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A Study of Developing Gold Course of English Linguistics in Local Normal Universities and Integration of Moral Education—Taking IPA Teaching as an Example

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Abstract

Given that few scholars engage in discussing the practical aspects of gold course development and the integration of moral education into the English Linguistics curriculum, this paper uses IPA teaching in Phonetics as an example to demonstrate how the three criteria of innovation, advancement, and challenge in a gold course can be achieved. Updating the teaching content and teaching philosophy is suggested as a conducive way to innovate IPA teaching. The criteria for being advanced and challenging can be met by adapting and supplementing materials that are practical and beneficial for the students' development. In addition, this paper presents elements of moral education that can be integrated into the process of teaching IPA. There are three concrete examples: Chinese elements in the IPA chart and Zhao Yuanren's contribution, the Chinese Pinyin Scheme, and the choice between British English and American English. It is hoped that this study can provide insights for scholars dedicated to teaching this course.

Keywords

English Linguistics, Gold Course, Moral Education, IPA

1. Introduction

In June 2018, the Ministry of Education of the PRC issued a call for "Developing gold courses (i.e. best courses) and eliminating water courses (i.e. poor-quality courses)" in universities and colleges. From then on, universities and colleges in China have been actively devoted to the construction of gold courses for professional development since it is of great significance for cultivating talents in the context of the new era. As a theoretical course, English Linguistics is offered in the fifth semester for juniors majoring in English at the local normal university. Many scholars in China have involved themselves in exploring the path of moral education for students who major in English. However, most of them mainly discuss how to implement moral education into the entire curriculum from a macro perspective. Although only sporadic researchers (Wen Xu, 2021; Ju Jing, 2022) choose English linguistics as the target course to discuss how to integrate moral education into knowledge teaching, the specific cases of how to integrate diverse materials to construct gold courses are seldom touched. Given this, this paper aims to choose IPA teaching in English Linguistics to show how professional knowledge can be better integrated with moral education to satisfy the requirement of the criteria of the gold course. This study falls into four sections. Section two discusses how to make the IPA teaching meet the three criteria of the gold

course. Section three focuses on the elements of moral education that can be integrated with IPA teaching in gold course construction. Section 4 summarizes what has been discussed and concludes the paper.

2. IPA Teaching and the Three Criteria of Gold Course

Regarding the construction of the gold course, director Wu Yan (2018) put forward three criteria, i.e. being innovative, advanced, and challenging. In this section, our focus is on how the three criteria can be achieved in teaching IPA.

To start with, let's give a brief introduction to IPA. IPA is an abbreviation for the International Phonetic Alphabet which is a phonetic notation system that is a vital part of Phonetics, one of the major branches of English Linguistics. Earlier known as the Universal Phonetic Alphabet, IPA is a system based on the Latin alphabet used to mark and transcribe the sounds of various languages. The IPA can be used for many different purposes. For instance, it can be used as a way to show pronunciation in a dictionary, to record a language in linguistic fieldwork, to form the basis of a writing system for a language, or to annotate acoustic and other displays in the analysis of speech (International Phonetic Association, 1999, p. 3). However, a brief review of linguistic textbooks in China shows that the IPA chart is only briefly discussed though it is widely used in dictionaries and textbooks. Given this, this part takes the three criteria of gold courses as the yardstick to see how the criteria can be achieved in IPA teaching.

2.1 IPA Teaching and Innovation in Gold Course

To satisfy the requirement of being innovative in IPA teaching, our teaching team has been exerting great efforts on innovation for the content and teaching philosophy. With regard to the content, relevant ideological and political elements have been incorporated into the knowledge teaching of IPA. On the other hand, close attention is paid to the similarities and differences between IPA and English Phonetic Alphabet as well as Chinese Pinyin (or Chinese Phonetic Alphabet). In addition, students can also choose to focus on the study of software for speech analysis of English, Chinese, dialects, and phonetic experiments, etc. according to their personal interests.

Another important point is that our teaching team has summarized and extracted the optimized path and teaching philosophy in our class by integrating the Multiple Cooperation Principle and Multiliteracies Pedagogy in the teaching process. Guided by the overall objectives and unit objectives of the course, we design a series of hierarchical tasks through a detailed analysis of learning conditions and our target students. Teacher-student Collaborative Assessment is used to evaluate teaching feedback and learning effects. Generally speaking, the Multiple Cooperation Principle requires us to use multiple APP platforms, corpus, and databases to integrate online and offline teaching, and in-class as well as off-class learning so as to achieve maximum teaching effect. By doing so, EFL students are able to have enough knowledge input and output and improve their abilities in cooperative learning and problem inquiry. The theory of multiple literacies pedagogy was first proposed by the New London Group in 1996 and has been locally revised and practiced by many domestic scholars in recent years (Feng Dezheng, 2017). By using the multiple literacies pedagogy, we adopt the framework of situated practice, overt guidance, critical framing, and transformed practice. By adopting situated practice, EFL students are put in the environment of primary and middle schools where the students are supposed to be English teachers who will teach English Phonetic Alphabet or Chinese Pinyin to the students, or we set a condition for field study of the sound of language or the speech analysis of language by using of the software. The two conditions enable students to think and operate their roles in a proper way but also make them experience the exact difficulties and problems in the simulated reality. Moreover, overt guidance requires teachers to make full use of multi-modal resources such as images, gestures, etc. to provide clear conceptual explanations and guide students to creatively construct meanings in real contexts. Furthermore, critical framing enables students to understand the values and ideology in the text through the explicit guidance of teachers in real practice. The core of the framing is to train students' analytical ability so that they can objectively and rationally analyze the text of the textbook and the social and cultural phenomena contained therein. Finally, transformed practice refers to the process in which students apply what they have learned in a new social and cultural context, and the ability to interpret and construct multimodal discourse independently in this process.

2.2 IPA Teaching and Advancement in Gold Course

In terms of the advancement in the gold course, Director Wu Yan (2018) pointed out that promoting the advancement in the course means that the course is supposed to have higher objectives that adhere to the organic integration of knowledge, ability, and quality so as to cultivate students' comprehensive abilities and advanced thinking to solve complex problems. At the level of course content, the breadth and depth should be emphasized, the habitual cognitive mode should be broken.

Following the above standard in advancement in the gold course, IPA teaching should have three integrated objectives.

With regard to the knowledge objective, students are required to identify the six basic parts of IPA and understand the functions of each part. For the skill objective, students are required to identify both the English and Chinese sounds in the IPA chart and apply them to daily learning. With reference to the quality objective, students are required to actively practice socialist core values in the process of course learning so as to cultivate their devotion to family and country, the feeling of political identification, cultural consciousness and to enhance their global awareness.

When it comes to the course content, the textbook material has been adapted and supplemented in order to broaden the scope of knowledge and have an in-depth understanding of the IPA. To make the IPA teaching advanced, our teaching team supplements the following content: (1) The use of Praat, which is a speech analysis tool used for doing phonetics by computer: As a program, Praat can analyze, synthesize, and manipulate speech, and create high-quality pictures for linguistic research. Having a good command of Praat software can equip students with practical and transferable information literacy and information technology capacity. (2) The comparison and contrast between IPA and Chinese Pinyin: the purpose of such supplement is to make EFA students know the advantages of Chinese Pinyin mainly shows in its role of being an auxiliary tool of Chinese characters on many occasions, such as the Pinyin input method on our computer, the Pinyin font detection method of the dictionary. (3) The comparison and contrast between IPA and the English Phonetic alphabet: It can help the students eliminate the misconception that the English Phonetic alphabet is IPA, and convince them of the fact that the IPA is a set of symbols used to label the sounds of all human languages in the world in which English phonetic symbols are just some of the symbols in the IPA chart which are used to represent English pronunciation.

2.3 IPA Teaching and Challenge in Gold Course

Just as Wuyan (2018) said, increasing the degree of curriculum challenge is undoubtedly a response to the reasonable "burden increase" of undergraduate courses advocated by the Ministry of Education. The specific requirements for the standard of challenge are to increase the research, innovative and comprehensive content in the course design, and to make students concentrate more on their course study. The strict process of assessment and examination evaluation should also be exerted.

In IPA teaching, there are two ways to make the lesson effortful. First, students may often get confused about the writing system of phonetic symbols in that it is not consistent in many dictionaries, English teaching and reading materials, etc. Thus, EFL students are encouraged to know the similarities and differences between the top two English phonetic symbols: the DJ phonetic alphabet (adopted by *English Pronouncing Dictionary* which was edited by Daniel Jones in1917), and the KK Phonetic alphabet (adopted by *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English* which was edited by Kenyon, John S. & Thomas A. Knott in 1944).

Second, as the pre-service English teacher, students are required to do a survey of primary and secondary school textbooks and skillfully use the latest edition of D.J. phonetic symbols. One of the facts is that textbooks of primary and secondary schools only adopt British pronunciation to mark, not American pronunciation, even if the textbooks themselves adopt American pronunciation. Another fact that the student needs to know is that the phonetic system adopted by the *English-Chinese Multi-Functional Learning Dictionary for Middle School* is completely consistent with the English teaching materials for primary and secondary schools.

Third, to make the IPA teaching challenging, it's better to ask those who have a good command of IPA and who are interested in field study to apply it to practical research. They are required to memorize the IPA and learn to use basic speech analysis software (such as Praat, desktop speech studio, etc.), so they can also describe the language to a certain extent, even transcribe local dialects.

3. Integration of Moral Education in IPA Teaching

In the construction of the gold course, and teaching of IPA, we have added and integrated many ideological and political elements that are useful in enhancing moral education for the EFL students. Our discussion falls into the following three parts:

3.1 IPA and Zhao Yuanren's Contribution

The IPA was originally only used to mark Western languages, African languages, and so on. Later, the IPA can be used to transcribe Chinese and other Eastern languages with the efforts of Chinese scholar Zhao Yuanren and others. As we can see, consonants and vowels in Chinese are easily represented by the IPA. To record this change in pitch, Zhao Yuanren submitted additional symbols to the International Language Society, which can be used to represent four tones in Mandarin Chinese. His major contributions lie in two aspects: First, Zhao Yuanren made audio recordings for the Commercial Press to promote Mandarin. Second, Zhao Yuanren's knowledge of dialects was unmatched by others, and he knew 33

dialects. His academic rigor and diligence are breathtaking. For students who major in English, they are supposed to have the ability to listen and identify sounds accurately, so they are encouraged to take Mr. Zhao as a role model to concentrate on their studies and skill training. By doing so, students have already established their sense of service for our country and the cause of education.

3.2 IPA and Chinese Pinyin Scheme

Since IPA can be used to mark the pronunciation system of any language in the world, students have such a confusion why we do not use IPA to mark Chinese directly. It is suggested that IPA is too complex to be suitable for China's national conditions. We Chinese people have made an unremitting effort to create our sound notation system. Chinese Pinyin Scheme is the 'Latinization' program of Chinese characters used for marking the pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese in the People's Republic of China, which was developed by the Committee of Chinese Pinyin from 1955 to 1957 and it became the international standard ISO7098 (Chinese Roman spelling) in 1982. Its establishment and popularity contain the wisdom of the Chinese people since it is comparatively easier for beginners to learn Mandarin Chinese. In introducing the Chinese Pinyin Scheme, students learn to appreciate our forerunner's wisdom and our national spirit.

3.3 Beijing or Peking: An Easy Choice for Students

Students may notice that some translations of the Chinese name of a place or person have two alternatives. In fact, Chinese Pinyin has experienced five phases: the emergence of Witoma Pinyin, Postal Pinyin, Mandarin Romanization, Latinized new characters, and the Chinese Pinyin scheme. Today, most of the old pinyin in China has been basically replaced by the Chinese pinyin scheme, but it has not completely disappeared. For example, in Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese communities, it is customary to still use the old pinyin; or the codes used in some airports are still based on postal pinyin, such as PEK (short for Peking) for Beijing Capital International Airport. Over the past 60 years, the improvement of comprehensive national strength has laid the foundation for the overseas dissemination of Chinese Pinyin. Instead of using "Peking" or "dumpling", "Beijing" or "jiaozi" has become more popular. There is strong evidence of the increasing acceptance of Chinese Pinyin and culture overseas. On such occasions, students naturally have firm cultural confidence and want to tell China's story to foreigners when it comes to Chinese Pinyin translation.

3.4 American English, British English, and Global Visions

IPA has eliminated the regional pronunciation characteristics and habits of English in different countries in order to achieve general pronunciation. The DJ phonetic symbols mainly incorporate the habits, characteristics, and tone of the Received Pronunciation of British English. The KK phonetic alphabet reflects all the features of General American English. Many EFL students feel perplexed about what to choose, DJ Phonetic alphabet or KK Phonetic alphabet, British English, or American English. They may meet foreigners from different countries who have different accents when they speak English. In such conditions, our teaching team has guided our students to embrace different pronunciations and accents as long as the communication can go smoothly. As an international language, English should be inclusive. Whatever phonetic alphabet you choose, and whatever English you choose depend on your personal characteristics of pronunciation, personal preferences, and personality. No pronunciation or accent can be superior to others. As university students in the new era, they are encouraged to have such a global vision.

4. Conclusion

This paper chooses IPA teaching as a concrete example to discuss how the criteria of being innovative, advanced, and challenging can be achieved. It has been found that the criteria of being innovative can be achieved by updating the teaching content, and teaching philosophy. The criteria of being advanced can be achieved by adapting and supplementing the teaching content such as the use of Praat, the comparison and contrast between IPA and English Phonetic alphabet, IPA and Chinese Pinyin. The criteria of being challenging can be achieved by connecting IPA teaching with students' future careers, or research interests. Moreover, this paper has also presented some elements of moral education that can be better incorporated into the teaching process of IPA. Zhao Yuanren's contributions to IPA and achievement has been supplemented to let students know the Chinese elements in the IPA chart and encourage students to take Mr. Zhao as a role model to be devoted to their studies and future career. Chinese Pin Scheme has been added to make students understand the Chinese wisdom of recording sounds and improve their cultural confidence. In addition, we have also discussed accents or choices of British English and American English to give students have global vision in the new era. All in all, it is hoped that this study can provide some references for developing a gold course in English linguistics and the

integration of moral education in the teaching process.

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