

On the Integration of Ideological and Political Education into Specialized Courses in Chinese Universities: A Case Study of English Foundation Course¹

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Abstract

This paper provides a detailed introduction to the new trend of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) in Chinese universities, i.e. integrating IPE into specialized courses. It draws on a thematic analysis of documents from Ministry of Education (MOE) and States sources. The paper reveals the principles and practices of integrating IPE into specialized courses in Chinese universities. Also, the course English Foundation Course from Foreign Language Schools of Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics Dongfang College is exemplified to show the whole process of integration.

Keywords— IPE, Integration, Specialized Courses.

I. INTRODUCTION

The present study shows how the Ideological and Political Education (IPE) in China's higher education institutions integrates into specialized courses. It focuses on the changes in course design and teaching practice in the universities' specialized courses against the backdrop of China's intensifying IPE in higher education. Since the goal of Chinese higher education is to "cultivate the builders and successors of socialism for the future" ((National People's Congress [NPC], 2015), IPE is a key factor to contribute to this goal. In the past few decades, the important channel of IPE is the theoretical course in Chinese universities, a compulsory course which run through undergraduates' four years of study and consist of a number of modules including Basic Principles of Marxism, Mao Zedong Thoughts, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the Three Represents, Modern Chinese History, Ideological and Moral Cultivation and its Legal Basis, and so on (Xu et al., 2021). The IPE theoretical

course is taught to all university students, follows a standard framework and offers academic credits. However, the theoretical course turns out not effective since most students lose interest. Therefore, the importance of IPE in other specialized courses was reinforced when President Xi (2016) made a speech at a conference on IPE of universities. He stressed that IPE in universities should be integrated into the whole education process of Higher Education, and universities must focus on students, caring for them, serving them, and helping them improve in ideological quality, political awareness, moral characteristics, and humanistic quality to enable them to develop both ability and integrity. And in February 2017, the CPC central committee and the state council emphasized that ideological education should be carried out in the whole process and every link of teaching to form a long-term mechanism of teaching. Class teaching in specialized courses should fully explore IPE resources in various disciplines (The Central Committee of

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CPC and the State Council, 2017).

This paper shows the integration of IPE into a language course in Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics Dongfang College, an independent college in East China. It first introduces the principles of this integration and outlines the major theoretical considerations. It then focuses on the presentation of English Foundation Course as a case to show how these principles translate into course designs and teaching practice. And the discussion and conclusion are followed in the end.

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF INTEGRATING IPE INTO SPECIALIZED COURSES

In China, IPE develops the political cultivation and values view of the undergraduates while guiding them into the Party's ideology. Zeng (2015) argues that, in contemporary China, IPE plays an important role in influencing the world views and political beliefs of people. Zhang (2015) points out that IPE is one of the basic carriers and realization forms of conducting and developing Chinese mainstream culture and ideology. Thus, the integration of IPE into specialized courses should meet the purposes of IPE, i.e., to use certain ideas, political views and moral norms to exert influence on students, which would be the general principle. IPE in Chinese college is now challenged by problems such as belief diversification, differentiated values, and lack of collective consciousness among students. So, the important issue would be the combination of the teaching contents with ideological and political theories. The teachers of specialized courses should have their own understanding of the nature of IPE and find the invisible educational resources in their courses. Therefore, the teachers are encouraged to explore "IPE elements" in their courses since different courses have their own points of IPE resources. When it comes to the class teaching, the delivery of these elements should be implicit just like "salt dissolving into soup". Educators in China has come up with various teaching theories which aims to contribute to promoting the full integration in ideological education. Based on the theory of affective learning, Li (2020) relates cognitive development in translation teaching to the value shaping of students and shows the construction of IPE from the extracting of IPE elements, the internalization of IPE resources and the evaluation of teaching effects. Mei (2018)

believes that foreign language education should not only help students master foreign language knowledge and pragmatic competence. It is even more necessary to cultivate students' feelings, attitudes and values in the new era, and their international vision and cross-cultural communication ability should be based on Chinese feelings and Chinese genes. Hong (2019) pointed out that universities should cultivate student's national pride, and foreign language students should be able to spread traditional Chinese culture to the world and participate in global governance with Chinese wisdom.

III. THE INTEGRATION OF IPE INTO THE ENGLISH FOUNDATION COURSE

The English Foundation Course is a compulsory course for the first-year English majors in Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics Dongfang College, with a total of 128 class hours and 8 credits. It aims to lay the comprehensive English language foundation needed for advanced English language studies by engaging students in multi-modal learning activities. Learning topics include the writing process, critical listening, reading and response, and features of spoken English, covering the domain of literature, history, culture and sociology. This course is compulsory for first-year students and is a prerequisite for Level Two course. The following section will show how the integration is carried out in this course.

3.1 Teaching Design

In terms of teaching design, the course aims to create an effective teaching mode to achieve the aim of combining language teaching with value shaping. Therefore, IPE is integrated into the process of teaching objectives, content, organization, implementation and evaluation. The course attaches great importance to creating a natural learning experience for students' character building while learning language, characterized with an explicit language learning and implicit value shaping. Since language learning is closely related to culture and cognition, so language education serves both instrumental and humanistic function. As a core course for the English majors, the English Foundation Course integrates value shaping into the cultivation of learners' language competence. Based on the objectives of the course, the ideological and political elements of the course include the following two aspects:

first, students will be able to introduce Chinese culture in English. So, the course will incorporate Chinese elements into the everyday teaching to cultivate the students' ability to introduce Chinese culture and history. Second, the students will be able to analyze and discern the ideological value in western texts while enhancing their cross-cultural communication.

3.2 Teaching Objectives

One of the fundamental principles of integrating IPE into specialized courses is that the content of ideological and political education in professional courses should be implicit. Based on the realization of the curriculum's language goals such as language skills and critical thinking, more emphasis should be placed on value shaping. Therefore, the course focuses on cultivating students' solid basic skills as well as incorporating IPE into the subject content.

The English Foundation Course integrates IPE into English teaching, as is exemplified in its teaching objectives. The objective is twofold, which consists of language skills and value shaping. As to the language skills, upon completion of the course, students will be able to: a. have a general idea of English language system, such as phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, text structure, etc.; b. have language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating to develop the comprehensive ability to use English; c. master correct learning strategies, which mainly includes consciously looking for opportunities to practice their expression, encouraging themselves to reduce anxiety, memorizing through classification and association, and practicing language through analysis and generalization. While in the light of value shaping, the students will be able to: d. develop cultural confidence and foster a strong sense of the building of a community with a shared future for mankind; e. incorporate patriotism, devotion and honesty into their life; e. enhance the mission of making Chinese culture go global. Based on the objectives of the course, the ideological and political elements of the course include the following two aspects: one is "China's story". The course will incorporate Chinese stories into its teaching content, aiming to draw students' attention to Chinese culture and cultivate their ability to tell China's story well. The other is cross-cultural communication. Particularly, the course will guide the students to analyze the language ideology, thus

enhancing their ability of discerning value orientation behind language.

3.2 Teaching Contents

IPE aims to use certain ideas, political views and moral norms to exert influence on students so that they form social practice activities that meet the requirement of the State. The Implementation Summary for Improving the Construction of Civic Morality issued in 2001 (CCP Central Committee, 2001) introduced the concept of citizenship into IPE. It states that civic morality is part of ideological and political activity and is vital in the cultivation of socialist citizens who have ideals, morals, culture and discipline, and in the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics. IPE has been expanded to include citizenship education that aims to emphasize an independent social position and the personality of individuals (Li & Zhong, 2002), it is also an important part of the teaching content of Foundation English Course. The following section introduces the ideological and political contents extracted from main units. To begin with, in the teaching unit of "campus life", the text is an excerpt from the novel *Half a Day* by the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006), in which life is embodied in half a day at school. Class teaching will focus on encouraging the freshmen to face the university life with a positive attitude. Secondly, in the unit of "language and culture", the teaching content is mainly about ethnocentrism, linguistic superiority and discrimination. By introducing the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, the teachers will introduce the "world view," "holistic view" and "harmony view" from traditional Chinese culture. Besides, in the unit of "literature", by reading through *After Twenty Years* by O Henry, the students are encouraged to think about the choice in the conflict between friendship and public integrity. And this theme will be applied to the study of life, guide students to establish integrity, public responsibility concept. At last, in the unit of "social system", after reading an excerpt from Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, the students are encouraged to analyze the root of racial discrimination and think about the issues such as westerners' discrimination against Asian-Americans during the Covid-19 epidemic.

3.4 Teaching Procedures

This course is based on Production-Oriented Approach (POA), which attaches great importance to effective

language learning. Since POA aims to address both students' development as moral and socially responsible citizens and their language development (Ellis, 2017), it is compatible with the idea of integrating IPE into specialized courses. Teaching with the POA consists of three phases: (1) motivating; (2) enabling; and (3) assessing. All three phases are mediated by teachers, whose mediating roles include guiding, designing and scaffolding in addition to being a facilitator and a consultant (Wen, 2016,7). By designing a series of coherent and progressive tasks, the students are expected to meet the teaching objectives while completing the task. First, in the motivating phase, the teacher motivates students' thinking and discussing in the beginning of the teaching unit by presenting the language activity. The students get engaged in the communicative activities and reflect on their language limitations. In the enabling phase, the teacher presents the output task, and the student pays attention to the language content required for the output task with the teacher's help. Then the students apply what they've learnt from the previous stage to language production in the last phase, the assessing phase. The teacher gives feedback on Students' language products, which might be written compositions, public speeches, translated texts, oral interpretations, simulated role plays, posters and so on. While giving assessments, the teacher adheres to the principle of combining explicit and implicit evaluation, integrating the evaluation of ideological and political teaching into the evaluation of language knowledge and skills. Thus, this evaluation takes into consideration both students' language and value shaping. Here is an example of students' oral presentations in the teaching unit "The Green Banana". The discussion question is as follows: How do you understand the following quote by Amy Tan "Don't judge a book by its cover or someone's intelligence by her English"? How much of your self-esteem is tied to your mother tongue? On the assessing phase, the teacher focuses on observing and evaluating the student's growth in both language and values. Here are sample answers from students. Student A: We are proud of Chinese language and culture, but we're still willing to learn western culture. English provides a powerful tool to connect to the outside world, while promoting mutual understanding, friendship and cultural exchanges between the Chinese people and international community. Student B: I think

learning English is not simple about learning a second language, it's about learning a fresh pattern of thinking. We can get a deeper understanding of the nation and the culture that is different from ours. English is powerful tool for us to connect to the outside world. So, in the last phase of POA, the criteria of assessing students' language product should include both language skills and value shaping. A collaborative assessment could be adopted by selecting a few typical student products to be evaluated in class. The teacher prepares detailed evaluations before class and then in class, the students make comments followed whole-class discussion. Most importantly, different versions should be compared and discussed to illicit different understandings of a certain topic. This kind of collaborative assessment can lead to better learning outcomes.

IV. Discussion and Conclusion

This study provides a possible method for integrating IPE into other courses in universities. Chinese universities pay high attention to IPE for students. It is one of the most important approaches for students to learn theories of society, politics and economics and understand the history of the country and the culture of the nation. It is delivered both through formal theoretical lectures as well as other specialized courses. This paper introduces the principles and the implementation of combining IPE with specialized courses in universities in China by presenting the example of Foundation English Course for English majors. The educational function of integrating IPE in Foundation English Course is to consolidate students' beliefs in moral values and help students form positive outlook on life. The topics such as the meaning of learning, the power of literature, and the social responsibility of citizens are touched upon in this course. It could be found that students will reflect on the point of receiving higher education by the end of an academic year while their enthusiasm and initiative for learning English are greatly enhanced. For example, most English majors participated in the local public welfare project which aims to help the children in the Town improve their academic performance. Meanwhile, the students also showed great learning motivation, and many students are determined to take the postgraduate entrance examination. They realized that great importance of learning English well. English can provide them with the access to the latest information, the most advanced

technology and high-quality resources in the world. At the same time, they feel the necessity of practicing language skills to enhance China's international discourse power and influence in the world.

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