

# **An Analysis of Teaching Reformation of College English Course on the Background of Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum**

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## **Abstract**

As a public required course of higher education, College English course has such problems as low budget, being overlooked by students, outdated textbooks and teaching methods. The introduction of ideological and political courses into college English course can be an effective solution to all the above problems. In spite of all the setbacks, ideological and political education in College English course is the access to confidence-building, output and recognition of Chinese culture.

Key words: Ideological and political education in curriculum; College English course; Teaching mode; Teaching reform

## **1. Introduction**

The concept of “ideological and political education in curriculum” was first put forward in a themed lecture of Social Science Academical Annual Conference Review in 2016. The basic meaning of this educational concept is to cultivate ideological and political literacy, and integrate general education such as correct values, outlook on life, and critical thinking, etc. into the teaching of specialized courses. This kind of educational concept takes curriculum as the carrier and politics as the teaching method. It will definitely lead to the reorganization of current teaching contents of college English, bring about tremendous changes in teaching methods, and call on higher requirements for teachers' abilities.

## **2. Significance of ideological and political education in curriculum**

### **2.1 Cultivating Four Self-confidences**

In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that “the whole party must more consciously enhance road self-confidence, theoretical self-confidence, institutional self-confidence, and cultural self-confidence” (Qin, 2018 ). To cultivate socialist successors with “four self-confidences”, colleges and universities shoulder important responsibilities that cannot be shied away, and ideological and political education in curriculum is the key to this significant task.

Ideological and political education in college English classrooms especially promotes the cultural self-confidence of college students, because college English is “a quality education course that broadens knowledge and understands world culture, and it should also be a course to spread Chinese culture; it is both instrumental and humanistic” (An, 2018, p.84). Therefore, English serves as a bridge for the transmission of Chinese culture to the world. The integration of ideological and political education in curriculum into English

courses can effectively guarantee the realization of this goal.

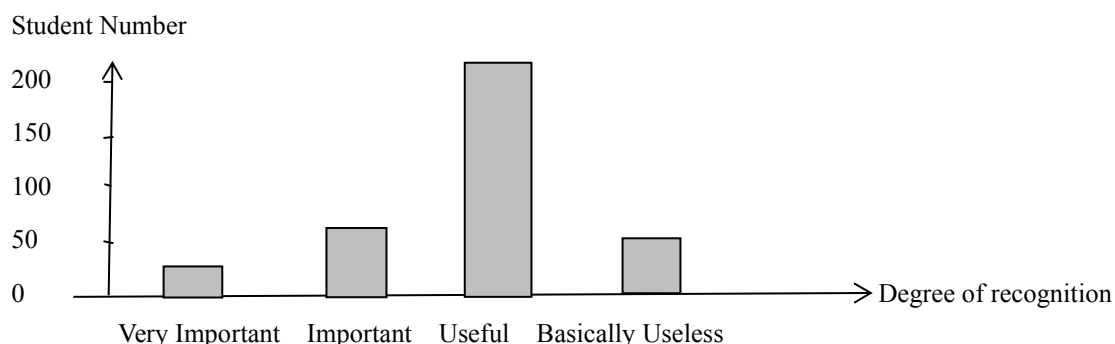
## 2.2 Status Quo of College English Courses

At present, college English courses have reached a critical turning point, and the status of college English courses as public compulsory courses for colleges and universities has begun to shake. The setting of college English courses of a 985-project college in Chongqing depends entirely on the secondary schools. A large number of colleges and schools have started to cut class hours, reduce credits, and some of them even directly cancel college English courses. Therefore, considering the actual interests of foreign language schools and teachers, reform is also imperative. The foreign language community in colleges and universities has been actively exploring the reform, and their determination of foreign language reform is greatly represented in many attempts to improve teaching modes, such as flipped classroom teaching mode, blended teaching mode, TBLT teaching mode and other teaching methods. Nevertheless, those changes are only touching on “sinews” or the surface, rather than “bones” or the root. On the contrary, ideological and political education in curriculum has brought about the connotative reorganization of college English courses.

## 3. Setbacks to implement ideological and political education in curriculum

### 3.1 Students' lack of political awareness

The utilitarianism in teaching is so powerful that the society, schools, families and students regard knowledge learning as the studying of professional skills. As for English majors, their enthusiasm for non-specialized courses, especially ideological and political courses, is far lower than that for specialized courses. This study has conducted an online questionnaire survey on the importance of ideological and political courses among 200 students of various majors in a university in Chongqing (see Table-1 below).



Excluding 9 students who did not participate in the voting, among the remaining 191 students: only 13 students think that the ideological and political courses are very important, 35 students think that it is important, 121 students think that it is useful, while 22 students think that it is basically useless.

Although ideological and political education in curriculum is not equivalent to ideological and political courses, the improper handling of ideological and political education in college English courses will result in resistance and rejection by students. Therefore, how to integrate ideological and political education in curriculum into English courses is a difficult task.

### 3.2 Teachers' lack of political teaching abilities

The long-term cultivation model and educational philosophy has resulted in the lack of political teaching abilities of college English teachers. As a Chinese old saying goes, it takes ten years to grow trees, but a hundred to rear people. So, it will take the continuous efforts of several generations to achieve the cultivation and improvement of the political teaching abilities of educators. The current situation is that most educators have insufficient ideological and political teaching abilities. So it is difficult for them to cultivate outstanding next generations.

Although some supporting textbooks have emerged in the short four-year period since the first proposal of ideological and political education in curriculum in 2016, most of the teaching materials in use do not fulfil the characteristics of ideological and political education in curriculum. Therefore, the realization of ideological and political education in curriculum depends mainly on a teacher's own ability. The evaluation standards for this kind of ability are lacked. So it is difficult to institutionalize, normalize, and control the ideological and political education in curriculum.

### **3.3 Teaching evaluation standards that emphasize language skills rather than language contents**

For a long time, college English courses emphasize the competences of pronunciation, listening, speaking, and grammar, but ignore the most important language contents and connotations with the language as the carrier. This improper evaluation index has also brought college English teaching into a developmental dilemma. The purest standard English is London English, but in many countries such as the United States, Singapore, India, those "non-standard" English has become the official language, and has gradually been recognized by the international community. Language communication focuses on contents, ideas and cultures. The integration of ideological and political education in curriculum into college English courses is conducive not only to the English teaching and the cultivation of English ability in China, but also to the recognition and acceptance of Chinese traditional culture by the international community.

## **4. Coping strategies**

### **4.1 Increasing the proportion of Chinese cultural contents in teaching materials and curriculum design**

According to statistics, the average proportion of Chinese culture in college English textbooks is only about 2% (An, 2018, p.85). With the rise of English learning in schools at all levels in China, the "foreign festivals" has gradually become popular in the society and schools. On the contrary, traditional Chinese festivals, such as the "Dragon Boat Festival", are being listed in the application for world heritage by other countries. Moreover, most college students in China are unable to explain the origin and customs of the Dragon Boat Festival in English. Cultural exchanges mainly focus on mutual learning. If there is only input without output, there will be no recognition and respect by others, not to mention cultural self-confidence.

### **4.2 Combination with critical thinking teaching**

Ideological and political education in curriculum requires the teaching philosophy of critical thinking, so it is necessary to design some in-depth ideological and political questions in college English textbooks. For instance, when talking about the comparison of Chinese and Western cultures, students are allowed to ask a few more whys; such as why is this cultural difference caused? Why can't China simply copy Western practices? Why can't Chinese culture be recognized by the Western society? Take the global panic caused by COVID-19 as an example. Because of the different social values and cultures, the Chinese and Western societies show varied responses to the prevention and control of epidemic.

In addition, the cognitive ability of college students does not match the cognitive difficulty of current college English textbooks. College students have comprehensive and in-depth understandings of environments and things. So too simple cognitive contents cannot arouse their resonance. Compared with the questions such as "how to borrow books in the library" and "how to introduce the campus", the questions such as "how to resolve international disputes" and "how to treat cyberspace violence" are closer to the cognition level of college students. To teach and explain those complicated topics requires the integration of critical thinking into ideological and political education in curriculum.

### 4.3 Weakening pronunciation teaching

The first issue of *Nature* in 1996 published the findings of experts from Cornell University that human brain has a special region that is responsible for language learning, namely the Brocas area. Foreign languages learned before the age of 12 will be stored in this area like mother tongue, while that learned after 12 years old cannot. Other studies have also shown that after the age of 12, the teenagers can not extricate themselves from their native accent in learning foreign languages. Therefore, the focus of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities should not be based on pronunciation, which is extremely disproportionate in terms of input and output.

However, weakening pronunciation teaching does not mean completely abandoning pronunciation. After all, the importance of standard pronunciation for listening ability is self-evident. The strategy to weaken pronunciation teaching in this study is to reduce the importance of pronunciation in the output (English speaking) instead of the input (English listening). In addition, weakening pronunciation teaching is also a manifestation of ideologies and politics and cultural self-confidence in the curriculum.

### 4.4 Improving the faculty's abilities

Ideological and political education in curriculum needs to be achieved by teachers with ideological and political teaching abilities. First of all, it is necessary to focus on the ideological and political issues. In recruiting and evaluating teachers, ideological and political abilities should be considered as an important assessment aspect. Secondly, in terms of teaching research and reform, teacher training and continuing education, political learning and ideological education must be strengthened.

## 4. Conclusion

The integration of ideological and political education in curriculum into college English courses is the key to reflecting the importance and necessity of college English, and is also vital to solve the current bottleneck of college English development. To better integrate ideological and political education in curriculum into college English, the country, universities, teachers, students and etc. need to carry out all aspects of reform from the dimensions of teaching materials, teaching methods, assessment and evaluation. The integration of ideological and political education in curriculum into college English not only responds to the requirements of national needs, school development, teacher promotion and student training, but also brings new opportunities for the development of college English courses.

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## **Biography**

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