

Ideological Integration in English Reading and Writing Course for Postgraduates

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English Reading and Writing for Graduate Students is the fourth edition of *English Reading for Graduate Students* published by Renmin University Press of China. The selection of materials for the course follows the principle of theme guidance, content support, and professional combination, highlighting the features of ideology, authenticity, and fashion. The outstanding feature of the course is to integrate the ideological elements and Chinese elements to the greatest extent. Relying on this textbook and the learning platform of “Renda Yunchuang”, flipped classroom teaching can be implemented. The classroom time can be used to improve language ability, ideological oriented classroom activities as well as questions and answers between teachers and students. Such smooth ideological integration cultivates graduate students’ humanistic quality, international vision, national feelings, professional ability, and innovative spirit.

Keywords: ideological integration, Chinese elements, textbooks, flipped classroom teaching, classroom activities

At the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Higher Education Institutions in 2016, President Xi Jinping emphasized that “classroom teaching should be used as the main channel, so that various courses can go hand in hand with the ideological and political theory courses, forming a synergistic effect” (Xi, 2016, p. 12). The 2018 National Education Conference (The Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, 2018) and the National Undergraduate Education Conference (Chen, 2018) both proposed the “four returns to promote the undergraduate education”, referring to the four requirements proposed by the Ministry of Education for the construction of high-level undergraduate education and talent cultivation quality, namely “return to common sense, return to responsibilities, return to original aspirations, and return to dreams”. The Ministry of Education (2018) put forward the “40 principles of higher education in the new era”, emphasizing the importance of “ideological integration in professional courses as well as the whole curriculum”, that is, to strengthen the moral education awareness of every teacher and integrate ideological education elements into each course naturally. As a result, every course possesses the ideological educational functions, and every teacher shoulders the ideological educational responsibilities. Graduate English, as one of the basic public courses for graduate students in universities, has the characteristics of multiple class hours, multiple credits, long class hours, wide coverage of teachers and students, and wide influence, thus the greater responsibility of ideological education in the course. Therefore, to strengthen the ideological functions of university classrooms, the first step

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is to increase the ideological elements of university English classrooms, and to strengthen the ideological curriculum in English classrooms, we can focus on the following four aspects.

Textbook With Enriching “Ideological Content”

A Chinese saying goes that a skillful housewife cannot make a meal without rice. As the most important material in classroom teaching, textbooks serve as a guide for teachers' instruction and students' learning. Traditional English textbooks collect mostly the reading materials related to Western culture, while those related to local Chinese culture are few and far between. Such imbalanced proportions might lead to some biased understanding in students, who might favour the Western culture over the local Chinese one, feeling that “the moon in the West is brighter than the one in China”. At the same time, due to a lack of words related to Chinese cultural expressions, students may find it difficult to introduce Chinese culture in English, resulting in the phenomenon of “Chinese culture aphasia”, which greatly affects the cultivation of the talents and the exchange and distribution of both Chinese and Western cultures. It can be seen that the content and proportion arrangement covered by textbooks directly affect the teaching content and learning outcomes. Therefore, in order to strengthen the ideological function of college English classrooms, it is necessary to integrate ideological concepts and Chinese elements into the textbooks to highlight Chinese value, including traditional Chinese culture and Chinese virtues, and to provide material support and value guidance for promoting ideological education in the curriculum.

English Reading and Writing for Graduate Students is the fourth edition of *English Reading for Graduate Students* published by Renmin University Press of China in 2020. The selection of materials for the textbook follows the principle of theme guidance, content support, and professional integration, highlighting the features of ideology, authenticity, and fashion. When revising and planning the present edition, the editors tried their best to make the integration of the ideological elements and Chinese elements the prominent feature of the textbook.

As a result, Passage A of Unit One presents President Xi Jinping's 2020 New Year Speech in which our President summarizes the major achievements made in 2019, looking forward to 2020, a year of milestone significance, giving thanks to those dedicated unsung heroes who are ordinary people living extraordinary lives, expressing his appreciation to all the hardworking people, and wishing everyone a happy new year. Besides the inspiring models and encouraging aspirations, students can also pick up dozens of the English expressions of Chinese cultural loaded words and phrases with distinctive Chinese characteristics, such as “remain true to the original mission” and “the first self-developed aircraft carrier officially commissioned”, and so on.

Passage B of Unit One, *Anecdotes of Yanzi*, portrays Yan Ying, an accomplished philosopher, statesman, and politician, as the most creative thinker of the Spring and Autumn Period in ancient China. From Passage B of Unit Six, *Feeding the World with Hybrid Rice: Prof Yuan Longping*, students will take a glimpse of how a Chinese scientist devotes himself to the greatest endeavor to benefit the world.

Out of the 30 articles in the entire textbook, five are about or closely related to China. This can effectively avoid the “invisibility” or “aphasia” of Chinese institutional, political, economic, cultural, and other elements in English textbooks, and also prevent students from losing their identification and belief in socialist core values due to excessive impact from the Western ideological trends in English learning. It can guide students to enhance their critical thinking ability and cultural consciousness through comparison, continuously enhancing their “four confidences”, namely, confidence in the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, in socialist theory, in socialist system, and in Chinese culture.

In addition to highlighting Chinese elements, the selection of materials for the entire course revolves around five major themes closely related to graduate students' learning, daily life, and future work, which are humanities and social sciences, economy and management, life and health, science and technology, environment and energy. The content of 30 articles in 15 units of the textbook covers leaders and leadership, language and culture, ecology and economy, medical research, leading scientists and pioneering research, people and the world, space and species, entrepreneurship and employment, desire and anxiety, solitude and loneliness, chip wars and tech revolution, health and disease, energy and environment, surveillance and supervision, and global green economy. These carefully selected articles, from ancient times to the present, from micro to macro, from material to spiritual, and from individuals to society, bring not only a leap in English proficiency to the students, but also a sense of patriotism, technological literacy, and international perspective as depicted in the poem that "listen to the wind, the rain and the sound of reading and care for one's family, nation and the whole world".

Another highlight of the course is the Chinese English translation module in the exercise. The selected translation content is related to the text, to China's national conditions, and to the forefront of technology, aiming to help students learn to tell Chinese stories well in English step by step.

Flipped Classroom With Subtle "Ideological Input"

In 2007, two high school teachers in the United States combined presentations with real-time explanations to create videos and upload them to the internet for students to learn independently. This teaching model, called "flipped classroom", which is based on students' autonomous learning and leaves classroom time for answering questions and solving doubts, quickly became popular and spread to the whole United States and even the whole world.

Flipped classrooms will readjust the learning time both inside and outside the classroom, allowing students to take the initiative in learning. Through this adjustment, classroom learning time will be more effectively used to solve the questions and doubts found by students during their autonomous learning process, deepening their understanding of the knowledge acquired. Moreover, it can be applied to the presentation of language tasks prepared by students after class to enhance their language ability, and it can also be applied to classroom discussions, asking and answering questions, clarifying doubts, and exercising students' critical thinking skills.

The course design, assessment methods, and teaching environment of the textbook revolve around flipped learning. The publishing house, Renmin University Press, has developed and designed a learning platform called "Renda Yunchuang". Each unit in the tutorial is equipped with micro lessons taught by excellent teachers from various universities, accompanying text reading audio, expansion exercises, and unit quizzes, English proficiency tests, and other teaching resources that are different from the content of the paper textbook. Teachers can use the online teaching platform to organize and supervise students to engage in online self-directed learning, and a large number of output activities are designed for offline classrooms to test online learning, using various forms such as Q&A and classroom discussions to unconsciously influence the ideological points of each unit.

Using this textbook for flipped classroom teaching, the teacher can explain to all the students in the first week the objectives of the course and the methods and means to achieve them, explain the use of textbook and learning platform, design classroom activities, divide students into several groups and assign activity tasks to each group, describe the detail requirement of each task, as well as the grading methods, and ensure that the team members of the first activity are clear about the details of the task and their respective roles through questioning

or paraphrasing. The flipped classroom teaching starts from the second week and usually consists of one class hour of group activities and one class hour of classroom discussions, which will revolve around the learning content of one unit per week. After completing the extracurricular platform learning, students can ask questions about the problems they encounter during the learning process. Teachers can also raise questions on the key points, difficulties, and the “ideological points” in the text, and organize students to have classroom discussions. For example, in Passage A of Unit 3, “Spillonomics: Underestimating Risk”, we can guide the in-class discussion from asking students the question, “What is the relationship between spillonomics and our daily life?” since oil spill in the ocean is something far away from us. Then we can guide the students to understand the focus of the text, “underestimating risk”, that “when an event is difficult to imagine, we tend to underestimate its likelihood.” We have a hot discussion on what the “proverbial black swan” is and cite examples on the “low-probability, high-cost events” around us. After a good brain storming, a large number of examples are accumulated, such as not paying attention to the safety exits in crowded areas, not having a fire extinguisher at home, not fastening the seat belt when driving, trying smoking out of curiosity, staying up late, and even drinking too much iced cold cola... Many students feel surprised at the visions and ideas they once overlooked, and many feel “chills in their spine”.

A major guarantee for the smooth implementation of flipped classroom is a formative evaluation system, which emphasizes the process and participation, encourages students to actively ask questions, answer questions, participate in classroom discussions, and learn to present their viewpoints in English. Teachers need to clearly state the composition and implementation methods of the formative evaluation system in the course introduction section, and systematically implement various grading details in the subsequent flipped classroom activities. Usually, students can quickly understand and actively follow up, achieving efficient and happy learning in the classroom.

Classroom Activities for the “Internalization of Ideological Thinking”

Classroom activities are an important part of flipped English classroom teaching, which can simulate real communicative contexts to enhance students’ language proficiency. Classroom interactive activities require the cooperation of students and group members, which helps cultivate students’ team spirit and collective sense of honor. When organizing classroom activities, teachers can choose themes that are conducive to “ideological education”, and moral education can be permeated through keynote speeches, case studies, group discussions, comparative analysis, and other forms. Examples of successful classroom activities include the following.

Keynote Speech

Students are required to prepare a PPT and prepare a three-minute speech given without the script. The topic of the speech includes introducing their hometown, customs and culture, famous people and activities, etc., which can also be combined with their major. For example, introducing an outstanding academic figure in their research field, perhaps a mentor they are familiar with; an authoritative academic journal in their discipline, which is often the main battlefield for their own literature learning; a high-level international conference that they yearn for day and night, which may just be held at their alma mater; a major technological breakthrough that has inspired them to become passionate; a participating research project, which may witness countless sleepless nights; a kind of scientific spirit, some admirable, some within reach. The struggle of scientists and celebrities is full of positive energy, and their excellent qualities such as diligence, kindness, and sense of responsibility are worth learning.

During the process of preparing and listening to the speeches, students broaden their horizons, train their courage, and enhance their confidence in using English.

Current Affairs Review

Students are required to download a short video of English news and make comments after playing it in class. After all the students in a group play the news and make comments, a discussion of the whole class can be organized to encourage students to make real-time comments on the news and on the comments of the news group. Finally, students can vote for the best news and comments. This activity allows students to track current events and express their opinions, and teachers can also provide ideological guidance by grasping the essence of the problem, and bringing out the crucial point. For example, we have discussed the ill-intention of some Western interest groups regarding the “Xinjiang Cotton Incident”, the lessons we Chinese can learn from the war between Russia and Ukraine, the reasons of the Jews roaming on earth for over 2000 years, and the responsibility of a responsible government regarding “Japan’s discharging of nuclear contaminated water into the Pacific ocean”. Such discussions can not only exercise students’ creative thinking and critical thinking, but also encourage them to think deeper about social issues, and keep up with the pace of faster and faster development of the times in their horizons, ideological concepts, and cognitive levels.

Group Discussion

Each group in the class will discuss the cases or questions provided by the teacher for three-five minutes. Afterwards, the group leaders or executive leaders will provide a summary and presentation to the whole class, and the teacher will make comments. Group discussion is a highly efficient means of oral training, which can give the timid or not so confident students the opportunity to speak up. Gradually they can reduce the tension when speaking on stage, and after a few activities, they often feel happy and encouraged to find themselves speaking well.

These classroom activities enable students to realize the importance of teamwork under the competitive mechanism through their own practice in the process of discussion and cooperation, as well as the importance of teamwork awareness and collective sense of honor. This is itself an important goal of cultivating students’ personality.

Teachers of High “Ideological Abilities”

First, the ideological qualities of college English teachers themselves are a prerequisite for implementing the “curriculum ideological education”. The spiritual world of teachers refers to their ideals, beliefs, and moral sentiments. In the book *General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Lectures on Importance of Education*, it is written that “Dreams should be ignited with dreams, and ideals should be awakened with ideals. Only a teacher with ideals and beliefs can sow the seeds of dreams in the hearts of children and young people” (Compilation Group of the Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 209). As teachers, we should constantly reflect on ourselves and ask ourselves whether we have the spirit of dedicating ourselves to the country and the people, whether we can firmly hold our political stance in the face of major rights and wrongs, whether we can grasp ourselves in the face of money, materialism, fame, and fortune, whether we can adhere to our moral standards, and do not follow the trend or merge with others. Although our ideals, beliefs, and moral sentiments are deeply ingrained in our hearts, they can be externalized in our words and actions. In our daily interactions with students, when discussing what we see and hear in society, and when discussing hot issues at home and abroad, the viewpoints and opinions

inadvertently revealed by teachers will play a role in shaping students' perspectives in life, in sense of worth, and in the world.

Second, teachers can form a research group and use collective lesson preparation to brainstorm and design the ideological elements of each unit in advance, and cleverly introduce this ideological guidance in the classroom through Q&A sessions or discussion sessions.

For example, in the third paragraph of Passage A "A Christmas Sermon on Peace" in Unit 6, Martin Luther King says, "Now let me suggest first that if we are to have peace on earth, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional." When students understand the meaning of "ecumenical" and "sectional", we can hold a discussion on the exact meaning of the latter part of the sentence. Students can easily associate the current situation with former US President Trump's policy of prioritizing the United States, which is undoubtedly a "sectional loyalty". They promote the hegemony of the US dollar, engage in "quantitative easing" when encountering economic crises, collecting wool from all over the world to seize the "lion's share" to achieve maximum benefits, which will inevitably lead to war and suffering, and result in large number of refugees. But China's the Belt and Road Initiative is truly "loyal to all human beings" and can bring mutual benefits and peaceful development to the world because we are all in the same community with a shared future for mankind. This preaching by Martin Luther King in the mid-19th century still holds significant relevance to today's reality. Students not only have a thorough understanding of the text, but also have a clear perspective of the current world situation as well as China's stance and means in dealing with important world issues. Such discussions render a silent transforming influence on students' ideological development and have a subtle effect of "the spring drizzle moistening things silently".

Pre-designed ideological elements are often supplemented and enriched as classroom discussions deepen. For example, Passage A, Unit 10 of the textbook, "Spell of the Rising Moon" describes the inner peace and confidence that the rising moon brings to people. Our prepared task is to compare the different associations of the full bright moon between the Chinese and the Westerners, and to understand cultural differences. But once a student called our attention to a sentence in the second paragraph, which read, "In the hush of dark I share the cheerfulness of crickets and the confidence of owls." Then he asked the question, "why are the owls confident?" Questions like this often find the teacher at a loss in giving the instant answer in class. But after the following inquiry and finding the answer, the question will be added to our reserved program. Every time when we come here, we can ask students why owls are confident. Their answers are full of imagination, such as because the owls stand high up the trees, because they prey at night, or because they have big eyes... At the end of the discussion, I often ask the students whether they have seen a picture of an owl wearing the hat of a PhD candidate. Many students nod, and suddenly they seem to realize that the feathers around the owls' eyes make them look like they were wearing glasses. Since people tend to associate wearing glasses with knowledgeable, and since knowledge may form wisdom, so wisdom brings confidence. All of a sudden, the students are enlightened and seem to get a better understanding of the meaning of the school motto "to learn and to do".

A good textbook is like a gold mine, every lesson, every round of teaching and learning experience can bring full harvest and joy to teachers and students.

Conclusion

The construction of "curriculum ideological education" is the key to cultivating morality and talents in universities, as well as cultivating builders and successors of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Graduate

English teaching bears an irreplaceable responsibility and obligation in the field of “curriculum ideological education”, and is also one of the effective carriers of moral education and talent cultivation. The use of the textbook *English Reading and Writing for Graduate Students* can successfully incorporate ideological elements into the classroom, providing education on traditional Chinese culture and the national conditions of China in the new era for our master’s and doctoral students, enhancing their cultural and national confidence, and unknowingly immersing and baptizing them with socialist core values and excellent traditional Chinese culture. Through the “curriculum ideological education”, students can not only master the essence of Western culture, but also communicate Chinese ideological and cultural concepts and value at any time, tell the world a good story of China, spread the Chinese voice, and interpret Chinese characteristics well.

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