

A Practical Study on Integrating Moral Education into College English Reading Teaching in the Digital Context

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Abstract: Digital transformation offers a new opportunity and technological support for implementing moral education in College English reading teaching. Starting from the internal connection between moral education and College English reading teaching, this paper summarizes and analyzes the current situation and problems of moral education in reading teaching in the digital era, and then proposes a four-dimensional practical approach for introducing moral education content into reading teaching: selecting reading materials to reflect moral elements, using technological means to change teaching forms, incorporating moral goals into instructional design, and evaluating according to standards to promote educational success. This paper also illustrates a unified design method of pre-class, in-class, and post-class teaching and a digital resource utilization scheme with the aim to provide practical examples for the teaching reform of moral education in College English reading teaching.

Keywords: Moral education; College English Reading; Digitalization

1. Introduction

At present, information technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence have entered the field of education extensively, and the digitalization of higher education is an inevitable trend. The *Strategic Action Plan for Educational Digitalization* proposed by the Ministry of Education in 2022 clearly regards digital technology as a teaching method to be applied, requiring overall innovation in education[1]. The teaching of College English courses will also undergo changes. It will shift from traditional classroom teaching to the combined use of various teaching methods, including both online and offline approaches, as well as a combination of the two.

The construction of moral education has been regarded as a fundamental approach for higher education in the new era to fulfill the mission of cultivating virtue and promoting talent development. In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines for the Construction of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions to promote the development of moral education in all schools and all courses, unifying value guidance, knowledge teaching, and ability training[2]. In terms of College English, its instrumentality and humanism are well suited to teaching related to international understanding or national identity, so it is a very promising and worthy construction field for moral education[3].

College English reading teaching is the fundamental approach for language input, cultural learning and thinking training, and it carries profound educational implications. In the digital age, how to better integrate moral education into reading teaching and achieve both value guidance and language teaching purposes is a key issue that College English teachers need to address. This study first analyzes the connection between moral education and College English reading, the practical difficulties and solutions, and uses examples to illustrate its feasibility, striving to provide ideas with reference value for teaching practice.

2. The Relationship between Moral Education and College English Reading Teaching

2.1 The Connotation of Moral Education

Moral education represents a completely new perspective on courses and a new educational philosophy. Its core lies in integrating moral education into all aspects of curriculum teaching and reform, and achieving the unity of knowledge transmission, ability cultivation, and value shaping[2]. Moral education is a new idea and new concept, which takes it as the core to consider all aspects of curriculum and teaching, and incorporates knowledge, ability, and value into a unified construction track. Wen Qiufang conducted an analysis from the perspective of teachers, pointing out that moral education in foreign language courses should be led by foreign language teachers. This should be reflected in various aspects such as the language taught, classroom format, assessment of performance, and the behavior of the teachers themselves, all of which should incorporate the concept of cultivating virtue and promoting the all-round development of individuals. Through this approach, a correct understanding of life, society, and worldviews can be achieved [3]. Huang Guowen and Xiao Qiong also provided a macro-level analysis of moral education in foreign language courses (namely, why, what, who, when, where, and how), clearly outlining the fundamental issues [4].

2.2 The Importance of College English Reading Teaching

College English reading teaching is not only a necessary part of language skill training, but also of great significance to cultural dissemination and value guidance. The texts are the basic medium for students to understand Western culture, and at the same time have various ideological backgrounds or value orientations. Zhang Jingyuan and Wang Na have pointed out that the educational function of courses should be examined according to the humanistic nature of foreign language teaching, that is, seeking educational ideas from specialized courses [5]. The social, cultural, and even scientific and technological contents involved in English reading materials can all be used as materials for moral education. If teachers can make a relatively detailed analysis of the texts, they can inspire students to think about cultural similarities and differences, use rational judgment, and establish a sense of confidence. In teaching, the development of ideological and political content should be considered in light of students' actual situations, the characteristics of the subject, and the school's traditions. Attention should also be paid to the utilization of the existing resources in the textbooks.

2.3 The Integration of Moral Education into College English Reading Instruction

There are natural points of convergence between moral education and College English reading teaching. As for the reading text itself, the cultural content is a rich resource that can be utilized in moral education. Teachers can introduce value guidance more naturally by using the text as a medium. At the same time, the analysis during reading is very meaningful for the development of judgment, which can prevent students from passively accepting Western values. He Lianzhen proposes that political identity, national sentiment, cultural quality, and moral concepts should be incorporated into the ideological and political system of College English courses, using these four dimensions to promote the combination of moral education[6]. The student subjectivity emphasized in reading teaching is not in contradiction to the value internalization sought by moral education. Both advocate that knowledge and beliefs are unified and acquired through active participation.

3. The Current Situation and Problems of Integrating Moral Education into Reading Teaching in the Digital Age

3.1 The Popularization of Digital Teaching Tools

In recent years, the application of digital tools in College English teaching has become increasingly widespread. With the rapid development of online education platforms, digital tools, such as Chaoxing Learning Platform, China University MOOC, and Rain Classroom, have been widely used in English teaching practice. These platforms not only provide rich teaching resources and convenient interaction

channels, but also provide new technical means for the integration of moral education. The deep integration of the latest information technology and curriculum teaching should be vigorously promoted to encourage teachers to use high-quality online educational resources to transform and expand teaching content.

3.2 Previous Explorations of Integrating Moral Education into Reading Teaching

From a theoretical perspective, scholars have already carried out various discussions on the implementation methods of the integration of moral education into foreign language teaching. Hu Jiehui analyzes from three aspects: policy background, curriculum theory, and the reality of foreign language disciplines, and summarizes the instructional design from the four requirements: teaching objectives should be clear, content should be systematic, processes should be phased, and evaluation feedback should be coordinated [7]. In terms of the actual situation, many colleges and universities are currently trying to arrange moral content of English reading courses in the form of blended teaching, using SPOC or PBL methods to promote the combination of language teaching and value education .

3.3 The Main Problems of Integrating Moral Education into Reading Instruction in the Digital Age

Even though the integration of moral education and College English reading instruction has achieved preliminary progress amid widespread digital transformation, numerous prominent drawbacks still exist in current teaching practice within the digital age. First of all, the implantation of moral elements tends to be rigid and disjointed. Many teachers attach moral education as an extra supplementary segment to language teaching, mechanically inserting relevant moral content without organic fusion, which leads to a clear split between language proficiency cultivation and value guidance objectives. Second, digital teaching resources fail to be fully exploited. Most instructors only rely on digital platforms such as Rain Classroom to upload reading materials or release homework tasks, ignoring the interactive and immersive advantages of digital technology to deepen moral infiltration. Third, supporting evaluation systems remain defective. Existing assessment modes mainly focus on students' reading and linguistic competence, lacking measurable standards to assess their ideological awareness and moral literacy. Fourth, teachers' comprehensive competency cannot meet integration demands: their digital operation skills and moral teaching capabilities are unbalanced, which greatly weaken the practical effects of integrating moral education into reading classes.

4. Practical Paths for Integrating Moral Education into Reading Instruction

4.1 Selecting Reading Materials and Uncovering Moral Elements

The selection of reading materials is the basic link for integrating moral education into reading teaching. Teachers should rely on textbooks and uncover moral elements in texts from multiple aspects. Domestic researchers have proposed that by using the method of "telling Chinese stories in foreign language", students can be guided to disseminate Chinese culture and tell Chinese stories during language learning. Teachers can supplement English and Chinese reading materials with ideological and political elements around the unit theme. For example, when learning about the theme related to "heroes", English reports about the deeds of Chinese figures such as aerospace heroes, and role models of the times can be supplemented to guide students to compare the understanding of the concept of "hero" in China and abroad, and cultivate patriotism and responsibility. The teaching design of ideological and political content in College English courses should be based on the "Teaching Guidelines for Ideological and Political Content in College Foreign Language Courses", and systematically explore the educational elements in the textbooks.

4.2 Innovating Teaching Models and Integrating Information Technology into Teaching

Digital technology is the foundation on which various forms and means of moral education can be developed. Teachers can use digital resources to design reading teaching that combines "online + offline." Regarding the pre-class activities, platforms, such as Xuetong and MOOC, can be utilized to arrange the preview content. Relevant moral materials and videos can be incorporated into the unit themes, enabling

students to begin to come into contact with the concepts of moral education. During the class, it is advisable to use the voting, discussion or chat functions on the platform for interactive reading. Text analysis, group tasks and viewpoint debates should be embedded into reflections on moral content in reading materials. After class, writing software or language assessment tools can be used to put forward extension requirements (writing English reflections, giving theme speeches, etc.), so that moral education has implementation and action.

4.3 Optimizing of Teaching Design and Embedding of Moral Objectives Throughout Teaching

Systematic instructional design is the foundation for ensuring the effectiveness of moral education. The four design strategies listed by Hu Jiehui can serve as operational guidelines for moral education in reading courses[7]. When considering the design of goals, we should take both the language goals and the moral goals into account, and avoid merely discussing or labeling the moral content in a superficial manner. Regarding the reading materials related to life choices, such a moral goal can be envisioned: "Guide students in an appropriate manner to form value judgments, establish life attitudes, and develop the habit of overcoming difficulties." In terms of content design, language facts and moral viewpoints should be interwoven with each other, and texts and their meanings should not be treated separately. Process design should be arranged according to the idea of going from shallow to deep, incorporating pre-class, in-class, and post-class into the sequence of value guidance. As for evaluation design, there should be both process examination and result measurement, and moral performance should be regarded as part of the assessment. Moral factors in foreign language teaching should be applied according to the idea of implicit education, using ingenious methods to embed moral goals into language goals or ability goals.

4.4 Improving the Evaluation System and Enhancing Educational Effectiveness

A scientific evaluation system is of great significance for the educational effectiveness of moral education. Domestic researchers have proposed the "four-in-one" concept for moral education in university English courses, including integrating language skills, cultural awareness, thinking ability, and value orientation into the evaluation scope. The evaluation of reading teaching should be carried out through various methods: one approach is to design reading tests with a focus on moral education (that is, using materials that can reflect China's stance or the spirit of the times for assessment); the second is to use process-based methods to verify whether and how students complete moral learning (using platform records of related behaviors); the third is to use speeches, reflections, group results, and other forms to judge their value understanding or expression. It is also necessary to establish a new type of evaluation system, so as to fully reflect the educational philosophy in multiple aspects. The evaluation should take into account various factors such as people's cognition, emotions, and values, and be humanistic and diverse; it should also use both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods to dynamically and comprehensively measure knowledge, abilities, and even values.

5. Case Analysis of Teaching Practice

5.1 Teaching Case Selection

The case discussed in this study is the teaching content of Unit 3 "Heroes of Our Time" in Book 2 of the third edition of New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Course. The theme of this article is "Heroic Figures of the Era", and the texts included in the article precisely describe the heroic deeds of ordinary people and unknown individuals. From the perspective of socialist core values, this kind of "dedication" and "kindness" spirit is extremely valuable and can be regarded as a relatively specific entry point in moral education.

5.2 Philosophy of Teaching Design Embedded with Moral Objectives

This case takes the "Production-Oriented Approach" (POA) proposed by Wen Qiufang as its theoretical foundation[3], adopts an online-offline blended teaching model, and embeds moral education into all teaching stages such as pre-class preview, during discussion, and post-class output. The instructional design

follows the four strategies of “precision of objectives, systematic organization of content, progressive process design, and integrated evaluation” proposed by Hu Jiehui[7], and implements teaching with the help of digital platforms such as Rain Classroom, Welearn and Unipus.

5.3 Design of Teaching Procedures

Guided by the idea of embedding moral education into College English reading instruction, this research designs a three-stage teaching procedure including pre-class preparation, in-class activities and post-class tasks, as is shown in *Table 1*. Each teaching session specifies teaching arrangements, moral integration objectives and applicable digital tools, enabling the continuous infiltration of moral education amid language teaching with the support of digital technology.

Table 1 Instructional Design Plan for “Heroes of Our Time” with Moral Education.

<i>Teaching Stage</i>	<i>Teaching Content</i>	<i>Ideological and Political Integration Points</i>	<i>Digital Tools</i>
Pre-class preview	Watch English introduction videos of “Touching China” figures; complete vocabulary preview of the text; discuss “Who is the hero in your heart”	Preliminary perception of the hero theme, understanding the deeds of Chinese heroes, stimulating learning interest	Rain Classroom (video, discussion)
In-class introduction	Display pictures of the annual “Touching China” figures, and guide students to share their pre-class thoughts; Compare the cultural differences between China and other countries regarding the concept of “hero”	Incorporate socialist core values - dedication and kindness; cultivate cross-cultural comparison awareness	Rain Classroom voting, comment function
In-class Close reading	Analyze the character image of “unsung heroes” in the text; explain key vocabulary and sentence patterns; discuss “Why can ordinary people become heroes”	Guide students to recognize the value of ordinary positions, cultivate a sense of responsibility and dedication	PPT, electronic whiteboard annotation
Moral education deepening	Group discussion: deeds of space heroes, rural teachers around us; comparative reading: supplementary English reports on Zhang Guimei and Yuan Longping	Promote patriotism, enhance cultural confidence, cultivate national pride	Learning Platform group discussion, screen sharing
Post-class Language output	Write an English short essay titled “The Hero Around Me” and give an oral report; evaluate group report content	Combine language learning with value guidance, cultivate students’ ability to tell Chinese stories in English	iWrite writing platform, classroom recording
Post-class extension	Complete the “14-day Good Deeds Plan”, record the daily stories of those who helped others and write an English reflection journal; complete the unit tests online.	Externalize the concept of “doing good” into daily actions, achieving the unity of knowledge and action.	Learning Platform assignment system

At the first stage, pre-class preview, teachers issue preview tasks through the digital platform, such as Rain Classroom, which include watching the English introduction videos of the “Touching China” figures, completing the vocabulary for the text, and participating in the discussion with the topic “Who is your hero in your heart”. Students come into initial contact with English expressions related to Chinese heroes in the process of watching, and form a preliminary understanding of the hero theme in the discussion.

In-class stage, The first part of the lesson involves introducing the topic by showing pictures of the annual “Touching China” figures and conducting a voting through the learning platform, which helps to activate the students’ existing knowledge. When doing a detailed analysis of the text itself, the moral thinking related to “unsung heroes” should be brought out, while providing English materials on Chinese role models such as Zhang Guimei and Yuan Longping as comparative reading. Using group activities and viewpoint exchanges to enable both language training and ideological understanding to develop simultaneously. As for language use, students should be encouraged to write or speak on the topic of “The Hero Around Me,” unifying language expression with value judgment.

In the post-class stage, students should be organized to do the “14-Day Good Deeds Check-in Plan,” bringing the hero-related content they have learned into real life, and then writing reflection logs in English to explain their feelings. Regarding the situations where the tasks are completed, teachers will use the Learning Platform to verify and analyze them, and then provide feedback or evaluations.

5.4 Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness and Conducting Teaching Reflections

From the perspective of a semester of teaching practice, the adopted instructional design has achieved the following positive results: first, students' acceptance attitude toward reading and classroom engagement are better than before, and according to Learning Platform statistics, the pre-class viewing rate of related videos has reached more than 95%; second, when writing essays or speaking, students are more able to actively use English expressions related to Chinese culture, and there are more instances of explaining Chinese phenomena and narrating Chinese stories in English; third, in terms of questionnaire results, most students have already understood the spirit of heroism relatively clearly, and their sense of responsibility and willingness to dedicate have improved.

Meanwhile, several problems in practical teaching remain unsolved. First, some students show strong resistance to the embedded moral content. Second, digital tools are not entirely technically reliable at present, which may disrupt normal teaching. Third, in terms of process-oriented evaluation, the quantitative analysis criteria for measuring students' moral literacy have not been well established.

6. Conclusion

The integration of moral education into College English reading teaching in digital teaching contexts is a systematic project, demanding holistic coordination of teaching philosophies, teaching modes, instructional design and teaching evaluation. Based on the connection between moral education and College English reading instruction, this paper proposes targeted design strategies covering reading materials, teaching methods, teaching procedures and evaluation systems. Combined with teaching cases, it elaborates the progressive embedding of moral education across all reading teaching links. This practical research confirms that digital tools support the implementation of moral education, while technology is merely a medium rather than a final target. Teachers must conduct language teaching centered on the mission of fostering virtue and talents, balance knowledge transfer, value guidance and competency training, exert moral education's educational functions via digital means, and build sound evaluation standards. The research results can serve as comprehensive practical references for moral education integration in College English.

Acknowledgement

This paper is a phase research product of Undergraduate Research Training Project "Research on the Strategies for Moral Education in College English in the Digital Context" (No. 2026J00170)

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