

Analysis of Ideological and Political Education Strategies in College English Course

-- Based on the Trinity of “Thematic Teaching Concept”, “Cooperative Learning” and “Constructivism”

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Abstract

The research on how to combine the ideological and political education elements into college English classes has been developing very dramatically and has achieved great results. This paper firstly explores the relationships between the thematic teaching philosophy, cooperative learning, and constructivism, and also provides the strategies on how to excavate the moral education elements from each theme, and runs the ideological and political education throughout the three stages of Pre-class, In-class and After-class on the basis of theme. In the strategies provided, teaching and learning are mainly realized by cooperative learning in groups, and the teachers lead the students to reconstruct about the theme on the basis of their original knowledge about the theme, to further guide the students to construct “knowledge”, “emotion” and “value systems” in the hope that the “knowledge”, “emotion”, and “value systems” would influence the students in their action and the college English classes would finally realize the final function of fostering the students' soul.

Keywords

Ideological and Political Education; Thematic Teaching; Constructivism; Cooperative Learning.

1. Introduction

The concept of “ideological and political education in curriculum” was first proposed in Shanghai to form a new educational model to break the traditional situation of separating the learning of professional knowledge and skills from ideological and political education to build a comprehensive education curriculum that integrates teaching and educating people. In essence, it is to take “cultivating morality and cultivating people” as a fundamental task, which runs through all courses.

Since 2014, with Shanghai as a pilot project, the exploration and construction of a full-staff and whole-curriculum ideological and political education system from “ideological and political courses” to “ideological and political education in curriculum” has been carried out. The research and implementation of ideological and political education in curriculum has been carried out nationwide and has achieved great results.

Taking college English as an example, in the initial stage, relevant research mainly focused on feasibility exploration. Many scholars believed that the “ideological and political education in college English courses” can be implemented, but there are obstacles. “Can be implemented” means that as a language course, college English has unique advantages of combing many ideological and political education elements naturally; “obstacles” means on how to implement the ideological and political education in the real classes. College English teachers and related researchers have certain doubts about the teaching objectives, teaching materials, teaching

methods, teaching evaluation. At present, the research on ideological and political education in College English courses has reached the stage of “real implementation stage”. Teachers are carrying out the ideological and political education in the real courses and explore the proper and effective teaching methods and they also have achieved certain results in the construction of evaluation systems which was once considered very difficult.

2. Analysis of Ideological and Political Education Objectives and the Concrete Elements of College English Course

The general objectives are targets of College English course as a whole, and are the guiding lines for the teachers to excavate the concrete elements in the course.

2.1. General Objectives

Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, College English course is aimed to implement the fundamental task of building morality and cultivate students, give full play to the advantages and characteristics of university foreign language courses, fully explore the rich educational resources contained in the university foreign courses and strengthen curriculum education to realize the goal of unifying value shaping, knowledge transfer and ability development. It is also aimed to help students to establish a correct world outlook, outlook on life, values and awareness of correct treatment of the achievements of world civilization, deepen the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures through comparison, strengthen cultural self-confidence, promote cultural exchanges and mutual learning between Chinese and foreign cultures, and cultivate students’ patriotism spirit and family and country feelings, improve the ability to tell Chinese stories well in foreign languages.

2.2. An Analysis of the Unit Theme Concept and Ideological and Political Elements Contained in College English Textbooks

The College English Teaching Guide (the latest edition of the Ministry of Education in 2020) clearly states, “this guide provides guiding opinions on College English teaching. It is the guiding principle for ordinary colleges and universities to formulate college English teaching syllabuses, carry out college English curriculum construction, and carry out college English curriculum evaluation”. Under the guidance of the “Guide”, the compilation of college English textbooks highlights the humanistic nature of the curriculum.

In the college English textbooks commonly used by most colleges and universities in recent years, each unit is actually a “theme” and each “theme” fully combines the knowledge, the times and the fun. Each unit consists of two or even three texts which have the same “theme” but opposing viewpoints, so that students have the opportunity to contact the rich language materials and materials at different levels of the same theme. This text arrangement can fully stimulate students’ interest in learning and meet their individual needs. While cultivating students’ language ability, it broadens students’ horizons, cultivates students’ critical thinking ability, guides students to establish correct values, and realizes the function of all-round education.

In the textbook “New Version of Advanced College English” for non-English majors which have been used since 2017 in Xi’an Peihua University, the first three volumes have a total of 18 units, corresponding to many themes which have very clear ideological and political education elements, and can fulfill the corresponding ideological and political education functions.

In some themes, the same single theme has multiple ideological and political education elements and educational functions at the same time; meanwhile, many themes have the same ideological and political elements. The main themes and ideological and political education elements are shown below:

Table 1. The main themes and ideological and political education elements

themes	ideological and political education elements
time spirit	socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new era by Xi Jinping
creative thinking	
ecological thinking	
consumption concept	core value system of Socialism
view of life and values	
professionalism	
view of friendship and love	
cultural differences	international perspective
cross-culture communication	home and country feelings
	traditional Chinese culture

2.3. The Status of Themes and Ideological and Political Elements in College English Teaching

The theme is the main line of the teaching of the whole unit and in the themes the ideological and political education elements are explored. The students learn vocabulary, sentence patterns and passages related to the theme, and acquire the language ability so the teaching targets are achieved; while the ideological and political education elements fulfil the function of moral education, which is the ideological and political education goal of the College English course. The theme in each unit is “apparent”, while the ideological and political education elements are “hidden” in the themes.

3. The Relationship between Thematic Teaching Model, Cooperative Learning, and Constructivism

In this part, the relationship between thematic teaching model, cooperative learning and constructivism is analyzed and shown in the teaching procedure.

3.1. The Relationship

The thematic teaching concept is based on constructivism and promotes mutual cooperation among students. It is the basic concept that runs through the entire teaching procedure. Teachers design, arrange the class and organize students to use comprehensive skills around a specific theme to capture their interests through multiple channels. Group cooperative learning is the main way for teachers to teach and students to learn under the thematic teaching concept. A specific theme triggers students’ original cognition, and with their original experience, they actively construct their own unique insights in the process of communicating with group members.

3.2. Teaching Procedure

As is shown in the picture above, two lines including the teacher and the students run through the teaching procedure. In the three stages of Pre-class, In-class and After-class, with the purpose of constructing the students “knowledge”, “emotion”, “values” in order to influence the students’ actions, and realizing the ideological and political education target embedded in the theme, the teachers expose the students to the theme, guide the students to know more about the theme, and help the students to establish their opinions about the themes and finally reinforce the theme in the students. On the other hand, the students cooperate in groups in the three stages to fulfill the task given by the teacher.

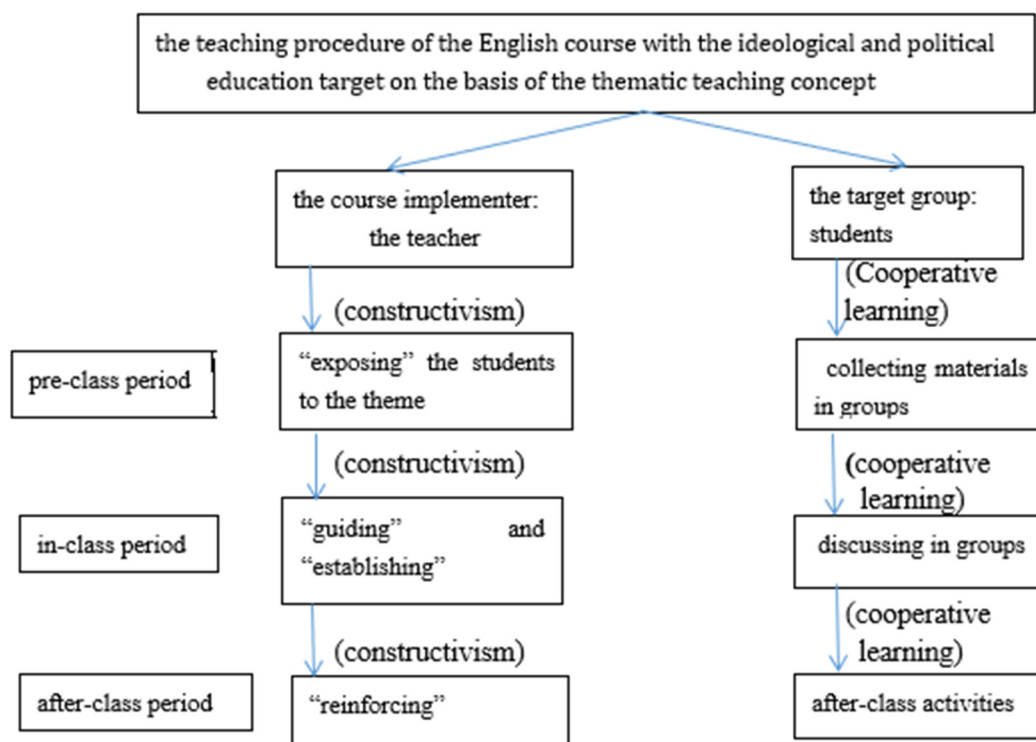


Fig 1. Schematic diagram of the teaching procedure

4. Teaching Design and Procedure --Living Green

Living-Green is the first unit in Volume 2 of the *New Edition of Advanced College English*. At the very beginning of the course, the students' cooperation ability and willingness to cooperate are investigated to ensure that the students have the cooperation ability and willingness to cooperate. On this basis, classmates form groups according to their combination willingness and group assignment principles of cooperative learning which include "being heterogeneous in the same group" and "groups being homogeneous".

4.1. Pre-class Stage

Pre-class stage includes two tasks: Pre-class design and the implementation of "exposing the students to the theme-related scene".

4.1.1. Pre-class Design

Before the class, teachers excavate the ideological and political elements of this theme and establish the specific ideological and political education goals at the four levels of "knowledge", "emotion", "values" and "behavior" corresponding to this ideological and political education element. Then teachers check the scenes in this unit to make sure that theme-related scenes in this unit can cover all the four levels of the specific ideological and political education goals of "knowledge", "emotion", "values" and "behavior". The teachers then try to implement the specific goals into the three stages of Pre-class, In-class, and After-class, and finally realize the four-dimensional unified educational goal of "knowledge, emotion, value, and action".

The ideological and political education goals in this unit can be specified as follows: "knowledge" level: the students are able to understand the importance of environmental protection and green living; "emotion" level: the students can love the earth on which we live; feel the hatred toward human greed; have the empathy and feel regretted for the extinction and death of animals and plants, etc; "value" level: after learning from General Secretary Xi Jinping's conviction that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets, the students can establish the value systems of green values, green development, and green economy; "behavior"

level: with the influence of knowledge, emotion, and values, the students can take actions in the daily life to live a green life.

Then the teachers infiltrate the moral education goals at the knowledge level, emotional level and value level in the three stages of Pre-class, In-class, and After-class.

4.1.2. The Process of “Exposing” in the Pre-class Period

The teachers assign the Pre-class tasks and expose the students in the “theme”-related scenes.

Task: Ask the students to work in groups to collect environmental protection related film, songs or videos and choose the best two pieces of materials.

This task is intended to motivate the students and ignite their original cognition to lay the foundation for the ideological and political education goals.

4.2. The Process of “Guiding the Students” in the In-class Cooperative Learning

Task1: Ask the students to listen and watch the video of Micheal Jackson’s *Earth Song* and answer the questions in groups. Through group discussion and communication, students are guided to further construct, on the basis of Pre-class cognition, knowledge, emotions, values which hopefully will guide their actions.

Q1: What do you see in the video? (use phrases, sentences)

Examples of students’ answers: Forests are cut down. Elephants are killed for their wild tusks. People became homeless and even killed in wars.

Q2: How do you feel when you listen to the song and watch the video? (use adjectives)

Examples of students’ answers: sad, angry, regretted. It left me into deep thinking.

The two questions are intended to realize the ideological and political education goals in the knowledge level, the emotion level respectively.

Task 2: Text study

Ask the students to work in groups and find the answers to the following questions.

Q1: What do the author’s family do to overcome the difficulty of having no water or electricity?

Answer: They generated their own electricity and hauled their own water.

Q2: What does the author think is the greatest benefit of living a self-sufficient life?

Answer: It taught their children the importance of conservation.

Q3: In what ways does the author show to the readers that their children learned the importance of conversation.

Answer: The author contrasted how they used water in the past and how they do now.

4.3. The Process of After-class “Establishing”

Task 1: Ask the students to discuss in groups Xi Jinping’s conviction that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets, share the ideas and opinions and write a group report.

Task 2: Ask each group to give an oral report on “What can we college students do to live a green life”.

Through task 1, the students can understand the relationship between the “lucid waters and lush mountains” and “invaluable assets and understand the green economy, green development concepts so that they can have deep insights about the important policies of China. The Task 2 is intended to guide the students to put what they have “constructed” into action.

5. Conclusion

The teachers organize teaching around a certain theme, excavate potential ideological and political elements from themes, and establish ideological and political education goals in four levels: knowledge, emotion, values, and behavior. This teaching strategy is very easy to carry

out in the real class. Furthermore, it can be combined with a lot of other teaching strategies. In the process of cooperative learning, the students are the center and their learning enthusiasm are ignited and their learning autonomy is fully mobilized, so they can, with the guidance of the teacher, construct “knowledge”, “emotion”, “values” and act accordingly. While this teaching strategy has a lot of advantages, the teaching effect is being verified. With the development of evaluation systems, this teaching strategy will be greatly improved.

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