

# Reform of Ideological and Political Theories Teaching in English Major Courses Based on the Idea of “Telling China’s Stories Well”

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**Abstract**—English major students are the reserve forces for “telling China’s stories well”. It is of vital importance to train students to be English professionals with both excellent ideological and political qualities and high English proficiency, so as to cultivate students into a new generation capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation. Therefore, publicity and ideological work must be done well to foster their firm faith. However, ideological and political education in high schools is actually absent and aphasia in teaching practice of English major. To change this situation, ideological and political education should be combined with professional teaching. First of all, the concept of emphasizing intelligence over morality in professional courses should be reversed. Secondly, curriculum design of integrating ideological and political education into teaching should be made. Thirdly, students should be encouraged to participate in various professional competitions and guided to understand and familiarize themselves with current affairs and tell China’s stories well in English. Finally, the construction of ideological and political education teaching staff should be strengthened through cooperation, training and other measures, so as to improve the quality of ideological and political theories teaching.

**Keywords**—Teaching reform; Ideological and political theories teaching in other courses; English major; China’s stories

## I. INTRODUCTION

In August 2018, General Secretary Xi Jinping said at a national conference on publicity and ideological work, “We will improve our ability to engage in international communication so as to tell China’s stories well, make the voice of China heard, and present a true, multi-dimensional, and panoramic view of China to the world. [1]” College English major students are the reserve forces for “telling Chinese stories well”. How to do well in publicity and ideological work to them, foster their firm faith, so as to cultivate students into a new generation capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation is an issue that must be considered in English teaching. Early in December 2016, Xi delivered an important speech at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities. He pointed out: to do a good job in ideological and political work in colleges and universities. In order to make good use of

the main channel of classroom teaching, the course of ideological and political theory should persist in strengthening in the course of improvement, enhance the affinity and pertinence of ideological and political education, and meet the needs and expectations of students undefined growth and development. All other courses should keep a good canal, plant a good field of responsibility, and make all kinds of courses and ideological and political theory courses go hand in hand to form a synergistic effect [2]. Thus it can be seen that ideological and political education is the educational responsibility that every teacher should assume and the teaching content that every professional class should pay attention to. All English teachers must seriously consider the problems existing in the ideological and political theories teaching in major courses and actively participate in the reform aimed at constructing an ideological and political education system with English characteristics.

## II. PROBLEMS IN IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION IN ENGLISH TEACHING

Language education is about cultural cognition, which is related to national identity. As a linguistic tool, foreign languages are always accompanied by certain ideological content. The basic characteristic of foreign language teaching lies in the unity of language and thought, thus realizing the combination of instrumentality and humanism. This characteristic determines that English teaching should not only impart linguistic knowledge and develop language ability, but also educate students ideologically. However, for a long time, due to the particularity of foreign language environment in universities, ideological and political education is actually absent and aphasia in teaching practice of English major.

### A. Biased Outlook on the Most Fundamental Quality Training of Foreign Language Talents

To cultivate foreign language professionals with both international vision and innovative ability, good basic skills of foreign language are the basic core professional qualities, but they are not the most fundamental qualities. On May 6, 2014, Jiang Feng, secretary of the Party Committee of Shanghai Foreign Studies University, published an article in *Guangming*

Daily, pointing out that in the new era the cultivation of foreign language talents should adhere to “five unifications”. Firstly, ideological and political education and foreign language teaching should be unified, because the two are equally important. Secondly, the dissemination of Chinese culture and learning from advanced experience should be unified. Thirdly, academic research and professional courses teaching should be unified. Fourthly, classroom teaching should be unified with the reality of life. Finally, respecting foreign language teaching rules and highlighting Chinese characteristics should be unified [3]. If this concept had been put into practice, the result should have been very ideal. The foreign language graduates who have entered contemporary Chinese society should have been socialistic compound, internationalized and innovative talents who could not only have been competent in their own fields but also have adapted to the requirements of the times. They should have had not only firm ideals and beliefs, but also solid theoretical foundation; they should have had excellent foreign language professional standards and comprehensive quality; they should have had Chinese feelings and international vision. These are just the qualities that contemporary Chinese foreign language talents should possess, among which the most fundamental and core ones are the excellent moral quality, ideological and political quality, such as firm ideals and convictions, deep patriotic sentiment and so on. Therefore, ideological and political education should have been the guiding and principle of English talent cultivation. However, due to the negative impact of traditional education model and evaluation system as well as market economy, foreign language colleges and universities have not dealt with well the relationship between knowledge, skills and abilities in the process of foreign language talent cultivation. Teachers and students attach great importance to the transmission of language knowledge and language skills, despite the cultivation of humanities and ideological and political quality. As a result, the students’ knowledge structure is single, the knowledge scope is narrow, the comprehensive ability is not strong, the development potential is weak. Some college students are very enthusiastic about the system and culture of western developed countries, but they are very unfamiliar with the history and culture of their own countries and nationalities. Especially, they lack the ability of independent thinking and critical thinking in analyzing, synthesizing, judging and reasoning about the history of the Party and the major issues such as the Party’s line, principles and policies since the reform and opening up.

#### *B. Alienation between Ideological and Political Course and Professional Course Teaching*

For a long time, the ideological and political course in colleges and universities in China, as an integral part of general education, plays a role in ideological and political education for university students. The educational task is mainly undertaken by teachers of the Marxist academy through classroom teaching and extracurricular practical activities. However, it is difficult to attract the interest of English majors in ideological and political courses taught in Chinese, which objectively results in the alienation of ideological and political courses and professional courses, which should be inextricably linked. Consequently, on the one hand the ideological and political

course teaching can not get the support of professional course teaching, and is falling into the dilemma of “isolation”; on the other hand, English professionals generally present the state of being “more excellent but less profound, more skilled but less valuable, more internationalized and less localized” [4]. Students are weak in telling Chinese stories, spreading rich traditional Chinese culture and communicating advanced ideas in English. With the development of socialism going into a new era, this contradiction has become increasingly prominent.

#### *C. Ideological and Political Education Being Long Neglected in English Teaching*

The content of English major courses mainly comes from the literature and newspapers of English-speaking countries, which inevitably involves sensitive issues such as Western culture, ideology, religious beliefs and so on. And what the foreign teachers bring to the students is more authentic Western culture and values. No matter in class or after class, students live in the environment of English culture all the time. Though they are in the realistic domestic system and culture, what they are learning is the non-realistic Western system and culture. Meanwhile, based on the theory of negative transfer of mother tongue, our foreign language teaching has long emphasized that we should try our best to get rid of the influence of mother tongue. As a result, some students who major in English are only familiar with the language and customs of the target language countries, but are unfamiliar with the history and traditional culture of China, let alone the socialist values of China. As young people, college students’ thoughts are usually in a dynamic state. If Chinese culture is neglected in English teaching and there is no timely ideological guidance, students will be easily captured by Western ideas and values, and even be easily influenced by foreign media’s anti-china remarks.

### III. THE WAY OF IMPLEMENTING IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL THEORIES TEACHING IN ENGLISH MAJOR COURSES

How do we combine the education of socialist core values, which embody the spirit of contemporary China, with the teaching of English majors? Can Chinese culture and values only be taught in Chinese? In this regard, we must realize that the practice of socialist core values is not the full-time job of ideological and political teachers and college counselors, but the common responsibility of all teachers. It is necessary to give full play to the educational function of other courses, deeply explore and make use of the moral education elements contained in professional courses. It is significant to establish the concept of “great ideological and political theories teaching in all courses”, and give play to the important role of professional course teaching in ideological education and moral guidance. Ideological and political education is the educational responsibility of every teacher should undertake and the teaching content that every professional classroom should attach importance to. Of course, foreign language teachers can not be exceptional. They are duty-bound to make efforts and contributions to the formation and construction of the ideological and political education system with foreign language characteristics, and to train high-end English talents with both excellent ideological and political theoretical

qualities and high English proficiency in line with the requirements of the times and social needs. Teachers should actively reform the teaching of English majors courses so as to create a new ideological and political theories teaching mode of English curriculum with the goal of “telling China’s stories well with the voice of the world”.

#### *A. Reversing the Concept of Emphasizing Intelligence over Morality*

To tell China’s stories well and realize ideological and political education in English courses, we must first reverse the phenomenon of emphasizing intelligence over morality in the teaching of specialized courses. As the ancient saying goes, the teacher propagates the doctrine, imparts professional knowledge, and resolves doubts. Therefore, teachers should not simply be accustomed to “imparting professional knowledge”. Under the system of ideological and political theories teaching, “propagating the doctrine” and “resolving doubts” should be the most important part of education. The three roles of the teacher should go hand in hand, with “resolving doubts” being the first consideration [5]. Teachers should realize that ideological and political education will not interfere with the normal teaching of professional courses, but will deepen the teaching connotation, improve the ideological and humanistic nature of teaching, and improve the teaching effect. While in traditional teaching, articles selected in English textbooks usually cover different fields such as economy, science and technology, culture and so on, the important topics related to national politics will generally not be touched. One of the most important reasons for “not touching” is that many professional teachers lack the confidence to handle macro-level problems. But nowadays, as China’s influence continues to rise, the international community is increasingly engaged in discussions on China’s political, economic, cultural and other issues. So how to lead students into these topics, which can not only highlight the collision of views in teaching strategies, but also lead the correct values and enhance “four self-confidence”, is a question that every teacher must face and answer. Teachers must strengthen their own theoretical cultivation and learning, enhance moral education awareness. Otherwise, no matter how good they are at solving doubts, they are just doing the work of information input and output mechanically.

#### *B. Integrating Ideological and Political Education into Curriculum Design*

To tell China’s stories well and realize ideological and political education in English courses, relevant contents of ideological and political education should be targeted when the course design is made. Representative professional courses can be selected to form a “curriculum group of ideological and political theories teaching”, in which lesson preparation and organizational learning can be combined so as to promote the curriculum construction of combining ideological and political education with professional teaching. First of all, the construction of the “curriculum group” can be tried in reading, writing and translation courses for English majors. Shanghai International Studies University has offered courses such as Translation of Chinese Culture and Reading of English Current Texts, etc. The teaching materials are carefully selected and compiled according to the current hot social issues at home and

abroad. The foreign editions of the speeches of the leaders of the state, the central documents and the major policies of the Party are the main materials to publicize the traditional Chinese culture and the strategy of modern Chinese economic development. For example, General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important speeches, Premier Li Keqiang’s press conference at the two sessions of NPC and CPPCC and the government work report are all the main learning materials about Chinese current affairs. In addition, focusing on China’s politics, economy, culture and society, articles about international current issues can be selected from the in-depth reports of foreign media. The study of Chinese and foreign articles provides the Chinese and Western perspectives which complement and learn from each other for students to approach the teaching content [6].

#### *C. Strengthening the Leading Role of Subject Competition*

To tell China’s stories well and realize ideological and political education in English courses, it is necessary to use the opportunity of subject competition to encourage college students to understand and familiarize themselves with current affairs, actively engage in innovative practices and publicize China to the world in foreign languages. Every year, various competitions are held in China with a very clear purpose, which is to make contemporary college students understand the state’s major policies, then publicize China’s economic development to the world in foreign languages. That is the practical actions of “telling China’s stories well, making the voice of China heard”. All the topic-specific speeches in major English speech contests in China are almost hot topics in Chinese society. Obviously, it is difficult to obtain ideal results without a good understanding of and familiarity with the current affairs of the state. When preparing speeches, participants in the competitions must repeatedly browse the interpretations and editorials of the authoritative media and read the government work report several times before and after. Such English words with a strong sense of the times as “the Belt and Road”, “staying true to our founding mission”, “Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era” must be spoken naturally and fluently.

#### *D. Strengthening the Construction of Teaching Staff for Ideological and Political Education*

To tell China’s stories well and realize ideological and political education in English courses, it is of critical importance to strengthen and perfect the construction of teachers’ ideological and political education team according to the changes of international situation and the new characteristics of English majors [7]. At present, as far as ideological and political theories teaching in other courses is concerned, teachers’ ideological and political quality, education consciousness and ability vary due to different disciplines. And there are still some gaps in the ideological and political education consciousness and ability of English teachers [8]. Therefore, first of all, universities should encourage English teachers to make full use of the resources of other academic disciplines to improve their interdisciplinary knowledge and ability. Secondly, universities should advocate that the English college, with its existing teaching staff, cooperate with teachers of relevant courses in other colleges. Teachers with higher English proficiency and professional

background of Marxist theory should be invited to undertake the teaching of English related courses, such as Chinese and Western philosophy, sociology, ethics, College Chinese, logic, international relations, etc. Thirdly, universities should also strengthen the training of English teachers, provide opportunities for them to study ideological and political theories and knowledge at home and abroad, so that teachers' teaching and scientific research abilities will be improved. In recent years, many foreign language research projects have been carried out around the national policy. Through training, English teachers learn to examine the problems from a macro perspective and combine the national policies and strategic planning with daily teaching activities. They can not only carry out in-depth research and obtain academic achievements, transform political language into academic language, but also integrate the cultivation and practice of socialist core values into the whole process of teaching and educating people. Teachers are the key elements to improve the quality of ideological and political education.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The new concept of ideological and political theories teaching in foreign language curriculum can creatively implement the content of ideological and political education into the teaching practice of English major courses. In this case the combination of explicit professional learning and invisible value cultivation will be realized. More importantly, students can truly understand the essence of ideological and political education, and an ideal effect of education will be achieved. Besides, such ideological and political theories teaching practice can provide students with both Chinese and Western perspectives, which helps them to eliminate cognitive biases. Feeling the collision of Chinese and Western cultures, students will not be assimilated by Western ideas. Through in-depth thinking, they will clarify their values and strengthen their political ideals and beliefs, and learn how to properly convey China's voice to the world in English.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The study is supported by The Research Center for Foreign Language Education in Engineering Institutes of Jilin Province, The Key Research Base of Humanities and Social Science of Jilin Province.

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