

Research on the Reform of Ideological and Political Education of English Courses in Higher Vocational Colleges Empowered by ChatGPT

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Abstract

In recent years, generative AI represented by ChatGPT has become a top priority for science and technology powerhouse. Higher vocational English is an integral part of the curriculum system of higher vocational education, with both instrumental and humanistic qualities. Therefore, the construction of ideological and political teaching in higher vocational English courses is especially important. The emergence and development of ChatGPT, an artificial chatbot, has brought new opportunities and challenges to the higher vocational English ideological and political education to a certain extent. Based on ChatGPT empowering ideological and political construction in higher vocational English courses, it is observed that there are the following practical challenges in the ideological and political construction of higher vocational English courses under the backdrop of artificial intelligence. This paper will propose the implementation pathway for ideological and political construction in higher vocational English courses under the context of ChatGPT Extracting elements of ideological education in English teaching materials.

Keywords

Vocational English, ChatGPT, Ideological and Political Education, English Language Teaching, Practical Approach

1. Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, “All other courses must guard their own channels and fulfill their responsibilities, ensuring that various courses align and walk together with ideological and political theory courses, forming a synergistic effect.” (Xi, 2016) Therefore, in recent years, there has been a constant stream of research on the ideological and political aspects of university English

courses. Concurrently, with the emergence of the artificial chatbot ChatGPT, it has, to some extent, brought new opportunities and challenges to higher vocational English teaching. The integration of artificial intelligence and higher education is an inevitable trend. In the future, ChatGPT represented by ChatGPT will continuously trigger educational transformations. As instructors of higher vocational English, one should proactively embrace the ensuing changes with an open, innovative, and cautious mindset, welcoming new developments. In this regard, this paper will conduct a comprehensive analysis and exploration of ideological and political aspects in higher vocational English courses within the context of ChatGPT. It is hoped that by leveraging ChatGPT, the efficiency of both teachers and students can be enhanced, achieving true “collaborative development between humans and machines”. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that “establishing morality and cultivating people” is the foundation, promoting the healthy development of ChatGPT in higher vocational English teaching.

In recent years, research on ideological and political education in college English courses has emerged one after another, with both macro theoretical analysis and practical exploration. In practice, many scholars believe that under the empowerment of ChatGPT, curriculum ideological and political innovation presents both opportunities and challenges. Zheng Tianxiang and Zhang Zhen proposed in their paper “Innovative Research on Ideological and Political Education in Universities in the Era of Artificial Intelligence” that artificial intelligence technology has promoted rapid development in various fields of society, giving birth to a large number of new products, new formats, new models, and new technologies, bringing possibilities for the modernization and intelligent development of education (Xi, 2021). Ren Fengqin and Dong Zihan believe that ChatGPT (AIGC) is deeply involved in the development of various disciplines, bringing opportunities and challenges for the innovative development of ideological and political education. There are also many research cases abroad on moral education and artificial intelligence (Harrison, Hurd, & Brinegar, 2023). The earliest attempt to apply artificial intelligence technology to teaching can be traced back to the programmatic teaching machine developed by B. F. Skinner in 1958. It can store and present textbooks, receive responses from learners, and provide feedback to strengthen their learning motivation (Fadel et al., 2019). Christopher Ryan Maboloc believes that ChatGPT requires an ethical framework to regulate its use in education (Dong & Ren, 2023). Overall, research on ChatGPT in the field of education has been extensive both domestically and internationally, which can promote the coordinated development of ChatGPT and education in China, and contribute to the development of ideological and political education in the curriculum. However, there is relatively little research on how ChatGPT empowers ideological and political education in English courses. In view of this, this article takes the development of ChatGPT as the background, continuously explores the practical path of ideological and political education in English courses

in universities and provides new ideas for English education and teaching in Chinese universities.

This paper first elaborates on the value of empowering ideological and political education in vocational English courses through ChatGPT. Then, the paper explains to readers the practical challenges of empowering ideological and political education in vocational English courses through ChatGPT. Finally, the author proposes a practical path for empowering ideological and political education in vocational English courses through ChatGPT.

2. Value Implication

2.1. Collaborative Development between Humans and Machines

High vocational English teaching should actively respond to the call of the Party and the country for “ideological and political education in the curriculum,” and resolutely construct an English ideological and political pattern in the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics as advocated by Xi Jinping. In the information age, for university students who have received education for many years, they possess a certain ability for independent judgment and analysis of Western cultural dissemination and inheritance. However, their discernment ability is not yet sufficient. Therefore, constructing a human-machine collaborative pattern for English ideological and political education is crucial. This can encourage students to firmly establish their own ideologies without being easily influenced by external factors. In recent years, the development of technology, particularly the environment of artificial intelligence, has widened the path for ideological and political education in language courses. The application of ChatGPT can enrich the content of English ideological and political education, enhance the intelligence and ideological aspects of English ideological and political education, and contribute to the innovative development of ideological and political education in higher vocational English.

2.2. Innovation in Machine Learning Methods

English, as the bridge for college students to communicate with the world, is a crucial avenue for them to encounter foreign cultures. Foreign language courses play a pivotal role in guiding values, not only cultivating students’ abilities for cross-cultural communication but also teaching contemporary university students how to tell compelling Chinese stories. Furthermore, ChatGPT streamlines various artificial intelligence and AI technologies, simplifying the process of providing users with the necessary materials through human-machine dialogue. This, in turn, reduces the difficulty for educators and students to explore the world using advanced technology. Teachers no longer need to spend a considerable amount of time downloading materials; instead, they can explore and analyze from different perspectives through human-machine interaction, making ideological and political education more vivid.

2.3. Correct Guidance of Values

An international perspective has become a crucial quality for contemporary youth. In the current globalized context, a global perspective is advantageous for exploring diverse cultures, broadening knowledge boundaries, and enabling students to better adapt to the continually changing international environment. With the rise of the new wave of digital technology revolution, ChatGPT exhibits an “internationalized” characteristic. It serves as an intermediary for cross-border communication, allowing students to chat with people from different regions and languages, gaining insights into the economic, cultural, and historical aspects of different countries. Additionally, ChatGPT can extract information from vast datasets that teachers need to broaden the international perspective, thus swiftly providing support for ideological and political education. Overall, ChatGPT facilitates communication with users in diverse international scenarios, presenting both opportunities and challenges for ideological and political education in higher vocational English. This, in turn, helps cultivate new-generation university students with an international perspective and a sense of patriotism.

3. Realistic Challenges

This chapter, set against the backdrop of the development of ChatGPT, continuously explores practical pathways for ideological and political education in higher vocational English courses, offering new perspectives for English education and teaching in our country’s higher vocational institutions.

3.1. Regional Educational Differences

Our country’s education includes both plain education, education in impoverished mountainous areas with relatively underdeveloped infrastructure, rural education, and education in ethnic areas. Therefore, the effectiveness and applicability of ChatGPT in different educational backgrounds need to be verified, and the diversified educational system of higher vocational colleges increases the difficulty of digital education. The infrastructure in remote areas is relatively backward, especially hardware facilities such as computers and multimedia classrooms. Firstly, there is insufficient funding, but the supporting facilities are not perfect. The situation of schools varies in different regions, so the establishment of educational facilities should be in line with local learning conditions, respect the differences between schools, optimize educational resources, and ensure the construction of digital facilities in remote mountainous areas. Adopting methods such as group assistance to ensure the ownership of rural information facilities, further narrowing the education gap between urban and rural areas, is conducive to actively eliminating the digital divide.

3.2. The Criticisms of Using AI

Critical thinking occurs in higher-order cognitive activities, is a necessary condition for learners to achieve personalized learning and is necessary for achieving

modern and innovative talents. Learners building critical thinking need to examine their own arguments and address their limitations and issues. The effortless data feeding generative artificial intelligence reinforces the information cocoon. In traditional search engines, users actively input instructions to seek information, and the various rich answers provided by the engine provide users with multiple perspectives to influence the formation of user opinions, which invisibly trains users' critical thinking. However, ChatGPT relies on massive amounts of data text to directly generate corresponding answers. This easily accessible standard answer is highly favored by learners, especially in the process of knowledge innovation. ChatGPT's almost perfect answer limits the improvement of learners' critical thinking.

3.3. The Limitations of the Technology

The model itself does not support direct construction and management of databases. It is a language generation model based on large-scale training, whose main function is to generate and understand this article, rather than processing and managing the database. Engineers build their own code knowledge base, and industry professionals embed technology based on instructions. However, for nonprofessionals, the process of code writing and data generation during database construction is also difficult. Limitations result in the inability to establish personal databases for students in teaching, and the inability to implement intelligent, comprehensive, and information-based personalized learning systems. Secondly, educational infrastructure has not kept up with the long-term development of personalized learning, and the construction of information-based teaching infrastructure requires a large amount of investment, including the procurement of teaching tools such as network equipment and computers. Moreover, the maintenance and subsequent updates of these tools also require certain financial and material resources.

4. Practical Path

4.1. Innovation in English Teaching Materials

The current higher vocational English courses are primarily based on textbooks, considering them as the foundation of teaching. The content of English textbooks not only encompasses the cultural customs of Western countries, such as traditional festivals and etiquette, but also includes aspects of China's human geography and folk stories. This allows students to gain a deeper understanding of traditional Chinese culture while learning English. The design of English courses itself requires us as teachers to pay attention to guiding correct values during the English teaching process, nurturing new-era young individuals with an international perspective.

Firstly, before the class, with the textbook as a foundation, teachers delve into ideological and political elements. In traditional teaching, a significant portion of the teacher's time is spent searching for relevant teaching resources online,

taking up the majority of their time. This includes the currently popular AI teaching tools, which also require teachers to invest time and money in exploring PowerPoint presentations and lesson plans that suit their needs. Today, ChatGPT, based on extensive training data sets, utilizes dialogue models to simulate human thinking by collecting vast amounts of text data, thereby generating high-quality language output. In summary, the emergence of ChatGPT provides intelligent teaching assistance and achieves human-machine collaboration. Effectively utilizing ChatGPT for lesson planning is crucial, and prompts play a vital role. They serve as key elements in helping solve problems and providing high-quality answers. In the ChatGPT-provided instructional design, there is a comprehensive set of teaching objectives, processes, and reflections, resembling a well-crafted lesson plan. Additionally, there is content related to ideological and political education before, during, and after the class, as seen in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 is a teaching plan that provides a reference for teachers to integrate ideological and political education into the English curriculum. Combined with the content from textbooks and slight modifications by the teacher, it not only saves preparation time but also achieves excellent teaching results. Moreover, it helps students cultivate correct values. Secondly, during class, the teacher, based on the lesson plan, activates ideological and political elements. As university students groomed as advanced professionals for the nation, they constitute the backbone of the new era and are most susceptible to subtle influences. Therefore, it is essential to activate ideological and political elements in the curriculum that align with the core values of socialism. For example, in the just-mentioned reading comprehension “One Man’s Efforts: Result of Perseverance,” by studying this article, the goal is to guide students in cultivating the spirit of tenacity, perseverance, and unremitting persistence. English teachers, based on the main content of the article, can also, for instance, extend the discussion to representative figures in our country with strong willpower. They can use ChatGPT to retrieve information about relevant domestic figures and their achievements to assist in teaching. The results are shown in **Figure 2**.

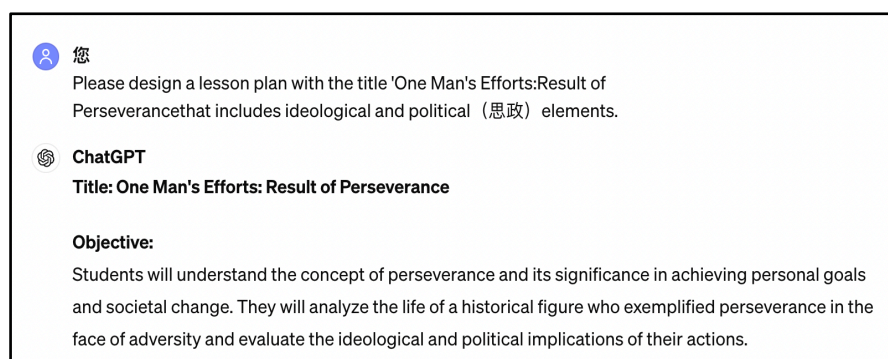


Figure 1. A lesson plan with that includes ideological and political elements generated by ChatGPT.

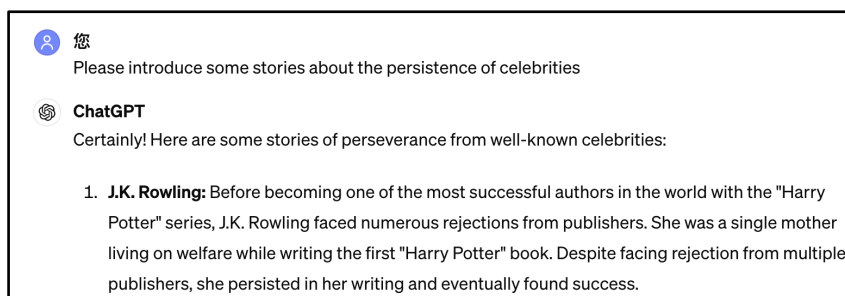


Figure 2. The deeds of determined individuals generated by ChatGPT.

From the output results, it appears that ChatGPT provides multiple solutions for users to choose from. Teachers can select the most suitable materials based on students' age, major, and knowledge level, which helps facilitate personalized learning. Finally, based on the classroom, evaluate the comprehensive scores. As a part of China's higher education, the ideological and political education in the basic English courses of higher vocational education is an important component. Evaluation is a crucial part of determining whether ideological and political education is effectively implemented. Currently, the evaluation of ideological and political education lacks scientific and systematic approaches, often giving a sense of "elusiveness," making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of ideological and political education. After the One Man's Efforts: Result of Perseverance course, teachers can use ChatGPT to create collaborative material for assignments to assess the content of ideological and political education. Writing, as a subjective question, is open-ended and can help teachers understand students' English writing proficiency while grasping their ideological consciousness and dynamics, as shown in **Figure 3**.

This plan provides a reference for teachers, helping them save time on searching for materials online. Teachers can optimize their approach based on the answers provided by ChatGPT to enhance the accuracy of evaluations.

4.2. Broadening Approaches to English Education

The unique historical and cultural background determines that vocational education in English must align with the socialist characteristics of China. It continuously updates the work of ideological education, integrating ideological education with efficient professional education. Firstly, teachers take the lead in cultivating a collaborative teaching model. As the implementers of the integration of ChatGPT into ideological education, teachers play a crucial role, and their technological literacy and professional knowledge directly impact the effectiveness of ideological education. By fully utilizing ChatGPT, the coupling of ChatGPT and ideological education first requires the enhancement of English teachers' scientific literacy. In the interaction between students and ChatGPT, ChatGPT will serve as an assistant to teachers' teaching activities. Teachers will act as supervisors, conducting dialectical analysis of the output content and correcting any content that does not align with the core values of socialism. This ensures true collaboration in learning among teachers, machines, and students.

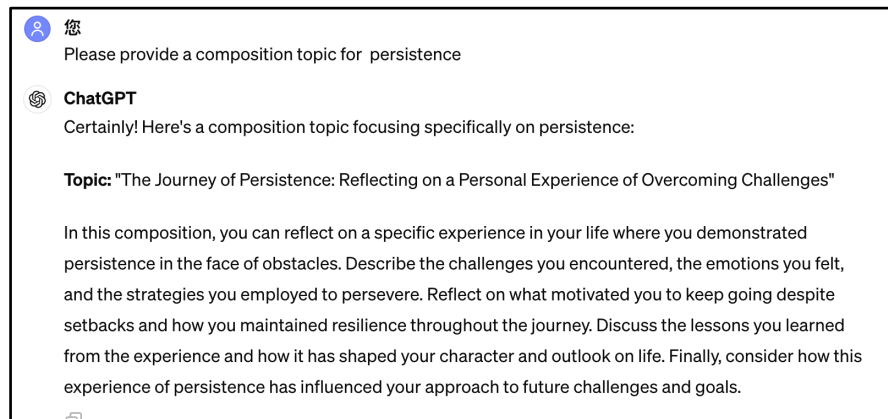


Figure 3. Homework based on the learned content generated by ChatGPT.

Next, with students as the main focus, teachers create a personalized learning environment. Student-centered personalized learning emphasizes the connection between teaching and individuals, focusing on developing students' abilities and transitioning from "giving fish" to "teaching fishing." Leveraging the adaptive, personalized, intelligent, implicit, and efficient features of ChatGPT technology, it provides students with high-quality, personalized, selectable, and precise ideological and political education services. This is based on the utilization of ChatGPT to capture digitized information about students' interests, cognitive levels, ideological and political aspects, and more. This, in turn, enables the provision of personalized learning materials to promote students' comprehensive development, aligning more closely with the nation's requirements for the growth of young people.

Finally, teachers use machines as carriers to stimulate interest-based learning emotions. Learning interests are divided into direct learning interests and indirect learning interests. The former can stimulate active learning, while the latter requires learning motivation to be sustained. Practical evidence shows that relying solely on indirect interests to maintain learning can create significant stress for students. Therefore, using machines as carriers to transform indirect interests into direct learning interests has profound implications for inspiring emotional learning in ideological and political education in English classes. ChatGPT employs advanced learning models and deep learning techniques to provide students with rich and interesting outputs and expressions. Education, as a crucial factor in technological progress and social development, has had a profound impact on ChatGPT empowering ideological and political education. Traditional textbooks lack sound and dynamism, but with machines as carriers, knowledge from books comes to life. Students can better understand various aspects of society, enhance their awareness of issues, and develop a sense of mission and responsibility.

4.3. Improvement of the Course Evaluation System

Teaching evaluation is the process of assessing the value of both the teacher's instruction and the students' learning. Its main objectives include understanding

students' initial behaviors, reflecting on teaching activities, diagnosing learning outcomes, and ultimately mobilizing the enthusiasm of teachers and the internal learning motivations of students (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023).

Firstly, diagnostic evaluation is a pre-assessment of students' cognitive levels, skills, and emotions before teaching activities. The teacher, based on the content of this class, assesses students' ideological levels using a survey carefully designed by ChatGPT. For example, before the "One Man's Efforts: Result of Perseverance" course, the teacher can create a questionnaire about the perseverance of young people. The generated results may include both subjective and objective questions. The survey aims to investigate whether contemporary university students possess the spirit of perseverance. The questions are comprehensive and suitable for students in their role as young adults. Throughout the data collection process, the teacher can gain a clear understanding of the students' moral perspectives, contributing positively to the learning of this class.

Secondly, formative assessment is an activity involving both teachers and students, evaluating students' grasp of knowledge and abilities during the teaching process. The traditional assessment elements of exams, assignments, and oral assessments are no longer suitable for today's teaching. A more comprehensive evaluation of student learning outcomes can be achieved through diversified assessment methods in modern education. Teachers can use ChatGPT to create sentences related to the quality of perseverance, prompting students to translate them. This process allows for a quantifiable assessment of students' learning outcomes and promotes a deeper understanding of this quality by increasing students' sentences and vocabulary related to this attribute.

Finally, summative assessment is an evaluation conducted over a period, such as end-of-term exams or assessments, aimed at testing the outcome of teaching activities. Teachers can use ChatGPT to generate a test paper covering the four aspects of English—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—related to the course theme. This paper should also include elements of ideological and political education. Objective questions can assess students' mastery of vocabulary, sentences, and grammar, while subjective questions can provide insights into students' writing abilities and the effectiveness of ideological and political education in vocational English.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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