Research on Effect of Ideological and Political Education into English Reading Courses

-- Taking a Class in MOOC as an Example

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Abstract

Based on a self-constructed ideological and political elements framework, output theory and students-oriented principle and by virtue of a research instrument of AntConc, this study tries to explore the effect of ideological and political education into English reading courses. Taking on-class discussion of students from an English reading class in MOOC as research discourse, this paper concludes that (1) almost all students maintain ideological identity and show right political stance when in an English class; (2) while most students lack critical thinking ability when answering some certain question and find it hard to flexibly employ English language ability to present their ideas.

Keywords

Ideological and political elements; Effect; AntConc; English reading class.

1. Introduction

Since the issuing of The Guiding Outline of the Curriculum Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities by the Chinese Ministry of Education in May 2020, nationwide colleges and universities have been responding to the call proactively that till now a plenty of researches conducted from different perspectives come to fruition. However, among present literatures, there is little study particularly on the effect that the work of ideological and political education into college courses has gained. For this reason, the author is going to to proceed a study about the effect nowadays that students get ideological and political education in university English courses.

2. Literature Review

In the database of China National Knowledge Infrastructure(CNKI), core articles about IPE of colleges or universities are 40, most of which are published in recent two years since the issuing of The Guiding Outline in 2020. Having a throughout reading, the author draws a conclusion that those literatures can be mainly sorted into three categories: review about ideological and political education (IPE) books, theoretical analysis of how to integrate ideological and political elements into English courses, and experimental study of the integration. Li Qiang(2021) taking Ideological and Political Education and Higher Education Development as a reference, concluded ideological and political elements that are embedded in college English courses, and the values and methods of the elements' application [2]. Theoretically, Mei Qiang(2018) explored how to conduct a complete and appropriate upper design of IPE. He gave his suggestion in two aspects: macro and micro [4]. The Education Ministry should make it clear that what philosophy, principles and methods higher schools have to maintain when proceeding IPE. Also, it should be encouraged that first-level teachers demonstrate model

classes involved with ideological and political elements, which then are to be further popularized nationwide schools.

Though there is a lack of articles on the effect of IPE in Chinese database, part of articles involves it in college courses in some international jounals. For example, Xiaoqing He(2021) along with other three scholars investigated students' acceptability to the online ideological and political courses through a questionnaire survey [8]. According to her results, more than half of the students have a good understanding of the comprehensive ideological and political courses and have gained progress in their values, ideology, morals, and knowledge. And more than half of the students have a positive attitude to the course, and think that the class atmosphere was active, which generated a satisfactory learning effect [8]. Besides, Liu Chongxiao(2021) taking online Business English course as teaching carrier, constructed a theoretical framework of how to proceed IPE in this course and verified the effectiveness by analyzing his teaching journals and interview materials with the students, as well as feedbacks to this curriculum [1]. It proved that IPE into English class has gained part of achievements, but at the same time pointed out some existing problems followed with his suggestions.

Output comes out after input, which mostly straight-forward reflects the effect of a course onto students. Despite of some literatures involving effects of IPE in English courses, there is still a lack of more detailed exploration into the micro materials that reflect whether students absorb ideological and political elements or not, such as students' writings, spoken homework, or free talk in classes. And due to online English courses shooting out at an exceptional pace in the post-pandemic era, this research is going to analyze students' discussing discourses over certain ideological and political topic and then measure to what extent such classes reach its goal.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Ideological and Political Elements

In accordance with the goals and core contents of The Guiding Outline of the Curriculum Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities, English ideological and political courses are responsible for embodying ideas of loving the Communist Party of China, the People's Republic of China, all Chinese people, and the collective, for cultivating students the Chinese political identity, homeland sensations, Chinese culture identity, the Constitutional sprits, and traditional virtues. From the article by Liu (2021), his self-designed ideological and political English teaching research encompasses such five dimensions as (i) Ideological and political elements: morality, Chinese, modernity, (ii) professional elements: basic ability, and professional ability to exam the effectiveness of IPE in the English course. This is his theoretical framework (see Figure 1) [1].

Referring to his framework and other literatures, this study extracts two dimensions due to quality of the research discourse (ideological identity and critical thinking ability) including more specific elements (right outlooks of the world, life and value, collectivism, and harmony; basic language skills, innovation, dialectical thinking model, and cooperation) as variables to measure IPE effect. Here are the ideological and political elements to be examed (see Figure 2).
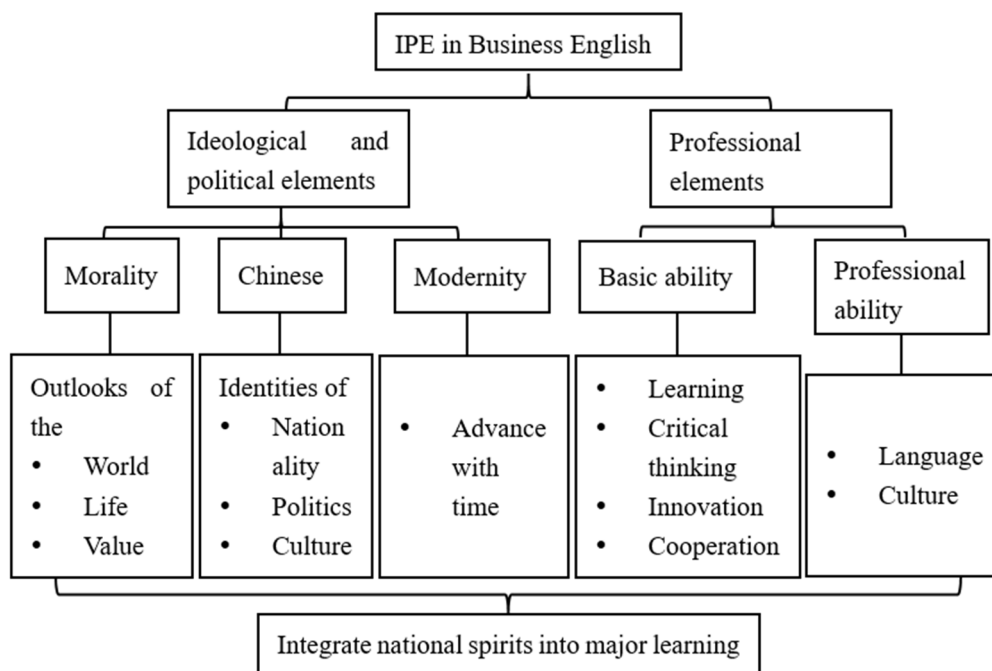
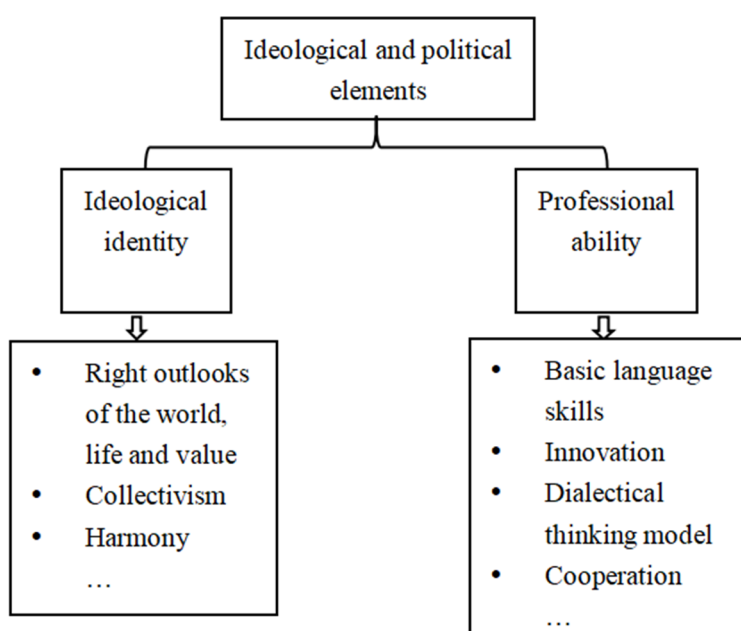**Figure 1.** Liu's research theoretical framework [1]

Figure 2. The ideological and political elements to be dealt with

3.2. Output Theory and Students-Oriented Principle

Production-oriented approach (POA) was a new teaching theory with Chinese characteristics by Wen Qiufang in 2014, in order to change behind-lagged traditional teaching model which focuses on language input [7]. In POA, teachers put their teaching target at students' production, which we can gather for a check of their learning effects, because learning effect shows itself in the output of the learners. On-class discussions no matter what forms, written or spoken, can be a representation of the effect of students' learning.

Liu(2021) conceived how to integrate IPE into Business English course, in which he obeyed a teacher-directed, students-oriented, and contents-sketched principle [1]. He highlighted that a course should become a stage for students proactively participating into learning process where they are the leading roles instead of being leaded by teachers from stem to stern. During

the design of the IPE in classes, it should be guaranteed that there will be various class learning activities and abundant teaching contents so as to promote students' learning interest and proactivity. And eventually, those learning protagonists have the chance in taking part in the program of IPE in class, duiring which students get ideological and political sense improved. Therefore, class free discussion concerning given topics is of necessity.

4. Research Procedures

4.1. Research Object

This study chooses one of the opening discussions of students targeting on a topic of "Living in Harmony with Nature" in a reading course which was introduced by Peking University on the MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) platform in China in 2021 as research discourses. The question with its requirement provided here for students is "Does living in harmony with nature equal to doing nothing to the world around us? Please explain your viewpoints in detail." After sorting of all answers from learners, a total of 84 pieces of discourse materials is prepared for analysis.

What purpose this class wants to reach through the topic discussion is to check the basic understanding and what attitude students hold to the Chinese ideological identity(see Figure 2). The question as well as its requirement "Does living in harmony with nature equal to doing nothing to the world around us? Please explain your viewpoints in detail" is used to exam (1) ideological identity: whether students have right understanding of living in harmony with nature under the Chinese ideological and political education, and (2) professional skills: whether students can take dialectical method to view one event from at least two different perspectives and express themselves flexibly in English language.

4.2. Research Questions

(1) This research tries to evaluate whether this class reached its ideological and political education goal, according to the above ideological and political elements in Figure 2.

(2) If "yes" to question 1, referring to the Figure 2, this study wants to demonstrate the specific distribution of the two dimensions: ideological identity and professional skills.

4.3. Research Methods

With the aid of AntConc, this study is going to (1) analyze the whole discourse by generating high-frequency word list to check the main opinion of students to this question, and (2) investigate whether when students answering the given question invlove ideological and political elements or not by indexing some certain words related to IPE and calculating each words' frequency percentages.

5. Data Analysis and Results

5.1. Analysis of Ideological Identity

To check whether students' learning effect embodies IPE or not, we do analysis from two dimensions: ideological identity and professional ability. First, we begin with the analysis of ideological identity. Here by harnessing two functions in AntConc—Concordance and Word List, we can be time-saving and more efficient. According to the "word list" function of AntConc, word frequency list can be generated in positive or negative sequence based on the corpus that has been already prepared from the discussion discourse [5] [6]. There below presents the top 20 words according to each one's frequency in the corpus (see Table 1).

The Word list sorted by frequency in AntConc shows the main words that were discussed. In other words, it shows the keywords that those students chose to answer the question, which

indirectly reflects their ideological and political stance to some extent. From Table 1, it can be viewed that the most high-frequency word is "nature", used by students to answer the question 187 times in 2724 words of the corpus in total. As we also can see, except from functional words like "the" "to" "and" "in" and etc, material words in the list are "we" "harmony" "environment" "human" "living" "world" and "live" besides "nature", all of which are related to the question and its requirement.

And from single words like "harmony", some characteristics of Chinese ideological and political elements appear out. Aligned with figure 1, one element inside is "harmony", a time-aged conception in Chinese mind, which is advocated a lot in China.

Table 1. Top 20 high-frequency words in the corpus

Rank	Frequency	Word
1	187	nature
2	133	the
3	110	to
4	97	and
5	80	we
6	79	in
7	76	with
8	73	is
9	67	of
10	63	harmony
11	61	not
12	40	a
13	38	should
14	34	environment
15	33	human
16	32	it
17	30	are
18	30	living
19	28	world
20	24	live

Taking "Concordance" function in Antconc, we can pick up certain words for indexing and then here comes what kind of data we want. Here some singles words or collocates related to IPE were put in for indexing, then Concordance Hits will be shown in the list, like Figure 3. To uncover students' ideological and political education progress through the answers to the given question with its requirements, we need to index certain words related to IPE. Here we first set "no" "not equal" "don't" "wrong" as search terms, we get 42 concordance hits altogether, which means regarding to the given question, there are 50% students contend that living harmony with nature does not equal to doing nothing to the word around us in an explicit expressing way. Then we set "harmony" "coexistence" "balance" as search terms, 77 concordance hits we get as shown in Table 2 "ideological identity" part demonstrates that 35 students though they do not show their opinions explicitly hold the same ideological and political stance with that of the 42 students. From the percentage of 91.7% indexing words directly related to IPE proves that almost all students keep Chinese ideological identity. Probing into the detailed context of

each research term, what idea of each student wants to convey circles around "living harmony with nature does not equal to doing nothing to the word around us".
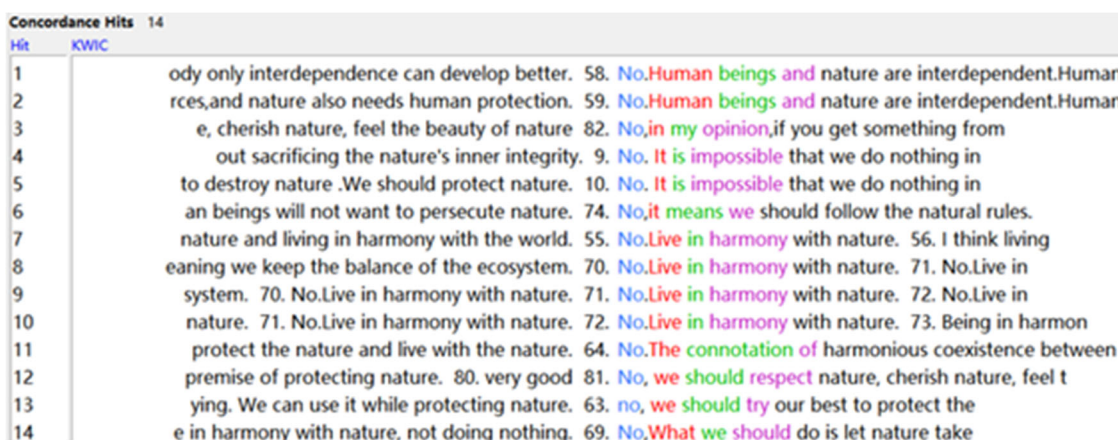

Figure 3. The first example of Concordance Hits hits generated by AntConc

5.2.   Analysis of Critical Thinking Ability

Having selected some certain words relevant to critical thinking ability, this paper adopts the same function as the former part, setting search terms as "dialectical" "dialectics" "unity" "both … and", and here is a part of concordance hits result as follow (see Figure 4). A total of only 10 concordance hits was gotten, accounting for only 8.4% of percentage (see Table 2 critical thinking ability part). This result reflects that most students of this class cannot take Marxism to think of questions, only giving their own attitude plainly and saying what floats in their shallow areas of mind. One problem that this result shows out lies on that most students lack critical thinking ability featured with treating problems in a dialectical way. The other problem is that the language skill employed for writing falls behind what they want to express. For example, some answer just is "no" or "not at all".
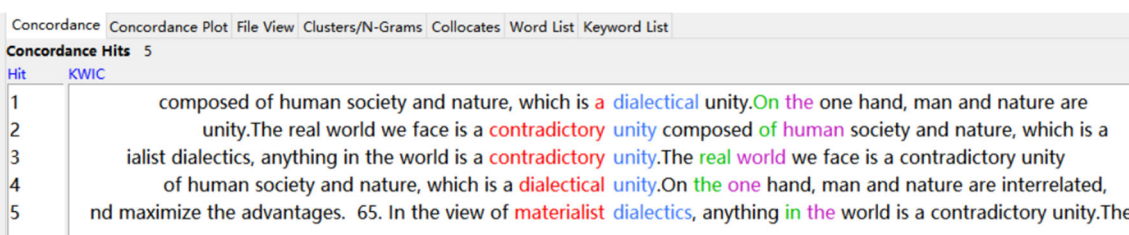

Figure 4. The second example of Concordance Hits

Table 2. Concordance hits and percentages of ideological and political elements

	Indexing words or collocates	Concordance hits	Percentages
Ideological identity	no not equal don't wrong	42	50%
	harmony coexistence balance	77	91.7%
Critical thinking ability	dialectical dialectics unity both… and	10	8.4%

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

According to the self-instructed theoretical framework, we here explore two dimensions (ideological identity and critical thinking ability) to investigate the effect of IPE in this English class. After an illustrated analysis according to the two scopes, there comes to a final conclusion: (1) almost all students keep right Chinese ideological identity, showing their right political stance, which indirectly proves that this reading class reaches its goal to integrate ideological and political elements into English classes; (2) unfortunately most students fail to display their dialectical ability towards problems and they could not apply English language ability freely and variously to present their ideas. Thus, teachers should further explore how to develop the critical thinking ability of the students and to forge their output faculty.

Inevitably, this research with a limited study discourses and analyzing methods needs more to improve, which should be more detailed analysis from more dimensions of ideological and political elements. However, this paper gives a new study scope from students' output to show how ideological and political education is integrated into English classes. It is a true wish that in the future there will be further more researches from output of students with more excellent detailed research discourses and methodology.

Acknowledgments

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