

The Construction of a Blended Case-Based English Reading Class from the Perspective of Ideological and Political Education

Yue Zeng

Zhaoqing University, Guangdong, China

Abstract: This study examines the problems within current university English reading courses and proposes the integration of ideological and political education into these classrooms. By employing a specific article as a case study, the research analyzes the strategies for incorporating ideological and political content into a blended case-based English reading curriculum and evaluates their effectiveness in enhancing comprehensive education. Several challenges have been identified through classroom observations and post-class investigations, which will be discussed in detail in the study.

Keywords: Ideological and Political Education; Blended Teaching; English Reading.

1. Introduction

English reading course is one of the fundamental courses for English majors, playing an important role in establishing students' fundamental knowledge and skills in the English language. It not only fosters students' reading literacy but also significantly contributes to the development of critical thinking and communication skills. More importantly, through text reading, this course enables students to form correct values, establish ideal beliefs, improve moral systems, and achieve innovative development. These objectives align with the fundamental issues in education proposed in the "Guidelines for the Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Curriculum", which is the question of what kind of people to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom to cultivate them [3]. The guideline points out that cultivating students' moral character is the fundamental measure of the effectiveness of university work, and the construction of ideological and political courses is an important measure to achieve the fundamental task of cultivating students' moral character. Therefore, the course of English reading should also be designed in accordance with the requirements of ideological and political education. Although English reading courses play an important role in imparting language knowledge, developing skills, and educating students comprehensively, there are some problems in the actual teaching process.

2. Reflection on College English Reading Class

2.1. Neglect the Value of Education

Influenced by traditional education, students generally prioritize the improvement of their language skills, hoping to enhance their competitiveness in language application through classroom learning. Consequently, students tend to devote more time to mastering vocabulary and grammar knowledge as well as English reading skills, aiming to achieve higher scores through reading training; However, this focus often results in a lack of ability to analyze discourse and apply critical and creative thinking to connect learned content with reality, and further evaluate and synthesize it. As a result,

there is significant room for improvement in cultural cultivation, moral character, and innovation ability.

In English reading classes, teachers generally devote more time to analyzing new words and sentence meanings in texts, helping students understand the meaning of the reading text, and obtaining the general idea and details of the text through reading comprehension. However, they may overlook the "hidden" educational value of the reading text itself, such as providing philosophical education through the meaning of the text, guiding students to think critically or solve problems through content extension and practical application.

2.2. Lack of Integration and Utilization of Online Resources

The advancement of Internet technology has rendered network resources an indispensable component of modern teaching. These resources, characterized by their timeliness, interconnection, and innovation, have the potential to significantly enhance the efficiency of classroom instruction and broaden students' perspectives. However, the constraints of traditional teaching culture often limit instruction to textbooks and conventional examples, neglecting the incorporation of current global cases and the utilization of Internet technology. This results in a monotonous classroom format and content, which hinders the exploration of avenues for integrating ideological and political education. Furthermore, the under-utilization of online teaching resources exacerbates the time constraints and heavy workload of offline classroom teaching, impeding the deep integration of classroom instruction with ideological and political education.

3. The Idea of Integrating Ideological and Political Education into English Reading Class

An analysis of the current problems within college English reading classrooms reveals that it is of great significance to explore strategies for more effectively integrating ideological and political education into these courses. Such integration is crucial for enhancing the educational value, which encompasses not only the development of language skills but

also the cultivation of critical thinking, moral values, and social responsibility among students.

3.1. Utilize Online Platforms to Prepare for Class

English reading classes inherently require substantial time for text analysis, and relying solely on in-class time for reading and analysis is insufficient for deepening the level of teaching. As a result, students may remain at the level of memorization and basic understanding. According to Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives[2], students should be encouraged to apply their learned knowledge to analyze, evaluate, and solve problems in order to achieve deep learning. To facilitate this, teachers can utilize online platforms to upload materials and assign pre-class tasks that help students gain an initial understanding of the reading text. This approach not only reduces the pressure of offline teaching but also allows for a shift in focus towards higher-order teaching activities.

3.2. Explore Cases with Ideological and Political Elements and Integrate Them into Offline Teaching

The integration of online teaching allows teachers to reduce the amount of reading time required in offline classrooms, thereby freeing up space to focus on a deeper analysis and evaluation of the overall content. This includes not only reading skills instruction but also stylistic analysis, article comparison, critical-thinking guidance, and case analysis, achieving a comprehensive coverage of the reading classroom from the ground up. As a result, teachers can fully explore contemporary, typical, and engaging cases that have ideological and political elements, integrate them into classroom teaching, and guide students to engage in critical thinking. This approach ultimately leads to a more comprehensive education, where students not only develop their language skills but also their moral character and social awareness.

3.3. Utilize After-school Learning to Continue Ideological and Political education

To align with both teaching objectives and ideological and political goals, teachers can assign targeted assignments that are designed to foster students' critical thinking and enhance their abilities to apply, evaluate, and synthesize the content they have learned. These assignments should be carefully crafted to challenge students to go beyond mere memorization and engage with the material on a deeper level. By completing homework after class, students have the opportunity to consolidate the knowledge acquired during the lesson, thereby reinforcing their understanding and promoting the transfer of learning to real-world contexts

4. Implementation of College English Reading Lesson - Taking "English Reading 2 * Critical Thinking" as an Example

In response to the current challenges in integrating ideological and political education within college English reading classrooms, the author has incorporated class design principles into the 'English Reading 2 * Critical Thinking' course. By developing relevant teaching activities, the aim is

to enhance the potential for embedding ideological and political elements into English reading classes. The overarching goal is to elevate the educational value of English reading through a blended case-based teaching approach, achieving a multidimensional integration of language education, thinking education, and ideological and political education.

To achieve these objectives, the teaching process is structured into pre-class, in-class, and post-class segments. Ideological and political education elements, such as ideal beliefs, innovative spirit, life values, and moral concepts, are vertically integrated throughout the teaching process using multimedia resources like videos, texts, and images. Teachers employ diverse teaching methods, including lectures, collaborative discussions, and problem-oriented heuristic teaching, to facilitate online and offline communication, case analysis, and problem discussions. These methods are designed to enhance students' understanding of critical thinking and enable them to apply and analyze critical thinking in the context of ideological and political problem scenarios.

The course objectives are designed to achieve a comprehensive educational experience:

Knowledge Objective: Students will be able to comprehend the main idea (critical thinking) and detailed information of the article through reading, understand the structure of the article, and expand their vocabulary and range of expressions.

Skill Objective: Students will enhance their reading speed and information acquisition skills by practicing skimming and scanning techniques.

Emotional Objective: Students will engage in critical thinking about class discussions and improve their teamwork abilities through collaborative activities.

Ideological and Political Objective: Students will gain insights into how critical thinking is reflected in China's institutional policies, national spirit, and innovative spirit. This will be achieved through pre-reading problem discussions, case analysis during reading, and post-reading activities, which aim to enhance cultural confidence, strengthen beliefs, and improve intellectual wisdom, ultimately helping students to establish a correct outlook on life and values.

The course is structured to integrate ideological and political education with English reading skills through a series of pre-class, in-class, and post-class activities:

Pre-class: Teachers assign relevant preview tasks via the online platform Rain Classroom, which includes reading textbook texts, exploring relevant literature, watching videos, and contemplating related issues. The reading material focuses on the conceptual understanding of critical thinking, while the video content highlights 'China's System Advantages in the Fight against the COVID-19 Epidemic'. These activities provide students with a preliminary understanding of critical thinking and its value within the Chinese system, establishing a theoretical foundation for classroom participation and enhancing cultural confidence.

Pre-reading in class: Building on pre-class learning tasks, students delve into the concept of critical thinking and discuss how the Chinese system exemplifies its value. They can share their insights through the 'KeTang.Cool' platform or in-person discussions.

While-Reading: Teachers guide students in using skimming and scanning techniques to grasp the general idea

and details of the article, analyze vocabulary and article structure, and understand the methods of critical thinking. A case study on 'National Innovation' (video: 'Understanding China: Innovation Driven') allows students to explore how critical thinking can lead to innovation, aligning text-reading with ideological and political education.

Post-reading: Students enhance their ability to apply knowledge to solve real-life problems through role-playing exercises related to critical thinking in everyday scenarios, achieving the goal of spiritual guidance.

After-class: Teachers assign writing assignments through online platforms, encouraging students to summarize the content and methods of critical thinking, evaluate the challenges and innovative practices faced by the country during the epidemic period, and reflect on personal development and perspectives on life's problems and challenges. These assignments also serve as a means to assess students' understanding and application of critical thinking.

5. Evaluation of Effectiveness

This blended case-based English reading class innovatively integrates ideological and political education into the curriculum, achieving a harmonious blend of knowledge, skill, emotional, and ideological and political goals. From the outset of curriculum design, the teacher leverages online platforms for preparatory knowledge and communication, designs student-centered classroom activities, and seamlessly integrates multimedia case studies with ideological and political elements. Additionally, the teacher guides students to comprehensively understand the definition of critical thinking,

apply it to analyze and evaluate cases, and solve real-life problems. Furthermore, the teacher incorporates ideological and political topics into post-class evaluations, fully harnessing the comprehensive educational potential of the English reading class. This aligns with the purpose of implementing ideological and political education in courses, which is to achieve a combination of knowledge transfer and value guidance in course education, thereby realizing the fundamental educational goal of cultivating virtue and nurturing talent [1].

The integration of ideological and political elements is evident in the significant guiding role played by institutional cultural confidence, ideal beliefs, innovative spirit, and life values in the English reading class. Students engage in classroom activities by attaching ideological and political elements to the case studies, unconsciously absorbing the guidance of these values as they understand and apply critical thinking. The case studies are fundamental in carrying ideological and political elements. For instance, in reading activities, students can use critical thinking to analyze how China achieves technological innovation (new energy vehicles, WeChat Pay, artificial intelligence) amid difficulties and challenges, which helps them understand that achieving critical thinking requires avoiding narrow-minded thinking, overcoming fear, and stepping out of comfort zones. Consequently, the great innovative spirit of China subtly enters the hearts of students, thereby strengthening their ideals and beliefs. Not only this case, but other cases as well (refer to Table 1 for details), have achieved the comprehensive educational effect in the curriculum's ideology and politics.

Table 1. The effectiveness of ideological and political education in the lesson

Teaching Stage/Content	Teaching effectiveness
Pre-class: Preview articles, watch videos, and think about problems	Students can understand the concept of critical thinking and appreciate the critical thinking reflected in the Chinese system, thus establishing institutional and cultural confidence.
Pre-reading: Further explore the meaning of critical thinking and analyze how critical thinking is reflected in the Chinese system based on the pre-class preview content.	Students can understand critical thinking through the case of institutional advantages in the COVID-19, and imperceptibly form cultural confidence.
While-reading: Reading comprehension and case analysis	Students can understand how critical thinking could be reflected in the technological innovation through the case analysis, which promotes innovative spirit.
Post-reading: Scene role playing	Students can apply critical thinking to address their problems in reality, thus integrating critical thinking into their value system and achieving the spirit guidance.
After-class: Writing for reflection	The assignment can enable students to apply their learned knowledge, transform the understanding of critical thinking into an understanding of the country, society, and individuals, strengthen their ideals and beliefs, promote national spirit, and establish a correct outlook on life and morality.

The design of blended teaching demonstrates that the integration of online components can significantly enhance the achievement of ideological and political education objectives within the curriculum. Firstly, online pre-class learning lays a solid foundation for knowledge accumulation, allowing students to prepare in advance for case discussions related to ideological and political education that will take place in class. Given the depth of the case content, which encompasses both ideological and political elements and analytical methods, students are encouraged to engage in more independent thinking to grasp its significance. Thus, in-class learning acts as a support for ideological and political education. Secondly, online teaching has effectively played its

role in ideological and political education, with in-class learning and online communication combining to facilitate better student participation in problem discussions, leading to a more organic integration of ideological and political education.

From the classroom design and curriculum evaluation, it is evident that a student-centered teaching approach empowers students with agency. Through collaboration and critical thinking, they can more effectively absorb the essence of ideological and political education from case discussions. Consequently, students not only master professional knowledge but also enhance their cultural literacy.

6. Reflection and Suggestion

The English reading class leverages the characteristics of blended learning and case analysis to deepen course content and enrich the methods of ideological and political education, achieving an effective integration of language teaching with ideological and political education. However, through classroom observation and post-class investigation, several challenges have been identified.

Online platforms offer valuable preview materials that facilitate understanding of course content and enhance the educational role of reading classes. Yet, self-directed learning demands a certain level of self-management ability from students. Previews may not yield the desired results, particularly for students lacking self-discipline, which poses challenges for cooperative learning and the development of ideological and political education. These students often rely more on teachers' explanations and lack the ability for self-exploration. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to help students enhance their self-learning abilities, foster a spirit of self-exploration, and cultivate the habit of independent thinking.

The integration of case studies into English reading enriches and deepens course content, positively affecting students with strong language skills. However, it may create pressure for students who are struggling, making it a teaching

challenge to encourage every student to engage in learning.

Case analysis enlivens the classroom learning environment, making it more engaging and meaningful. However, due to limited vocabulary and language organization skills, many students may hesitate to express their opinions for fear of making language mistakes or misunderstandings. Thus, the implementation of curriculum ideology and politics in English reading requires strengthening students' vocabulary accumulation, overcoming their fear of mistakes, and improving their language expression abilities.

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