A Study on Ideological and Political Education in English Teaching in Military Academies

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\textbf{Abstract.} Ideological and political education in curriculum is a new idea combining curriculum reform and ideological and political education. Through the comparative analysis of “ideological and political education in curriculum” and “ideological and political courses”, this paper explores the ways of incorporating ideological and political education into military academy’s English teaching from such aspects as teaching contents, teaching methods, and faculty development, so as to improve the effectiveness of ideological and political education in English teaching in military academies.

\section{1 Introduction}

In December 2016, President Xi Jinping pointed out clearly at the National Conference on ideological and political work in colleges and universities, “we should make good use of the main channel of classroom teaching. The ideological and political theory courses should be strengthened; the affinity and pertinence of ideological and political education should be improved; and the needs and expectations of students’ growth and development should be met. Other courses should provide good channels and do their duties, so as to make all kinds of courses and ideological and political theory courses have the same orientation and form a synergistic effect. [1]”

President Xi’s speech profoundly clarified that ideological and political education in colleges and universities is not only the main task of ideological and political courses, but also the “responsibility field” of other courses in colleges and universities [1]. Ideological and political education in curriculum and ideological and political courses are of the same kind to cultivate students’ morality. Since college English teaching in military academies is an indispensable part of humanities education, it is of high importance to carry out ideological and political education in military academy’s English teaching.

The aim of this paper is therefore to explore the ways of incorporating ideological and political education into college English teaching in military academies, with the purpose to improve the effectiveness of moral education in military academy’s English teaching and provide high-quality military foreign language personnel under the strategic goal of strengthening the army.

\section{2 A Comparative Analysis of “Ideological and Political Courses” and “Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum”}

“Ideological and political course” and “ideological and political education in curriculum” are two different terms. Generally speaking, “ideological and political courses” are the general name of the ideological and political theory education courses in colleges and universities, while “ideological and political education in curriculum” is a new word in the curriculum reform of higher education in recent years, which originates from the reform practice of Shanghai ideological and political education in curriculum. The practice of Shanghai’s ideological and political reform advocates the curriculum goal of “combining knowledge imparting with value guidance” and
incorporates the ideological and political education into all aspects of the curriculum reform of colleges and universities. Specifically, “ideological and political education in curriculum” is to strengthen college students' theoretical, political and emotional identification with Chinese culture and Chinese characteristic socialism in the process of English teaching, and to enhance students’ confidence on the road, theories, institutions and culture of Chinese characteristic socialism [2].

Therefore, Wang Haiwei [3] and Ao Zuhui [4] believe that, “ideological and political education in curriculum” is not a course or a series of courses in essence, but a new concept of curriculum, a new concept of ideological and political work, and a new way to cultivate and transmit values. Therefore, ideological and political education in curriculum must be combined with a specific course or certain courses, where the ideological and political education resources contained can be explored in-depth, so as to cultivate students’ morality in the process of knowledge imparting.

Based on this, the concepts of “ideological and political education in curriculum” and “ideological and political courses” have a certain connection: the two share the same objectives but with many differences. First, the ways of performing education between them are different. “Ideological and political course” is a kind of direct and explicit ideological and political education, while “ideological and political education in curriculum” is a kind of indirect and implicit ideological and political education. What’s more, the degrees of difficulties in implementing them are different. The implementation of “ideological and political education in curriculum” is more difficult, for it is not simply the same as “curriculum + ideological and political education”. The ideological and political resources in other courses are hidden and need more in-depth exploration to reflect. Besides, “ideology and political education in curriculum” should be presented in a way that is more acceptable to young college students, which makes it even more difficult.

3 College English Teaching and the Concept of Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum

3.1 Guidelines on College English Teaching and the Concept of Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum

Guidelines on College English Teaching is a programmatic document issued by the National Foreign Languages Teaching Advisory Board to guide foreign language teaching in colleges and universities. It is the basis for colleges and universities to formulate college English teaching syllabus, carry out college English curriculum construction and carry out college English curriculum evaluation in the new era [5]. According to it, socialist core values should be integrated with college English teaching, and it is necessary to fully explore the rich humanistic connotation of college English curriculum in order to realize the organic unity of instrumentality and humanity. Thus, Guidelines on College English Teaching clearly stipulates that the transmission and guidance of socialist core values should be incorporated into college English teaching. Language is not only a communication tool; it should also act the humanistic function as a cultural carrier. These requirements are consistent with the current concept of ideological and political education in curriculum [5]. Therefore, college English teaching should fully explore ideological and political education resources of college English curriculum, so as to integrate the college English teaching with socialist core values leading organically.

3.2 College English Syllabus of Military Academies and the Concept of Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum

Considering the teaching requirements and characteristics of military academies, the training management department formulated the College English Syllabus of Military Academies on the basis of Guidelines on College English Teaching.

In College English Syllabus of Military Academies, there are many expressions related to the
concept of ideological and political education in curriculum, such as “to cultivate the cadets’ ability to recognize cultural differences between China and foreign countries”, “to spread Chinese culture”, “to develop critical thinking...” and “to broaden international vision, adapting to the needs of professional development and foreign military exchanges”, and so on. These statements more specifically reflect the requirements of the humanistic function of military academies’ English teaching, and also provide the basis for the integration of ideological and political education with English teaching in military academies.

4. Ways to Incorporate Ideological and Political Education into English Teaching in Military Academies

4.1 Explore the in-depth Ideological and Political Educational Contents

Based on the requirements of Guidelines on College English Teaching and College English Syllabus of Military Academies, the author sorts out and summarizes three ways to explore the ideological and political education contents in college English teaching:

First, pay attention to the cultural comparison between China and the west. In college English teaching, most teaching contents are based on the texts of Britain and America, which makes the output and influence of western culture and values become the mainstream. As a college English teacher in military academies, it’s necessary to teach the cadets to be aware of the cultural differences between China and the west, which is not only limited to the differences of etiquettes, holidays and other customs, but more important is the deep analysis of the ideological level such as belief, outlook on life and morality.

Second, Tell Chinese stories well in English. The ability to spread Chinese culture in English is the basic requirements for military personnel in the future. For military cadets, they need to learn how to show and spread Chinese culture and military camp culture in English in future foreign military exchanges. To achieve this goal, we can add a special chapter of traditional Chinese culture in the teaching contents, or timely supplement the military news and hot spots around us in the teaching process, in order to improve cadets’ ability to introduce Chinese culture.

Third, explore contents related to military characteristic culture. In the process of military knowledge learning and military English skill training, we can timely insert the traditional culture of red revolution, advanced Chinese military culture and other educational contents. We can also select advanced models and heroic groups in military training and exercises as the elements of language skills training, so that the cultivation of core values of contemporary military personnel is closely related to their military life. In the process of English learning, we should create a positive and value-guiding military atmosphere.

4.2 Explore the Ways and Methods of Ideological and Political Education

Under the circumstances of military academies, the ways and methods of incorporating ideological and political education into college English teaching also need to be paid attention to. If the ways are rigid, far-fetched, or too rough, it is easy to arouse students’ antipathy and make them lose interest in English learning. The following ways and methods can be explored:

First, problem-based thinking. According to the teaching contents, teachers should design reasonable problems to arouse students’ thinking and inspire their insights during this process. There can be one or several problems, and these problems should have certain pertinence. For example, in the unit of “From Civilian to Soldier”, such question as “What are the differences between military life and civilian life?” can be put up. Through the comparison between military life and civilian life, cadets will rethink the spirits of discipline, loyalty and dedication of military personnel, and enhance their responsibility as a result.

Second, discussion. Teachers can organize the cadets to conduct some heuristic discussion in
order to trigger their thinking from the inside out and inspire them to practice it into action. For example, for topics such as individualism & collectivism, discussion like “in my view of individualism” or “in my view of collectivism” can be discussed. After the discussion, students will have a better understanding of the “collectivism” of the eastern culture and the “individual heroism” of the western culture, which can help them to cultivate the correct values of heroism.

Third, debate. For topics with distinct positive and negative views, or special controversial topics, teachers can divide students into groups to debate. In the process of debating with each other, students will deepen their mutual understanding and develop their critical thinking ability. For example, in the unit of “PLA today”, in response to some foreign media's statements about the so-called “muscle show” of the Chinese army, the teacher can divide students into several groups and organize them to debate on such topic as “Is the PLA really showing muscle? Why or Why not?” In the process of preparing, debating and reflecting, students can deepen their understanding and perception of the topic.

Fourth, practice. Practice is a direct way to enhance cognition and experience. Practice activities can be activities organized in class, such as role-play, short plays, etc., or activities organized out of the class such as military visits, military exchange etc. Put college English teaching in a broader learning background, so as to improve students' learning participation and experiential cognition.

4.3 Improve the Ideological and Political Education Ability of English Teachers

Ideological and political education ability of English teachers directly affect the effectiveness of ideological and political education in college English teaching, because the teachers are both the designers and executors.

The author interviewed the college English teachers on the cognition and implementation of ideological and political education in military academies, and found the following problems: first, many of them are lack of cognition on the connotation of ideological and political education in curriculum. Some teachers’ understanding of this concept is still in the stage of ideological and political courses. Second, there are biased cognitions of the humanistic function of college English curriculum. It is generally believed among English teachers that college English teaching is mainly to teach language knowledge, improve language skills and train the ability of intercultural communication. However, the cultivation and promotion of these knowledge and abilities are mostly based on the texts of English-speaking countries such as Britain and the United States. The humanistic functions of language are mostly embodied in these texts, which rarely involve Chinese culture and tradition, socialist core values education, etc. Third, the experience of military characteristic culture is insufficient. Currently, there are more and more civilian teachers joining in military academies’ college English teaching. They are relatively young and active in thinking. However, due to their short time in the army, they have less awareness of military life and practice, and their awareness of the army and military culture is far then enough. In this case, the influence and guidance of college English teaching on students’ military values are inevitably insufficient. Although the interviewees are limited, and the situation of ideological and political education ability of college English teachers in military academies has not been fully investigated, to some extent, the interview also reflects that the awareness and ability of ideological and political education of college English teachers in military academies needs to be strengthened urgently.

5 Conclusion

The concept of “ideological and political education in curriculum” is not limited to strengthen the value leading role of ideological and political theory courses in colleges and universities, but also to fully explore the ideological and political education functions of general courses and other courses, and to root socialist core values in general education[6]. Under the influence of multiple values in today's world, college English, as a vital general education course in colleges and
universities, should shift from mainly delivering western culture and its values to incorporate ideological and political education into it. In particular, under the military environment, the military cadets’ special mission in the future makes ideological and political education in college English teaching more worthy of attention. It is necessary to dig into the educational resources, pay attention to the ways and methods, and improve the teachers’ ability of ideological and political education so as to truly play the effectiveness of moral education in military college English teaching.

References


