

## Innovative Practices of Applied Teaching in the Course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings”

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**Abstract:** The course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings” is a specialized course for senior students majoring in English in Chinese universities. This paper takes Shandong Jiaotong University, a characteristic university for cultivating applied talents, as an example and is based on the innovative practices of applied teaching of the course. Through the analysis of the construction of the teaching team and the “pain points” in the course teaching, the feasibility and necessity of implementing teaching innovation in the course are elaborated. With the focus of the innovative path of course teaching based on the “pain points” and the information processing learning theory, teaching objectives of this course are refined, innovative practices of the team in reshaping course content, expanding course resources, innovating teaching implementation, and conducting diversified course assessments are summarized. The Effectiveness of the course teaching innovation in student cultivation, teacher development, and social services is sorted out. The application value of course reform in transforming educational concepts, innovating teaching practices, and extending the scope of education is illustrated. The future direction and improvement measures of course construction is analyzed from three aspects: teaching staff, teaching content, and teaching mode.

**Keywords:** “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings”; The Information Processing Learning Theory; “Pain Points”; Innovative Practice of Applied Teaching

### 1. Introduction

The course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings” is a traditional course for English majors in Chinese universities. It has

been offered for over 20 years at Shandong Jiaotong University, a university specialized in cultivating applied talents. The teaching team of the course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings” has been committed to the course teaching reform which is problem-oriented and student-centered. Aiming at key issues that urgently need to be solved in course teaching, starting from the application-oriented education positioning of the university, requirements for talent cultivation in English Majors, and students’ learning condition, and based on the information processing learning theory, the team continuously innovates in course content, course resources, teaching implementation, course assessment, and other aspects. The reform results are significant, with obvious achievements in student training, teacher development, and social services. It highlights the application value in transforming educational concepts, innovating teaching practices, and extending the scope of education.

### 2. Background of the Course Teaching Innovation

The course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings” is an integration of the pre-requisite course “History of British and American Literature” and its follow-up course “Selected Readings in British and American Literature”. As a specialized course for senior students majoring in English, the course focuses on introduction to English Literature and representative writers and classic works of English literature, with a total of 64 class hours and 4 credits.

#### 2.1 Construction of the Course Teaching Team

The course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings” is a school-level ideological and political demonstration course at Shandong Jiaotong University. The course teaching team has more than twenty years of

teaching experience and has currently four Chinese and foreign teachers, including two associate professors, one lecturer, and one foreign expert. The team includes two PhDs and two masters, and one has obtained the International English Teacher Advanced Diploma issued by the International English Language Teaching Research Association in the United States. The team members are actively engaged in social services, higher education teaching and ideological and political construction of the course. The team has won 16 national awards, 25 provincial awards and 11 school-level awards in teaching competition. Over twenty years of teaching practice experience and research results have provided practical guarantees for the course teaching innovation.

## **2.2 Analysis of the “Pain Points” in Course Teaching**

Through years of teaching practice, reflection, and research, the course teaching team has concluded that the reform of the course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings” is imperative. The key issues that need to be addressed in course teaching are highlighted in four aspects: course content, course resources, teaching implementation, and course assessment.

In terms of the course content, there are numerous representative English writers and classic works, and the content is complex. The 64-hour schedule is relatively limited.

In terms of the course resources, traditional textbooks have outdated content, narrow coverage of writers and works, and generally lack ideological and political elements.

In terms of the teaching implementation, traditional teaching focuses on teachers’ lectures and adopts a relatively passive teaching mode, which result in students’ low interest, and a lack of communication and interaction between teachers and students, as well as between students.

In terms of the course assessment, the evaluation is mainly based on students’ final scores of exam papers, which makes it difficult to stimulate students’ initiative in self-directed learning and cannot comprehensively and scientifically assess students’ learning effect.

## **3. Innovative Practice in Course Teaching**

In response to the four “pain points” that

urgently need to be addressed in course teaching, the teaching team of the course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings” introduces the information processing learning theory into teaching practice. Starting from the application-oriented education positioning of the university, requirements for talent cultivation in English Majors, and students’ learning condition, the team studies and adjusts course teaching objectives, and implements course construction and reform in teaching practice.

### **3.1 Theoretical Basis**

The information processing learning theory was proposed by the renowned American educational psychologist Gagne, which includes three basic ideas.

#### **3.1.1 Classification of Learning Outcomes**

Learning is a process of alienation, and changes in students’ psychological states, capabilities, or tendencies lead to different learning outcomes.

#### **3.1.2 Classification of Learning Levels**

Learning is a complex process, and students usually master basic low-level learning first and then complex high-level learning.

#### **3.1.3 Classification of Learning Processes**

Learning is a processing process, and the learning and information processing process are highly similar. After receiving external stimuli, students go through eight stages of learning: motivation, comprehension, acquisition, retention, recall, summarization, homework, and feedback, completing a series of information processing steps including expecting, encoding, storing, memorizing, extracting, transferring, responding and reinforcing. [1]

Based on the information processing learning theory and the characteristics of the course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings”, the teaching team implements the “student-centered” educational philosophy, fully utilizes information technology in teaching, continuously strengthens learning tracking, adjusts course teaching objectives at different levels, and further refines the learning process into five links: stimulating motivation, clarifying goals, storing information, checking feedback, and summarizing and reviewing. With these five links as the fulcrum for classroom teaching, students’ learning initiative is enhanced, and good learning outcomes are promoted. [2]

## **3.2 Adjustment of Course Teaching Objectives**

Starting from the education positioning of the university, requirements for talent cultivation in English Majors, and students' learning condition, the teaching team of the course adjusts the teaching objectives, implements the cultivation of students' knowledge, skills, emotions, and values such as language, literature, patriotism, international perspective, and team consciousness, promotes students' processing and internalization of information at all levels, and achieves good learning outcomes.

### 3.2.1 Serving the Education Positioning of the University and Requirements for Talent Cultivation in English Majors

Shandong Jiaotong University is characterized by cultivating advanced applied professionals in the transportation industry with patriotic spirit, international perspective, innovative consciousness, and practical spirit.

Based on the university's education positioning, English major education focuses on cultivating applied foreign language talents who have a solid grasp of literary and linguistic knowledge, possess high humanistic literacy, are good at cross-cultural communication, and have an international perspective.

The course "Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings" is designed to serve the education positioning of the university and requirements for talent cultivation in English majors under the guidance of the new national standard. It aims to cultivate students' knowledge, capabilities, and qualities in language, literature, patriotism, international perspective, innovation, and practical work.

### 3.2.2 Implementing Analysis of Students' Learning Condition

The teaching team fully utilizes information technology in teaching, using online platforms esp. their voting and testing systems, as well as the self-built course teaching platform, to investigate and understand students' knowledge mastery and value development. At the same time, through interactive activities such as group presentations and classroom discussions, students' abilities in information retrieval, teamwork, and dialectical thinking are tested and understood. The continuous tracking and research results of students' learning condition show that after studying specialized courses in the first two years, students have already acquired a certain level of English language proficiency and understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries. However, their

literary literacy, teamwork awareness, and ideological and moral qualities still need to be enhanced.

### 3.2.3 Teaching Objectives of the Course "Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings"

Starting from the education positioning of the university, requirements for talent cultivation in English majors, and students' learning condition, the teaching team adjusts the teaching objectives of the course.

#### 3.2.3.1 Knowledge objective

The course is to enable students to understand and master the characteristics of literary works from different periods and authors, laying a foundation for students to participate in exams like TEM-4, TEM-8 and the postgraduate entrance examination.

#### 3.2.3.2 Skill objective

The course is to cultivate students' practical and innovative abilities, English thinking skills and teamwork spirit, and improve their basic English language skills, dialectical analysis abilities, and information retrieval and academic research abilities.

#### 3.2.3.3 Emotion objective

The course is to improve students' humanistic qualities, cultivate their self-learning ability, communication ability, evaluation ability, and rule awareness.

#### 3.2.3.4 Value objective

The course is to deeply explore ideological and political elements, help students form correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, and adhere to policies and guidelines of the country.

## 3.3 Innovation in Course Teaching

The innovation in the teaching of the course "Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings" includes reshaping course content, expanding course resources, innovating teaching implementation, and conducting diversified course assessments.

### 3.3.1 Reshaping Course Content

In response to the problem of "numerous works by writers, complex course content, and limited class hours", the teaching team develops the course teaching platform that fulfills functions of reading, practicing, and evaluating, integrating and optimizing the course teaching content. [3]

The platform provides 300 original English classic works and massive literary reviews for students to download and read, and continuously

updates them. The platform includes the latest academic research results to cultivate students' innovation ability, and enhance their academic research ability. Besides, the platform sets up various learning rankings to effectively stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and promote their independent learning after class.

### 3.3.2 Expanding Course Resources

In response to the problem of outdated textbook content, narrow coverage of authors and works, and lack of ideological and political elements, the teaching team actively updates online and offline teaching resources and deeply explores ideological and political elements.

In terms of textbook resources, numerous electronic materials of classic textbooks and monographs published by well-known domestic and foreign publishers are provided. In terms of courseware resources, latest academic research achievements in English literature are timely added and dynamically updated. In terms of MOOC resources, online teaching platforms are utilized to supplement and improve the course teaching content. In terms of ideological and political cases, three types of ideological and political education content, namely knowledge-based, activity-based, and evaluation-based content, are introduced, incorporating elements such as patriotism, rule awareness, social responsibility, and humanistic spirit, to stimulate students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral identification, and achieve the unity of knowledge imparting and value guidance, and the unity of teaching and educating students. [4]

### 3.3.3 Innovating Teaching Implementation

In response to the problem of passive teaching mode, low students' interest, and lack of interaction between teachers and students as well as between students, the teaching team keeps strengthening the construction of the teaching team and the course teaching platform, enhance teaching design, and build effective and efficient teaching modes.

In terms of team building, the members of the course teaching team have graduated from well-known domestic or international universities, with a reasonable structure of age, professional title, and academic background. In the past over 20 years of course teaching, they have accumulated rich practical experience in course teaching. Over the years, the team has continuously strengthened teachers' training, adhered to the principle of promoting teaching through competitions, and won multiple awards

at the national, provincial, and school levels in teaching competitions. In terms of platform utilization, the team fully utilizes online platforms such as DingTalk, Rain Classroom, Tencent Classroom, etc. to publish voting, conduct real-time classroom roll calls, survey questionnaires, online tests, etc., greatly enriching the content of classroom activities. In terms of teaching design, the team optimizes the combination of multiple teaching methods, fully utilizes online and offline resources, and organically integrates the first and second classrooms. [5] In terms of teaching mode, BOPPPS effective teaching mode is adopted, which improves students' course participation and expands the limitations of time and space of classroom teaching through the setting of the six stages of introduction, objectives, pre-assessment, participatory learning, post-assessment, and summary.

### 3.3.4 Diversifying Course Assessment

In response to the problem that the evaluation is mainly based on final exam scores, which makes it difficult to mobilize students' enthusiasm for self-directed learning and cannot comprehensively and scientifically assess their learning effectiveness, a combination of process assessment (50%) and level assessment (50%) is adopted in the course assessment, with diverse assessment forms, multiple evaluation subjects, and moderate increases in the intensity of regular assessments. [6]

Only by establishing a comprehensive course evaluation system can students be better guided. The parties concerned in the process assessment and evaluation of the course "Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings" include the teachers, students in the same group, and students from other groups, with a ratio of 7:1:2. The evaluation content includes attendance (10%), assignments (20%), in-class tests (20%), classroom performance (20%), use of online teaching platforms (20%), and participation in extracurricular activities (10%). The final assessment includes recitation videos (30%) and course papers (70%), with a focus on testing students' English language proficiency, as well as their abilities in information retrieval and academic research.

## 4. The Innovation Effect and Application Value of the Course Teaching

In the course development of more than 20 years, the teaching team of the course "Introduction to

English Literature and Selected Readings” at Shandong Jiaotong University has adhered to creating features, achieved practical results in course teaching innovation, and achieved significant results in student cultivation, teacher development, and social services. Its application value has been highlighted in transforming educational concepts, innovating teaching practices, and extending the scope of education.

#### **4.1 Course Features**

The teaching team is guided by the information processing learning theory, adhering to the student-centered educational philosophy and focusing on the organic combination of knowledge imparting, skill cultivating, emotion developing, and value shaping in course teaching. Through online and offline diversified mixing and innovating of course content, course resources, teaching implementation, and course assessment, a full-process teaching guarantee system and a full-process comprehensive evaluation mechanism are established to solve the “pain points” of teaching, assist students in information processing, and promote the sustainable development of teachers and students.

#### **4.2 Achievements of Innovation in Course Teaching**

The achievements of innovation in the teaching of the course are shown in student cultivation, teacher development, and social services.

##### **4.2.1 Effectively Promoting Student Cultivation**

The development and construction of the teaching platform of the course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings” effectively solve the problem of limited class hours and complex course content. The platform provides a large number of literary works, commentaries, and latest academic frontiers, enhancing students’ English language proficiency and academic research ability. At the same time, the addition of foreign experts in the course teaching team helps students gain a deeper understanding of western civilization and culture and expand their international perspective. In the past three years, nearly ten English major graduates have been admitted to master’s programs at well-known foreign universities.

The team provides abundant and diverse teaching resources which are updated in a timely manner, effectively alleviating the problem of

outdated textbook content and lack of ideological and political elements. QR code shares courseware, which can be obtained by scanning and visually and timely displayed, making it convenient for students to review and communicate after class. In the meantime, the study of specialized courses is organically combined with ideological and political education, and knowledge, skills, and quality education are organically combined. Students actively participate in online and offline group discussions and classroom presentations, and their critical thinking and teamwork abilities have been significantly improved. In 2023, they won 2 national third prizes, 3 provincial first prizes, and 2 excellence awards in various English professional competitions.

The team adopts blending learning, breaking through the limitations of traditional classrooms. The setting of platform rankings and the adopting of BOPPPS effective teaching mode stimulate students’ learning enthusiasm and solve the problem of low students’ interest and lack of communication and interaction between teachers and students, as well as between students. At the same time, the series of activities of introducing knowledge into communities and rural areas make students deeply feel the social responsibilities of contemporary college students, regard the revitalization of rural culture as their historical mission, enhance students’ cultural confidence, and subtly increase their sense of identity with socialist core values. The ideological and political quality of students are significantly improved, and 39 students are awarded the honorary title of Outstanding Youth Volunteer at the Guangrao International Rubber Tire and Auto Parts Exhibition.

The course assessment adopts a combination of process assessment and level assessment, which increases the intensity and difficulty of process assessment, reforms the form of final assessment, and solves the problem of difficulty in comprehensively and scientifically assessing students’ learning effectiveness. Students’ English language proficiency and information retrieval and academic research ability are greatly improved. In the 2023 course teaching quality survey, 98.3% of students believe that the teaching objectives of the course are clear, the teaching progress is moderate, the key and difficult points are prominent, and the teacher-student interaction is active, which help students

understand the latest knowledge of the subject. During teaching, attention is paid to the development of students' values and communication skills. The assigned homework, Q&A, testing, questioning and other methods are of great help to students' learning, and students have a high overall satisfaction with the course.

#### 4.2.2 Effectively Promoting Teacher Development

In the process of the course reform, the abilities of the members of the team in teaching, ideological and political education, and information technology utilization are significantly improved. They win numerous honorary titles and teaching competition awards and guide students to achieve outstanding results in postgraduate entrance exams. Their teaching effectiveness wins unanimous praise from students.

#### 4.2.3 Actively Assisting in Social Services

The course teaching team actively responds to the call of the national rural revitalization and poverty alleviation strategy, implements the social service function of higher education, leverages the advantages of the teaching team and the course content, expands course coverage, and introduces knowledge into communities and rural areas. Through the integration of schooling and local education, the visibility of schools and majors is enhanced, the transformation of teaching and research achievements in foreign language subjects is promoted, the cultural life of rural residents and teachers and students is enriched, and the cultural confidence of people is strengthened. During the COVID-19, online propaganda was carried out. The online service achieves remarkable results, realizing the sharing of university resources with the local areas, actively meeting the needs of rural revitalization and construction, promoting rural economy, especially cultural construction, improving the scientific and cultural quality of rural residents and teachers and students, and providing intellectual support and spiritual security for the construction of a new socialist countryside. [7]

### 4.3 Application Value of Innovation in Course Teaching

The construction and reform of the course have achieved significant results, benefiting teachers and students greatly. The social response has been enthusiastic, and it has received continuous

attention and coverage from official media such as Volkswagen and Shandong Education Television. The innovative achievements can be further promoted and applied in the future.

The teaching team of the course is committed to combining professional learning with the cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities, and comprehensively improving the quality of talent cultivation. In course teaching, the team optimizes the combination of various teaching methods, fully utilizes online and offline resources, organically integrates the first and second classrooms, cultivates students' English thinking ability and teamwork spirit, improves students' basic English language skills, dialectical analysis ability, and information retrieval and academic research ability, promotes the improvement of students' humanistic quality, and cultivates students' self-learning ability, communication ability, evaluation ability and rule awareness.

The team is committed to combining literary learning with ideological and political education, achieving the unity of teaching and educating students. The team highlights the value and role of ideological and political education in literature teaching in teaching practice, integrating ideological and political content through various channels both in class and after class, on line and off line, and stimulating students' thinking on patriotism, excellent traditional Chinese culture, and other aspects. The teaching effect has been greatly improved, and students have gained greater achievements in patriotism, learning motivation, and direction of effort. [8]

The team is committed to putting students at the center and emphasizing the application of information technology. Starting from the level of course design, team members act as organizers and guides in course learning, fully utilizing information technology to build the course teaching platform. In response to students' habits of using mobile phones in reading, they make full use of students' fragmented time, cultivate students' ability to analyze, question, and interpret multiple perspectives, encourage students to think from multiple angles, conduct rational self-evaluation and self-reflection, effectively improve students' literary appreciation and reading ability, and achieve the goal of teaching and educating students.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper takes Shandong Jiaotong University, a university specialized in cultivating applied talents, as an example and is based on the innovative practices of applied teaching of the course “Introduction to English Literature and Selected Readings”. Through the analysis of the construction of the teaching team and the “pain points” in the course teaching, the feasibility and necessity of implementing teaching innovation in the course, the innovative path of the course teaching, and the application value of the course reform are elaborated. The study results have certain guiding and reference significance for the teaching of the course for English majors in Chinese universities. Given the limitations in subjective and objective conditions of the teaching team, further efforts are needed to accumulate and analyze data as well as strengthen the solidification of study results.

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