.9392		

a Note: (*P<.05; **P<.01)

b H = High score; M = Medium score; L = Low score; Part A = teaching principle and aim; Part B = teaching process; Part C = teaching content; Part D = teaching effect

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLEGE ENGLISH INSTRUCTION

In line with the given analyses and findings above, it can be noticed that the state quo of cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics is fine in general but still has much room for improvement. Students with different English levels do hold different views on foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. Among them, Newhuadu and Level-A students significantly outperform Level-B students in all four parts of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics, whilst Newhuadu students merely outdo Level-A ones in Part A (teaching principle and aim), which may arise from differences of students' English levels and teachers' teaching styles or methods. That means English proficiency does exert a significant impact on the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. For CET-4 scores, the high-score students do better than low-score ones in Part A (teaching principle and aim), Part B (teaching process) and Part D (teaching effect), while the medium-score students outdo the low-score ones in all four parts. For CET-6 scores, there is no statistical difference among the three levels of students. These findings may help to shed some light on college English instruction.

In the first place, universities should lay enough stress on foreign language curriculum ideology and politics and strengthen efforts to further promote it. College English has provided a platform in which students can learn not only English but how to be a well-rounded person. Actually, foreign language curriculum ideology and politics concentrate on both of the two respects. That is to say, English teaching and ideological and political education are meant to go hand in hand in college English. It is noteworthy that in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics, the requirements of ideological and political education have been reflected in the latest guidelines of college English instruction[11] and universities are supposed to organize relevant training to help English teachers practically conduct curriculum ideology and politics in the course of conducting college English teaching syllabus.

In the second place, English teacher plays a vital role in the implementation of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. During the process of English teaching, teachers shoulder the responsibility of excavating the hidden ideological

and political message and stimulating students' moral emotions, which contributes to cultivating students' high motivation to learn, thus enhancing their effectiveness of English learning. What's more, English teachers ought to consciously link English teaching with moral life rather than simply focus on imparting English knowledge and skill. For instance, some resources such as ethical stories and videos can be made use of in the teaching process to better students' ideological and political quality.

In the third place, students' cognition serves as the key to foreign language curriculum ideology and politics. College English curriculum ideology and politics is not only to foster students' ability to apply the English language as a tool, but also to enable them to develop a scientific spirit and research attitude in accordance with the teaching objectives of university English courses, and to become people of sound personality and integrity under the vision of core socialist values[12]. Only if students understand the principle and objective of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics, can they give full scope to their initiative and creativeness in English learning. In terms of the survey findings, difference in English proficiency does have some significant influence on the cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics.

What's more, in the last subjective questions, some useful suggestions were obtained from students of each levels, such as changing the form of conducting foreign language curriculum ideology and politics, combining it with western culture and adding relevant contents to textbooks, which indicates that students already have formed their own understanding of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics and been in the hope that it can be guided closer to their life. As is known that teachers, teaching materials and teaching methods are the three major elements in the implementation of curriculum ideology and politics in college English and they supplement and depend on one another. In other words, teacher who acts as the leader and organizer of the classroom plays an indispensable role in stimulating the curriculum ideology and politics; teaching material is the source of excavating the elements of ideology and politics; teaching method is the way to carry out the curriculum ideology and politics. Correspondingly for the sake of bettering the teaching effect, we must work hard on constantly perfecting teachers, teaching materials and teaching methods[13].

6. CONCLUSION

In respect of the study, conclusions can be summarized as follows. The overall situation of cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics is positive yet awaits promoting to be desirable. Hence, universities and English teachers ought to enhance ideological and political education in college English course with various forms that could arouse students' interests. The results also demonstrate that English proficiency indeed affects students' cognition of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics significantly. That is, both Newhuadu and Level-A students enjoy a remarkable advantage over Level-B ones in all four parts of curriculum ideology and politics. Furthermore, the superiority of these two groups is also reflected in the levels of CET-4. Thereby, our research questions about the impact of English proficiency on the cognition of curriculum ideology and politics are verified to a great degree.

Anyway, foreign language curriculum ideology and politics is a far-reaching topic and its relevant theories and practice should be taken into account in further empirical research. Naturally, there are still some defects in this study. First, the subjects and scope of the questionnaire are limited. The data of the study may only represent students' current cognition of curriculum ideology and politics in Minjiang University instead of all college students. It is likely that the results may not be comprehensive and representative in line with the situation of students in all college English classes. Consequently, it is recommended to expand the survey scope and sample size. Second, since ideological and political education has been infiltrated in all courses, it is hard to evaluate whether the present moral level of students is boosted only through the instruction of college English course. This is in need of follow-up study. Third, CET-4 and CET-6 scores may not be sufficient to define students' real English proficiency. Without comparative cases of foreign language curriculum ideology and politics from other colleges or universities, advice involved in this study may not be complete and authoritative enough as well.

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