

Study on the Effectiveness of Infusing Ideological Education into Extracurricular Activities in Foreign Language Teaching

Tang Guifen

Department of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Publishing and Printing College, Shanghai, 200093, China

Tang_gefei@sppc.edu.cn

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Abstract: This article aims to examine the effectiveness of infusing ideological education into extracurricular activities in foreign language teaching. The activity “International Communication Short Video Competition: Telling Stories about Chinese People” was taken as an illustrative example to interpret students’ language performance from the perspective of discourse analysis. High words frequency processed by AntConc3.4.2 reflected the ideological elements in the video scripts, including patriotism, dedication, hard work, unity and friendship. A questionnaire was also administered to 539 students to find out their attitude to these activities. The results showed that students benefited a lot from participating in a wealth of extracurricular activities in the aspects of knowledge acquisition, philosophy of life, and professional skills. Since various extracurricular activities play an important role in shaping core values and morality standard, the article provides teachers with insight about how to integrate ideological education into practical tasks in curriculum-based ideological education.

1. Introduction

Language, as a tool for human communication, carries more ideas and culture senses beyond its instrumental and technical nature. The significance of foreign language teaching in establishing correct values for students cannot be underestimated. Not only should students be imparted language and cultural knowledge, but also be encouraged to shoulder the mission of inheriting and promoting Chinese civilization. Therefore, foreign language teaching must take on more responsibilities, striving to meet the requirements of curriculum-based ideological education by continuously optimizing teaching design, improving the quality of student training, and deepening the reform of curriculum and practice systems.[3].

As a basic literary course offered to all students at college level, foreign language curriculum constitutes significant infrastructure of all-round education. Focusing on the goal of “value shaping, knowledge imparting, and ability cultivation”, foreign language courses are student-centered, carrying out foreign language teaching and ideological cultivation in and out of class.

With “ideological education” and “foreign language” as keywords, a search was conducted on CNKI from core journals and CSSCI, resulting in a total of 121 relevant research articles. Since 2015, the overall attention to ideological education in foreign language courses has shown a steady growth trend, and researches were mainly focused on themes and hot topics such as “curriculum-based ideological education”, “national consciousness”, “cultural confidence”, “teaching design”, “ideological and political construction”, and “practical paths”.

Zhang (2020) proposed that combining theory with practice is a fundamental requirement of higher education, but how to carry out ideological education of foreign language courses in practice has not received sufficient attention yet[6]. It was also pointed in the article that teachers should not only impart knowledge in the classroom, but also teach life philosophy and cultural differences both inside and outside the classroom, advocating for a positive outlook on life and values. Yang (2021) took the case “College Students Telling Chinese Stories in Foreign Language” as a field practice to find out the effectiveness of integrating language teaching and values cultivation[5]. By participating in this social practice activity, students can activate their existing cultural and language knowledge, improve their English proficiency, cultivate patriotism and international perspective. Wang et al. (2022) also pointed out that in order to avoid theoretical teaching in the curriculum-based ideological education, it is necessary to carry out student-centered practical situational activities and create a campus culture that is conducive to ideological education and morality construction[4].

Previous studies indicate that foreign language teachers have gained a good understanding of the importance of extracurricular activities and social practice in cultivating students morality and values. Still, forms and connotations of extracurricular activities in foreign language courses need to be further explored, and paths need to be enriched, and effectiveness of such practice needs to be proved.

2. Research Design

This study focuses on the comprehensive educational goals of “knowledge imparting, value shaping, and ability cultivation”, exploring the path and effectiveness of infusing ideological education into extracurricular activities in foreign language teaching.

2.1 Research Questions

This paper aims to answer the following research questions:

What are the language features demonstrated in the extracurricular activities?

What are the ideological elements reflected in the extracurricular activities?

How do participants respond to the extracurricular activities of foreign language courses?

2.2 Research Subjects

Among the annual language and cultural activities held by Shanghai Publishing and Printing College, one is called English short video with the theme of “Telling Stories about Chinese People”. This article illustrates the effectiveness of infusing ideological education into the foreign language short video competition. Based on the scripts of the competition videos, this study explores the connotation, approaches, and effects of such practical activities in foreign language courses.

A total of 26 individual or group entries were received from the event, including 22 videos in English, two videos in French, and two videos in Japanese. One of them was an aerial photo of China, which was excluded from the analysis scope.

There were all together 15 videos about the stories of individuals and two videos about group

characters. The background of individual character images spans a wide range of times, from the Spring and Autumn Period to contemporary China. They are mostly well-known Chinese celebrities, including scientists, national leaders and feminist leaders, outstanding contributors to cultural, historical and artistic industries, sports celebrities, special groups of physically disabled individuals, and pioneers of international communication from ancient to modern times. They have made tremendous contributions to Chinese revolution, technology, and education in respective fields, and their stories have been written into textbooks or presented on the big screen of “People Who Moved China” to be passed down to the offspring. Group character images can also be seen everywhere in life, including voluntary social workers and practitioners of Lei Feng’s spirit (Lei Feng was a well-known soldier in China. He died young, but he loved his country and served people whole-heartedly in his lifetime. With these great deeds, he set a role model to generations of people in China).

2.3 Research Tools

AntConc3.4.2 was administrated to analyze the texts of 22 English video works. AntConc is a corpus analysis toolkit for concordance and text analysis [1]. A questionnaire was carried out online to find out the proportion of students participating in the foreign language extracurricular activities, and their attitudes to such activities.

3. Results and Discussion

This paper reports words of high frequency, analyzes the characteristics of these words in the context of the foreign language videos, and discusses the ideological elements conveyed in the script. The paper also reports the results of the questionnaire, which sheds more light on the effectiveness of infusing ideological education into extracurricular activities.

3.1 Characteristics of the Language in the Videos

There are a total of 4,641 English word frequencies and 1,496 English word types. Vocabulary characteristics are analyzed in the following context.

3.1.1 High Frequency Words

The high-frequency vocabulary in order are “China, people, Chinese, life, dream, world, years, high, great, country, hard work, successful, always, development, better, spirit, family, struggle, culture, heart, generations, future, achievement, others, good, important, hope, help, national, influential, and outstanding.”

The videos center around the high-frequency word “China” and tell a series of stories happening in China, including “people’s great dream, hard years of struggles, tremendous achievement, great influence, holy spirit, generations’ hope, mutual help in the world, promising future, the development of science and technology in China, and so on.

3.1.2 Features of Positive Vocabulary

The positive vocabulary in video works can be classified into several major categories: country and people, contribution and achievement, effort and struggle, dedication and sacrifice.

Firstly, positive vocabulary about country and people mainly include specific terms such as “China, country”, as well as abstract terms such as “great motherland, the Chinese spirit, and the Chinese story”. These terms are closely related to the video competition activity of narrating “Chinese People”, reflecting students’ pride in “China’s development, achievements, and

contributions”. A vocabulary concordance search was made on “China”, the result of which shows expressions such as “in China, of China, for China, modern China”.

Positive vocabulary about contribution and achievement demonstrates a series of verbs such as “create, establish, build, explore, and open up”. The verbs are used in the following contexts: creating women’s high schools, creating hybrid rice breeding theories, exploring the path of technological development, founding newspapers, and opening up new paths. The nouns after the verb reflect the contributions and achievements made by renowned Chinese characters. They are in agreement with the Chinese People’s honorary titles such as “founder and expert”.

The expressions that mean “effort/struggle” include the following: striving to take everything seriously, working hard without pay, fighting spirit, and working hard in the fields. The meaning of “hardship” is reflected between the lines, such as experiencing countless setbacks, struggling for happy life, putting in more hardships than ordinary people, breaking the western stereotype of Chinese, taking countless notes and making millions of experiments, which all contain the meaning of hard work and overcoming difficulties.

The words with the meaning “dedication and sacrifice” include the following: devote half of your life to the vast desert, devote your life to the great Belt and Road cause, rush into a burning dangerous house, share a common destiny with the motherland, serve the people wholeheartedly, and make selfless contributions to communism. The actions of these “Chinese People” demonstrate their lifetime dedication and spirit of sacrifice.

Whether it is the loyalty and patriotism of scientists or the unwillingness of ordinary people to submit to fate, it is only because they carry dreams: the dream of becoming a technological powerhouse, the dream of protecting Dunhuang Grottoes (a world cultural heritage site in Gansu Province, China), the dream of childhood, and the dream of wiping out feminine in the world. Therefore, they are constantly pursuing and building dreams, as well as supporting other people to chase dream lives.

3.2 Ideological Elements

Extracurricular activities and competitions in foreign language teaching are carriers for explaining the truth deeply, thoroughly, and vividly. They not only enable students to improve their understanding and ideological level in real life, but also test their ability to apply professional knowledge and skills to practical use. “Telling Stories about Chinese People” short video dissemination competition played a positive role in the comprehensive education of students, confirming the success of curriculum-based ideological education.

3.2.1 Stimulating Patriotism, and Reinforcing Ideals and Beliefs

Patriotism is the spiritual bond of the Chinese national unity, struggle, and self-improvement. As the grand picture of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation unfolds, students not only narrate the deeds of exemplary figures, but also deeply understand the Chinese spirit, including the spirit of scientific research, the spirit of manned spaceflight, the spirit of Road and Belt Initiative”, the spirit of “reform and innovation”, and so on.

In addition, exemplary quotes by students in the video scripts reflect emotional touch that students received from the activities, such as “Looking back on my life, I can’t talk about any great achievements, I can only say that I didn’t waste time and did something for the country. I just want to say to young people, we must put the country in our hearts, always put the country first, remember history, and cherish today’s life.” Aviation expert Gu Songfen made outstanding contributions, but he evaluated himself very modestly. His spirit of caring for the country and silently dedicating himself resonates strongly with young students.

3.2.2 Drawing on the Strength of Struggle, and Achieving Self discipline and Self promotion

Based on the language use in describing role models, it can be seen that students have drawn strength from them, such as “This is the achievement he has made through strenuous training and overcoming shortcomings. His success is inseparable from his height and effort”, “We must first protect our country before securing personal happiness. I will continue to contribute my unique brilliance, and by participating in volunteer services, we can build a loving and harmonious society together.” These fearless individuals who prioritize people’s life safety, strive beyond themselves on the competitive field, silently contribute to a harmonious society, and tirelessly pursue the cause of science and technology in our country will inspire students to forge ahead on the path of building their dreams, establish lofty ideals through role models, and achieve the unity of personal and social values.

3.2.3 Adhering to Integrity and Developing Team Spirit

The English video competition activity of “Telling Stories about Chinese People” is also a test of students’ media and digital literacy. According to the activity rules, video material must be original. In the case of quoting materials from others, the source must be annotated with text to ensure no copyright disputes. The narration of the work must be dubbed by team members and cannot be done using artificial intelligence or video software. In the acknowledgment section, a total of 26 works were annotated with the source of the materials and the original author, and all of the videos were dubbed by the participating members. Although the pronunciation revealed imperfections or even minor errors, participants adhered to the principle of integrity rather than resort to dishonest methods.

3.3 Students’ Feedback on Extracurricular Activities

In addition to the English short video dissemination competition, Shanghai Publishing and Printing College organizes a series of language and cultural activities such as vocabulary contest, speaking contest, dubbing contest, English songs contest, recitation activity, English writing contest, and contest of drawing English picture books. A questionnaire survey was conducted among students participating in foreign language practice activities, and it was found that out of 539 survey participants, 73.6% of them participated in one or more of the above activities. In terms of motivation for participation, 58.75% of students said it was to motivate them to achieve personal progress, 32.3% said it was to challenge difficulties, and 42.02% said it was out of personal hobbies; In terms of the benefits from practical activities, 54.17% of students reported having made solid acquisition of foreign language knowledge, followed by increased self-discipline (37.66%), overcoming fear of difficulties (33.95%), forming friendships (31.73%), and enhancing professional skills (29.5%).

4. Conclusion

Satisfying results have been achieved in foreign language teaching with an integration between ideological education and extracurricular activities. Ideological elements in the video scripts connote patriotism, lifetime dedication, hard work, unity and friendship. Students took an active attitude to such activities and made self improvements in a comprehensive way.

In terms of teaching methods, infusing ideological education into practical activities in foreign language classes is to enable students to acquire knowledge and skill, and gain joy in the process of putting their theoretical knowledge into practice, which is also a vivid case of implementing the “Three Elements and Three Styles” curriculum-based ideological paradigm in foreign language

teaching. Integrating ideological elements into extracurricular activities is a successful example of integrating morality into teaching and integrating education into entertainment [2]. “Three Elements and Three Styles” curriculum-based ideological paradigm promotes the synchronous improvement of students’ ideological and moral character, cultural literacy as well as professional ethics in a subtle and silent way.

In terms of teaching time and space, the “Comprehensive Ideological Education” in extracurricular activities breaks through the limitations of classroom space and shifts towards a broader time-space dimension based on students’ learning, life, and growth. It extends from the classroom to the extracurricular, and from the offline classroom to the online virtual society, achieving collaborative education between ideological courses and foreign language courses. Various extracurricular practical activities carried out in foreign language courses have enhanced students’ comprehensive language abilities, as well as their international communication abilities to spread Chinese culture and stories. Therefore, infusing ideological education into the extracurricular activities in foreign language teaching is an effective path to achieve the comprehensive educational goals of “knowledge acquisition, values cultivation, ability enhancement, and emotional quotient improvement”.

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