

A Study on Cultivating National Consciousness in Foreign Language Education

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Abstract:

National consciousness is an important part of national cultural soft power as well as a reflection and embodiment of a country's comprehensive national strength, with strong cohesion and appeal. National consciousness emphasizes citizens' sense of ownership, such as their recognition and responsibility for and their pride of the country. Cultivating national consciousness is not only the requirement of the new era and the basic task of education in the new era, but also the requirement of the foreign language discipline itself. The cultivation of national consciousness in foreign language education should follow the basic principle of "two unifications", that is, the unification of the cultivation of national consciousness with the cultivation of international vision and with the cultivation of cross-cultural ability and critical thinking ability. Meanwhile, we should adhere to the cultivation approach of "two combinations", that is, the combination of classroom education and extracurricular practice, and the combination of education at home and education abroad, so as to implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education.

Keywords: National consciousness, Foreign language education, Cultivation approach.

I. INTRODUCTION

"National consciousness is a sense of belonging, identity and responsibility to the emotional community and the community of shared future formed by various factors such as blood, geography and culture."^[1] National consciousness is an important part of national cultural soft power, a reflection and embodiment of a country's comprehensive national strength, with strong cohesion and appeal. China has attached great importance to the cultivation of national consciousness. Since 2015, the cultivation of national consciousness has been repeatedly mentioned and emphasized in a series of important programs and documents. This fully demonstrates the necessity and importance of cultivating and improving national consciousness.

II. THE NECESSITY OF CULTIVATING NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

2.1 The Requirements of the New Era

At present, the world is experiencing a great change that has never happened in a hundred years, and China is in the historical intersection of the "Two Centenary" struggle goals. The times and the country

need young people. "Thriving youths lead to a thriving nation; strong youths lead to a strong country". The hope of a country lies in the youth, and the future of a nation also lies in the youth. The youths should establish national consciousness, cultivate patriotism, and be determined to strive for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. However, with the deepening of globalization, the emergence of network society, the infiltration of western ideology and the continuous expansion of China's reform and opening-up, many unfavorable factors have impacted the national concept and national consciousness to a certain extent, and the historically-rooted national consciousness has been challenged. In the minds of young college students, the national consciousness is gradually blurred and weak. Some of them even do acts that harm national interests and are not conducive to national security, resulting in serious consequences. All these challenges foreign language education and teaching.

2.2 Requirements of the Fundamental Task of Education in the New Era

The report of the 19th National Congress solemnly declared that the socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, which is a new historical orientation of China's development. Standing in a new historical position, at the Symposium of Teachers of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Schools held in 2019, it was emphasized that education in the new era should "implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, adhere to the principle of education serving the people, serving the governance of the country, serving the consolidation and development of the socialism with Chinese characteristics, and serving the reform, opening up and socialist modernization.....cultivate new people of the times who are responsible for national rejuvenation, and cultivate socialist builders and successors who are all-round developed morally, intellectually, physically and aesthetically" ^[2]. According to the requirements of the development of the times, the Symposium clearly pointed out the general direction and policy of education in the new era. The "four services" clarify the fundamental compliance of education for the Party and the country. Therefore, cultivating contemporary college students' national consciousness, and cultivating their spirit of fighting for and contributing to the country are the basic requirements of the fundamental task of education in the new era.

2.3 Requirements of the Discipline of Foreign Languages and Literatures

For students majoring in foreign languages, at the beginning of learning a foreign language, teachers usually show students the excellent culture of the countries of the language they are learning, with the aim of improving students' interest in learning foreign languages and enhancing their sense of major identity. Over time, most students will naturally like the language they have learned, and then migrate their interests to other aspects, such as having a natural affinity for the countries of the language they have learned and forming a complex with their culture. For language learning, this is a positive aspect. But in international communication, it will be very dangerous if young college students don't have the discrimination ability and can't maintain state-oriented and keep their national standpoints.

All along, foreign language education in China has generally focused on the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication ability, emphasizing that students should have an international perspective. Nevertheless, less attention is paid to the cultivation of students' national consciousness and motherland-loving feelings, or there is even a lack of such cultivation. This is true of foreign language education planning, personnel training plan formulation and foreign language education research. Until 2018, the Ministry of Education issued the National Standards for Teaching Quality of Foreign Languages and Literatures, stating that "students of foreign language majors should have correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, good moral quality, motherland-loving feelings and international vision, social responsibility, humanistic quality and scientific literacy, cooperative spirit, innovative spirit and basic academic literacy." [3] This document pays equal attention to "motherland-loving feelings" and "international vision", which grasps the characteristics of discipline of foreign languages and literatures. Although foreign language education is "foreign-related", it should be based on the motherland, and students should be guided to cultivate motherland-loving feelings and be determined to serve the motherland.

III.THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Many scholars have made the definition of national consciousness. Although the expressions are not exactly the same, the connotation is basically the same. Yu Hai believes that national consciousness is the belonging to a particular nation/state and its culture, tradition, system and language and thus "sharing a common history, common feelings, common thoughts and common way of life" [4]. He divided the national consciousness into three parts: "national concept, national security and national prosperity" [4]. National consciousness is a historical concept. With the development of a country, it has experienced a process of continuous evolution. Yan Guohua refines the national consciousness of the new era into the following six aspects according to the characteristics of the times: "a strong sense of national sovereignty, a firm sense of national unity, a comprehensive sense of national security, a rational sense of patriotism, a supreme sense of national interests, and a rising sense of striving for the country" [1].

The above definitions of national consciousness show that national consciousness essentially belongs to the categories of political consciousness, identity consciousness and responsibility consciousness. It is people's acceptance, recognition and love for the country and the nation from emotion and attitude, which is then implemented in the great action of patriotism and fighting for the country. It is a responsibility and a mission. National consciousness emphasizes citizens' sense of ownership, such as responsibility to and pride of the country. The national consciousness of Chinese college students is related to the future development of China and the realization of the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

National consciousness is a great spiritual force of national development, and it has a guiding function in people's thoughts and behaviors. It dominates people's behaviors and inspires people to closely combine the realization of personal values with the future and destiny of the Party and the country. Cultivating and strengthening the national consciousness of young college students is an important way to improve the

cultural soft power and strengthen the national core competitiveness.

IV. BASIC PRINCIPLES TO BE FOLLOWED IN CULTIVATING NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

"Youth is the future of the country and the future of the world. The Chinese nation should make greater contributions to human society." It was clearly pointed out at the conference commemorating the centenary of the May 4th Movement that: "the Chinese youth in the new era should have patriotism as well as humanistic care, carry forward the spirit of "all people belonging to one family and the world belonging to all" advocated by Chinese culture, strive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and work hard to promote the construction of "the Belt and Road Initiative" and the community of shared future for mankind."^[5]

Mei Deming, a professor at Shanghai International Studies University, pointed out: "foreign language education in China aims to cultivate people with motherland loving feelings, international vision and cross-cultural communication skills."^[6] "Foreign language education must establish the concept that international vision and intercultural communication skills should be based on motherland loving feelings and Chinese genes."^[6] He defined the tasks of foreign language education and clarified the relationship between motherland loving feelings and international vision. That is, foreign language education in colleges and universities in the new era should cultivate outstanding foreign language talents with both national consciousness and international vision, and international vision should be based on national consciousness.

4.1 The Cultivation of National Consciousness Should Be Unified with the Cultivation of International Vision

In foreign language education, we must always adhere to fostering virtue through education and cultivate outstanding talents with "four services" needed by the country and society, so that young people are determined to take on the responsibility and mission of safeguarding national sovereignty, promoting national unity, and safeguarding national security and the long-term and fundamental interests of the country. From the national perspective, the young college students should not be civilized egoists; from the international perspective, they should not worship foreign things and fawn on foreign countries, let alone harm the national interests and betray the motherland. This is the fundamental compliance of foreign language education.

With the acceleration of reform and opening-up, China's ties with other countries in the world are getting closer, with deeper exchanges and broader cooperation. Foreign language education in the new era should face the new era, the world and the future, cultivating outstanding international talents, who should have strong cross-cultural ability and broad international vision, respect the diversity of world cultures, and have cross-cultural empathy and an open mind. These talents should extensively absorb the excellent civilizations and cultures created by other countries in the world, but must put an end to indiscriminately

imitation. In the new era, China has further accelerated its integration into the international community and its participation in global governance. Especially after the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative and the proposal of the Thoughts of Community of Shared Future for Mankind, China's international image has been continuously improved, and its international influence and appeal have been further enhanced. As a responsible big country, China should take into account the legitimate concerns of other countries while pursuing its own interests, so as to achieve mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. To achieve this goal, foreign language education should focus on cultivating college students' global awareness, community awareness and human survival awareness, so that they are determined to contribute to the benefit of all mankind.

Therefore, foreign language education should always adhere to the unification of national consciousness and international vision. The cultivation of national consciousness should overcome parochialism; the cultivation of international view should overcome worshipping things foreign and fawning on foreign countries. International vision should be based on national consciousness.

4.2 The Cultivation of National Consciousness should be Unified with the Cultivation of Cross-cultural Ability and Critical Thinking Ability

The core and basic task of foreign language teaching is to cultivate the ability to use language and appreciate literature. This is the focus of the education of foreign language majors. It aims to enable students to communicate and express their thoughts and feelings in the language they have learned, and understand, appreciate and comment on literary works. On this basis, we should also pay attention to cultivating and improving students' cross-cultural ability and critical thinking ability. First of all, through the study of intercultural communication courses, students can communicate effectively and properly, and help people from different cultural backgrounds to communicate effectively. Secondly, nowadays, for foreign language education based on national consciousness, it is particularly important to cultivate the critical thinking ability of students of foreign language majors. When dealing with international issues, foreign language teachers should make full use of their advantages of proficiency in foreign languages, combine specific cases in teaching practice, and make in-depth analysis. On the basis of respecting facts, through comparison, analysis and synthesis, the teachers should guide students to look at the outside world in an objective manner rather than a subjective manner, in a comprehensive manner rather than a unilateral manner and in a dialectical manner, to learn contemporary China, and to make careful judgments and fair evaluations. They must never be indiscriminate and blindly follow, let alone do acts that endanger national interests. For all kinds of media reports, the students should not believe them at will, and should be good at digging deep into the truth. They should be able to identify and judge, and to distinguish right from wrong in critical identification. In foreign language education, the cultivation of language application ability, literary appreciation ability, cross-cultural ability and critical thinking ability is complementary and indispensable, which reflects the true nature and core competitiveness of foreign language professionals.

V. WAYS TO CULTIVATE NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Scholars Guo Jianfeng and Liu Haiying summarized the contents of the cultivation of national consciousness into three parts in their article titled "Exploration of Cultivating National Consciousness of College Students Under the New Situation": "1. Basic contents, including national cultural education and national historical and geographical education. 2. Subjective contents, including national sovereignty awareness education, national interest awareness education, national security awareness education and common ideal education. 3. Expanded contents, including global awareness education and related awareness education." [7] With the development of the times, the contents and manifestation of national consciousness education are also changing. Generally speaking, the basic contents are the most basic and core part, with little change. Regarding the subjective contents, Wang Yongyou and other scholars believe that national consciousness education should also include "national image awareness education" [8]. The author of this paper also agrees with this view, and includes it into the subjective contents. National image is an important symbol of national civilization and an important part of national soft power. It is of great significance to shape and display a positive and beautiful national image. Every Chinese should strive to show the world the image of China, which is civilized and harmonious, politically clear, economically developing, and maintaining international fairness and justice. In this way, the world can know the real China, thus expanding China's influence in the world. Expanded contents are a responsibility to the whole world and all mankind, which means having a global vision. In the new era, the Belt and Road Initiative and the Thoughts of the Community of Shared Future for Mankind put forward by China are more and more widely praised by the international community. The pace of China's integration into the international community and its participation in global governance is further accelerated. China is practicing the Thoughts of Community of Shared Future for Mankind with actual deeds. Therefore, the consciousness education of the Community of Shared Future for Mankind should also be included in the expanded contents. Through the study of expanded contents, students are guided to establish the global awareness, the awareness of Community of Shared Future for Mankind and the international peace awareness, and are determined to contribute to the benefit of all mankind. Foreign language education based on national consciousness is to integrate the above three parts into the whole process of foreign language education and teaching in colleges and universities, so as to internalize them into the spiritual strength of college students and externalize them into their conscious actions. Then, how to achieve this goal?

5.1 Combining Classroom Education with Extracurricular Practice

5.1.1 Classroom education: joint talents cultivation of ideological and political courses, general education courses and specialized courses

After the training goal is determined, it is necessary to set up corresponding courses to support the achievement of the goal. Foreign language education based on national consciousness and homeland loving feelings should give full play to the explicit educational function of ideological and political courses and the implicit educational function of general education courses and specialized courses. The three kinds

of courses complement each other, walk in the same direction, and jointly contribute to talents cultivation.

Ideological and political course is the main channel to cultivate students' national consciousness. We should give full play to the role of ideological and political course to enhance students' national consciousness and national identity from the theoretical level. At the same time, it is necessary to give play to the hidden educational functions of general education courses and specialized courses, which can play a subtle role. As far as specialized courses are concerned, first of all, to meet the requirements of foreign language talents in the new era, more courses related to China have been included in the elective module of the *Teaching Guide for Foreign Language and Literature Majors in Ordinary Colleges and Universities*. As specialized courses, the opening of Chinese culture courses will undoubtedly arouse students' attention to Chinese culture, and provide favorable guarantee and realization way for deepening students' understanding and grasp of Chinese excellent culture, cultivating their national consciousness and inspiring their patriotic enthusiasm, so as to better serve the strategy of "Chinese culture going out". Secondly, foreign language teachers should be good at excavating the elements contained in specialized courses that are helpful to cultivate students' national consciousness. Although foreign languages, literature and culture are the main teaching materials for foreign languages, by using the methods of comparison between China and foreign countries commonly used in foreign language teaching, relevant Chinese topics can be naturally introduced to guide young people to pay attention to and think about the issues of China, and inspire their patriotic feelings, their ambition to strengthen the country and their deeds of contributing to the country. Finally, according to the characteristics that current news is contemporary and easy to stimulate students' interest, we should educate young people through current news broadcasts and other forms, guiding them to establish national consciousness, constantly enhance their recognition of the great motherland, Chinese nation, Chinese culture and Chinese system, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, national security and national development interests, and take a clear-cut stand against the words and deeds of attempts to split the country and undermine national unity.

5.1.2 Extracurricular practice: implementation of various extracurricular practice activities

The state has repeatedly stressed that moral education should run through the whole process of education and teaching to realize the whole-process and all-round education. Therefore, how to make good use of extracurricular practice to cultivate college students' national consciousness is also a subject worthy of in-depth study. On campus, we can organize various extracurricular practical activities, such as discipline competitions, scientific research, innovative practice, academic associations, and carry out student association activities, cultural and sports activities, party day, group day, theme class meeting to find a suitable breakthrough point to integrate national consciousness education into these activities. Off campus, we may make full use of professional practice, graduation practice and social practice to make students put down their books and go out of the classroom. They should enter the larger classroom of society, get to know the society, witness and experience with their own eyes, which will help to increase their understanding of China's national conditions and enhance their sense of responsibility and mission. Students should be encouraged to visit museums, memorial halls, patriotic education bases, and red tourism bases to acquire nutrition and wisdom from the long history, splendid culture and local

characteristic culture of the Chinese nation, so as to enhance their sense of national pride.

5.2 Combining Education at Home with Education Abroad

5.2.1 Education at home: forming a linkage among school, family and society

Schools are the main front of fostering virtue through education, so we must give full play to the educational function of schools. The schools should create favorable campus environment, including the material environment and spiritual and cultural environment, so that students can be influenced by what they hear. They should also create positive and healthy campus network public opinion environment and give full play to the advantages of network communication to positively guide students. In addition, families and society should play their own roles to form a cooperative education mechanism. Family is the most direct place to cultivate patriotic education, and it is very important to create a favorable environment for family education. We should start from little things and implement patriotic education in daily actions. The importance of the social environment is beyond doubt. It is necessary to strengthen the supervision of the internet and the media, and give full play to their positive guiding role. We should give full play to the publicity function of public places by posting publicity wall charts, publicize in a vivid manner, create a good social environment, and form a good social atmosphere.

5.2.2 Education abroad: seizing the opportunity to stimulate students' patriotic enthusiasm and enhance their national pride

Most students of foreign language majors have the opportunity to study abroad. Thus, when paying attention to education at home, education abroad should not be ignored. When students go abroad and their space is displaced, the question of "who am I" is followed. Self-identity becomes the first and key problem to be solved. At this point, national identity is highlighted. The recognition of national identity is the recognition of the country, and the two are consistent. In this situation, their understanding of the concept of state is clearer and deeper than ever before, and their national consciousness is strengthened. Furthermore, after leaving the familiar environment and living in a strange country, they will feel attached to their homeland. From the psychological point of view: this is an opportunity to stimulate their patriotic enthusiasm and enhance their national pride. At this time, if we can find the right focus and guide them appropriately, we will often get twice the result with half the effort. Therefore, counselors and class teachers can't relax the guidance of students' thoughts during their study abroad, and a regular thought reporting system should be adopted; the courses of the Communist Youth League in WeChat official accounts, such as Youth Study, cannot be interrupted; the students should be encouraged to watch international sports events and participate in high-level cultural exchange activities to enhance their pride of the country and stimulate their patriotic enthusiasm. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the guidance by different methods, and teach them to look at the problem in an objective and dialectical manner. Through observation, comparison and analysis, they should be guided to correctly understand the development trend of the world and China, the Chinese characteristics, and understand the superiority of the socialist system through international comparison. We should enhance their political self-confidence,

their sense of responsibility of the times and sense of historical mission, and deepen their love and loyalty to the nation and the country.

In terms of the foreign language education in the new era, on the one hand, we should cultivate outstanding international talents with global vision, who should have humanistic care for all mankind; on the other hand, we should cultivate socialist successors who have the homeland loving feelings, put national interests first, and strive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Both of these two aspects are indispensable. In this way, foreign language education can meet the development needs in the new era and complete the basic tasks of education in the new era. And only in this way can foreign language education meet the characteristics of foreign language disciplines and better serve the national strategies.

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