Moral Education in Second Foreign Language from the Perspective of Educational Ecology

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ABSTRACT

As a course of general education, second foreign language not only imparts basic linguistic skills to students, but also has the mission of cross-cultural communication and dissemination, helping students to build correct outlook on the world, life and values and tell China's stories well. This course used to focus on knowledge impartment while ignoring building values, thus this paper attempts to construct an ecological system of second foreign language teaching by fostering input and output of moral education within the ecological system and enhancing the benign interaction among teachers and students, the learning environment and various teaching elements, in order to promote cultural dissemination, keep the ecological balance of language teaching and enhance the effectiveness of moral education.

Keywords: *Educational ecology, Moral education, Second foreign language, Interaction.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Second foreign language (English) is a course of general education offered to students who major in foreign language except English. By imparting knowledge and skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing to students, this course aims to cultivate talents of foreign language with both patriotism and a global perspective. Compared with students who are not language majors, students of second foreign language have a comparatively solid language foundation and strong cross-cultural communicative competence. However, they tend to pay more attention to the culture of target countries in language study and may overlook the learning of local culture. It is imperative to enhance their abilities of telling China's stories, expressing Chinese standpoints and Chinese characteristics.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education issued the document on deepening the reform of undergraduate education and teaching to comprehensively improve the quality of talent cultivation. The document puts forward that it is crucial to adhere to the unity of knowledge transfer and value guidance, integrate explicit education into implicit education, and fully explore the moral education resources contained in various courses and teaching methods, so as to guide the whole process of all-round education. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to enhance moral education in second foreign language course. Based on concepts of educational ecology, this paper makes an attempt to construct a teaching ecosystem of second foreign language with the aim of strengthening the guidance of values and promote the efficiency of moral education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of educational ecology originated from ecology, which was mainly concerned with the relationship between living organism and the environment. The term of ecology was widely applied to various fields. In the 1930s, the American educational sociologist Willard Waller applied the theory of ecology to the field of education and teaching and put forward the concept of classroom ecology. In the 1970s, the concept was further developed and the theory of educational ecology was formed. On the basis of the theory of ecology, educational ecology takes the overall interaction and systematic balance as principles and analyzes educational issues by studying the interplay and restraining factors among the educational ecological environment, ecology of individuals, ecology of a group and educational

ecosystem to fulfill the best educational function(Lu Chenhao, 2022; Li Jiqing, 2020).

In the current studies of educational ecology at home and abroad, researchers have studied micro aspects of educational ecology, for example, they studied the relationship between individual behaviors and the environment, such as school education and the teaching environment. And there are studies of macro aspects of educational ecology, like the educational ecosystem. What these studies have in common is the systematic, balanced and connected ecological spirit. However, how to achieve the dynamic balance between these various elements still needs to be further studied.

According to the theory of educational ecology, educational ecosystem is an open system, which continuously exchanges material and energy with social ecosystem and interacts with the environment. Under relatively constant output and input, a stable state is established. When all kinds of cycles in the education ecosystem are broken, in order to re-establish the balance, on the one hand, it is necessary to introduce energy and resources, on the other hand, it is also important to carry out internal environmental transformation so as to establish a new balance. The input of the social ecosystem includes human input such as the staff, students and administrators, material input such as teaching materials, books, reference materials, and values and moral codes at the spiritual level. The output of social ecosystem includes the gains, change of attitudes and behaviors, and change of critical thinking and emotions of learners. In the meantime, the educational system has the responsibility of dissemination of science, technology and culture. Whether within the social ecosystem or the educational ecosystem, people, education and the environment are connected with each other. These factors constitute an ecosystem which is in continuous movement together.

In recent years, scholars of foreign language studies have carried out some researches in the field of English education and teaching based on the theory of educational ecology, for instance, an ecosystem of intelligent education in English classroom was constructed. It took learners as the center and its goal was to promote learners' adaptability and autonomy to learning environment, methods and activities (Wu Min, 2023). A new model of ternary interactive educational ecology of knowledge and skills was constructed, which studied three disciplines of business English major, namely, "language", "business" and "business

cultural communication" (Kang Bo, 2017). Some studies are related to the research of educational ecology in English courses at the level of college or higher vocational college. Overall, studies on second foreign language teaching practice and theories based on the theory of educational ecology are limited and it is worthy of making an in-depth exploration to the specific practice paradigm.

Based on the above-mentioned research background, this paper tries to study second foreign language teaching and moral education from the perspective of educational ecology. By focusing on values driven of this course, it will construct a systematic and harmonious ecological system among different elements including teachers and students, the environment, teaching and learning, etc. so as to make contributions to the cultivation of high-quality foreign language talents who are patriotic and have a global vision.

3. CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEACHING ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM OF SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In second foreign language teaching, it is important to realize interaction and balance among various elements, such as the interaction between subjects of education, the physical environment and seating arrangements, keeping balance among different teaching elements.

3.1 Strengthening Interaction Between Subjects of Education

According to the theory of educational ecology, subjects of education refer to teachers and students. As President Xi Jinping put forward for teachers, they should establish correct ideals and beliefs, and meanwhile guide their students to establish correct outlook on the world, on life and values. They should have noble moral sentiment and become a model of students' moral cultivation. Keep learning and improving to meet students' needs for knowledge. A respectable teacher should care for students, respect their personality development, and care for their growth. Therefore, teachers should first set good examples for students, strive to improve themselves from these four aspects, and play the exemplary role of teachers. As ancient Chinese educational proverb goes, be close to your teacher and believe in his teachings. That is to say, a student who feels close to and respect the teacher will believe in the teacher's guidance. The impact

of teachers' words and deeds on students is self-evident. In addition to teaching behaviors, there are many behaviors and languages that are not directly related to classroom teaching, which also have a far-reaching impact on students' growth and the formation of values.

In order to convince students of teachers' teaching and give them positive guidance, teachers should keep learning and reflecting, and try to improve their own capabilities. Building an equal and harmonious relationship between teachers and students is the premise and foundation to realize the guidance of students' values. Teachers' attitudes towards students also play an important role in constructing a good relationship between teachers and students. For instance, teachers' attitudes towards top students and slow learners, their attitudes when answering students' questions, or correcting mistakes in the classroom all reflect how teachers choose to treat their students and whether students are equally treated. To be specific, when answering questions, whether the teacher is patient or not will affect the construction of the relationship between teachers and students, and it is the same case when teachers correct mistakes. Whether they encourage or criticize students will make a difference in constructing the relationship.

Additionally, teachers need to strengthen a good class atmosphere. Firstly, formulate the rules to be observed in the classroom, for example, make the requirements for attendance and homework, be honest when taking examinations, and take the reward and punishment measures for attendance. Secondly, try to create a positive atmosphere of helping each other and caring for others in the class. Thirdly, divide students into several learning pairs, who help their partners with learning difficulties. Fourthly, encourage and praise students in class and point out their shortcomings in time. At the same time, try to find shining points of every student and call on other students to study.

All in all, to build a balanced and harmonious teaching ecological environment, we should strengthen the interaction between educational subjects, and the interaction between educational subjects and the educational environment in a proper way.

3.2 Seating Arrangements

As the main body of classroom ecology, students have their own niches, namely, their seats in the classroom. As an important factor of the classroom environment, seating arrangements have a unique impact on students' attitude, behavior, learning and values.

In the traditional classroom, teachers tend to communicate more with students sitting in the front and middle rows, but less with students sitting in the back. Students in the front row and the middle row are close to the teacher, so they often have more opportunities to answer teachers' questions. Chances of being praised and encouraged will be increased, and they are more likely to have a strong motivation of learning and self-improvement. The students in the back row are far away from the teacher, so their communication with the teacher is more formal. When questions are answered incorrectly, students will be more likely to deny themselves.

Students who like to sit in the front row show a positive attitude towards learning and strong self-awareness. They often think of the goals of life, and believe that creativity and imagination are very important. They feel that they have the ability to succeed in school and have strong interest in learning (Fan Guorui, 2019:287). In contrast, students who like to sit in the back row tend to have a negative attitude towards school and learning. They are emotionally fragile and have poor learning interests and learning abilities.

To optimize the ecological environment of second foreign language teaching and realize good interaction of teachers and students, it is suggested that teachers should break the existing row seating arrangement. Smart classrooms and table seating can be applied. By means of smart platforms like the rain classroom, teachers can ask all students to answer online questions in class and stimulate students' enthusiasm for classroom participation and their learning motivation, which will help students form a positive attitude towards learning and life.

3.3 Interaction of Teaching Elements

To construct a classroom ecological system and foster students' values, teachers should integrate moral cultivation into different teaching elements such as teaching contents, objectives, methods and evaluation, so as to keep the ecological balance. They need to integrate different teaching and educational objectives into the teaching content, and pay attention to the dynamic balance within the teaching elements and the interaction between the educational subjects.

Table 1. Objectives of moral education in second foreign language course

Teaching Contents	Objectives of Moral Education
College Life	Strengthening ideals and beliefs; improving teamwork spirit and social responsibility
Song of the Soul	Personal ideals and the Chinese dream
Leisure Activities	Analyzing the cultural output in domestic games and celebrity worship; integration of urban culture and tourism into socialist core values
Living on Your Own	Self-discipline and time management; financial independence
Sources of Information	Critical thinking and dialectical materialism; strengthening awareness of information security and improving information literacy
Volunteering	Dedication, collectivism and social responsibility
Learning Strategies	Combining personal learning plans with needs of national development; using online learning resources critically

"Table 1" shows some objectives of moral education in second foreign language course. In the teaching ecological system, educational objectives can be divided into various types according to the topics in the textbook and are integrated into each unit, taking the textbook Experiencing English Integrated Coursebook (Book One) as an example. The first unit is about college life, which is related to college students' ideals and beliefs. Students can be guided to think about what they should do in the four years at college and try to improve teamwork spirit and shoulder social responsibility. What are listed in the table is part of the interaction of these teaching elements.

In terms of teaching methods, it is suggested that teachers adopt different methods such as project-based teaching, case teaching, group cooperation and discussion, etc. so as to enable more students to participate in learning and enhance the interaction among educational subjects. Moral education can also be reflected in the evaluation of teaching. With the aid of smart learning platforms such as the rain classroom, iSmart platform, and automatic writing evaluation systems, assignments embodying moral education done on the platforms can be evaluated via human-computer interaction. According to different moral educational elements in each unit, teaching contents, objectives, methods and evaluation can be coordinated in the ecological system of second foreign language teaching, which is helpful to improve the effectiveness of moral education.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the theory of educational ecology, the construction of second foreign language teaching ecological system is a tentative exploration to apply the educational theory to moral education in second foreign language teaching, aiming to achieve the overall interaction and dynamic balance of various educational elements. It also provides reference for the research of moral education in other language teaching. How to achieve balance among these teaching elements in interaction is an issue that needs to be further explored in the future.

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