

# Cultivation Approaches of Moral Learning in Senior English Teaching

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**Abstract:** In recent years, with the continuous deepening of research on the correlation between moral learning and subject education, majority of frontline English teachers have begun to explore approaches to integrating moral learning into English teaching, which conforms to the current goal of talent cultivation, but promotes the development of senior English teaching and solves the problem of separating “moral learning” and “intellectual education” as well. The moral learning of English subject in the new era is facing various difficulties, whose cultivation for high school students is also urgent. Therefore, based on the requirements of the New Curriculum Standards and combined with the senior English textbooks of FLTRP (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press), this paper attempts to point out the following cultivation strategies: serving as a moral model, establishing moral learning objectives, setting up moral learning contexts, utilizing multimodal resources, making good use of exams and exercises, carrying out extracurricular practice activities, creating a moral learning atmosphere. Through the exploration of moral learning strategies, this study aims to promote the construction of senior high school English curriculum and provide some references for the effective implementation of moral learning.

**Keywords:** Senior English; Moral Learning; Cultivation Approach; English Teaching.

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## 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of social informatization and advanced technology, major media present various information to high school students without any selection. Due to the immaturity of high school students' minds, they often lack the awareness of screening when receiving information, making their thoughts susceptible to the influence of detrimental information and leading to deviations in their understanding of morality. Therefore, moral learning plays a crucial role in cultivating high school students' correct values and fostering good social morality. Moral learning, as the foremost component of the “Five Education”, should receive corresponding attention. However, in current senior high school teaching, due to the influence of enrollment rates and exam scores, some teachers separate moral learning from intellectual education, overly emphasizing intellectual education while neglecting moral learning, which has resulted in a lack of moral learning among the high school student. Additionally, some school administrators regard moral learning as the main task of ideological and political courses, without realizing the connection between moral learning and subject education. Moral learning should not be limited to single moral learning course, but should be implemented in all disciplines and courses, and the concept of subject moral learning should be deepened through disciplinary education (Wang & Wang, 2024). English, as a necessary tool for promoting cultural exchange between the East and the West, provides a valuable approach for the cultivation of moral values. In recent years, due to the increasing emphasis on “curriculum ideology and politics”, it has provided a precious opportunity for frontline English teachers to integrate moral learning with English teaching. Therefore, in English teaching, teachers should not only focus on cultivating students' language and cultural knowledge, but also promote the effective development of students' ideology and morality through English teaching. The purpose of this study is to explore specific strategies to effectively improve moral

learning in senior high school English teaching based on the current dilemma of moral learning. The study can not only improve students' moral cognition, promote the teaching practice of moral learning of English teachers, but also provide some inspiration for the related research of moral learning and other disciplines.

## 2. The Dilemma of Moral Learning in Senior English Teaching

### 2.1. Lack of Moral Learning Awareness

Moral learning, different from explicit subject teaching, is often neglected by teachers and students in the course of teaching. Some teachers deem that moral learning should be the content of ideological and political courses, they do not consciously connect moral learning with teaching subjects, lack understanding of the connotation of moral learning, and do not put moral learning into teaching practice. In addition, as English is a basic subject in the college entrance examination, many English teachers focus on how to effectively improve students' English score, and students' learning life is filled with the training for various types of questions in the English college entrance examination. Due to the heavy teaching pressure, English teachers' exploration of moral learning has gradually decreased, and can only rely on obvious moral learning materials in textbook.

### 2.2. Outdated Methods of Moral Learning

When infiltrating moral learning in English teaching, many teachers adopt one-way preaching, which can only integrate some elements of moral learning at a superficial level (Song, 2022). Some high school students are in a rebellious period of youth, during which monotonous preaching or meaningless criticism and self-reflection can reduce the effectiveness of moral learning, which is a kind of ingenious and skillful education. Therefore, when conducting moral learning, teachers should fully consider the current situation of students' moral learning, and adopt a way that students can accept

wholeheartedly based on their understanding of the students. Scientific and reasonable moral learning methods can not only narrow the distance between teachers and students, but also establish an equal and respectful relationship between teachers and students, which is also beneficial to the development of future teaching.

### **2.3. Insufficient Exploration of Moral Learning Materials**

Exploring the moral learning content in textbooks is the starting point for disciplinary moral learning and the foundation for designing moral learning activities (Chen, 2023). English textbooks, as a key to cultivating students' moral learning, have not received much attention from frontline English teachers. Many teachers only focus on the content of the course itself when preparing lessons, and cannot explore and extend the moral learning points of the textbook. In addition to teaching materials, there are also many multimodal discourses in students' English learning and discourses in exam exercises, which also provide sufficient resources for students' moral training. However, due to the potential disciplinary problems that may arise from multimodal discourse, and teachers' emphasis on language knowledge and grammar points when analyzing discourses in exam, the moral learning functions of these two types of discourse is often overlooked.

### **2.4. Unrealistic Moral Learning Objectives**

In real life, the formulation of moral learning objectives in schools is not well integrated with reality and is too idealistic (Xu, 2021). The objective of moral learning, as the ideological guidance of moral learning teaching, has not yet played its role in current moral learning. The setting of moral learning objectives did not fully consider the actual situation of students, resulting in detachment from their psychological characteristics (Xu, 2021). Students are growing individuals. In the three years of high school, with the increase of their knowledge, they will face more and more moral learning situations and problems. The objectives of moral learning should be dynamic and optimized as students continue to grow. Moreover, when setting moral learning objectives, students' personality traits, living environment, and individual differences should also be taken into account.

## **3. The Significance of Integrating Moral Learning into English Teaching**

### **3.1. Enhancing Students' Moral Quality**

High school students are at a crossroads in moral development, cultivating students' sense of morality and promoting their integration of knowledge and action are vital tasks in high school teaching. In order to adapt to students' development and improve the effectiveness of moral learning, English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017 version revised in 2020) proposes three major thematic contexts (Ministry of Education, 2020). The three major thematic contexts are closely related to students' lives, which can trigger their thinking on nature, society and self, as well as form their own moral cognition. Based on discourse, the three thematic contexts provide a solid foundation for the cultivation of students' moral learning. Different contexts have different moral learning functions, and students can acquire moral learning knowledge from different discourses

and apply it to their daily lives.

### **3.2. Promoting the Integration of Senior English Teaching and Ideological and Political Education**

For a long time, many teachers have artificially separated ideological and political education from English subject education, deeming that ideological and political education is the task of teachers in charge of a class or political subject teachers. As the the concept of "curriculum ideology and politics" has become the focus of teaching research in various disciplines, many teachers have also begun to try to combine ideological and political education with the subjects they teach, exploring the real effects of the two in teaching activities. Senior English teaching is closely related to ideological and political education, and they promote each other. Teachers should strive to achieve a successful combination of the two, providing a powerful platform for talent cultivation.

### **3.3. Developing Students' Cultural Confidence**

Due to living in the era of globalization with advanced technology, senior high school students have more ways to obtain information, and various detrimental thoughts have begun to attack immature high school students. Although harmonious coexistence and mutual learning among different cultures are advocated in the context of globalization, the premise is to have a sense of identity, pride and confidence in the excellent traditional Chinese culture (Zhuang, 2024). China has a long history, with many exceptional traditional culture worthy of appreciation and learning by students, it is not only the inheritance of virtues, but also an important magic weapon against detrimental thoughts. In English teaching, teachers should timely supplement students with some attractive and meaningful materials related to China's exceptional traditional culture, and consolidate students' cultural confidence through students' experience of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. What's more, English teachers can also make use of extracurricular activities, English clubs, English corners, English radio, English competitions, etc., to popularize the excellent Chinese culture for students and encourage students to explore it independently.

### **3.4. Improving Students' Social Skills**

Social skills, as an essential bond in interpersonal communication and social life, are of great significance in students' learning and life. During high school, some students devote the vast majority of their energy to studying, pursuing ideal scores, often neglecting the cultivation of social skills. In senior English teaching, the thematic context of man and society provides many teaching cases for cultivating students' social skills. In the process of learning English, moral stories in discourse can provide students with moral learning materials, inspire them to think about morality, and make their own moral judgments. Besides, students can gradually understand the meaning of interpersonal communication and learn their own interpersonal norms from the learning process.

## **4. Cultivation Strategies of Moral Learning in Senior English Teaching**

### **4.1. Serving as a Moral Model**

Every word, action, and gesture of a teacher, whether

correct or not, will become an object of learning or imitation for students, and the impact will be profound and lasting (Zhuang, 2024). Therefore, in the process of English teaching, teachers should convey correct moral concepts to students and cultivate their correct values. For example, teachers can make good use of the welcome unit in textbooks. Based on the learning of the first lesson of the school year, teachers can encourage students to think about “what qualities should high school students possess?” Before formal teaching, teachers can guide students to think about this question, which helps them set goals for their efforts. By sorting out and discussing the qualities of excellent high school students, they can consciously get close to their goals. At the beginning of the semester, students are on the same starting point in terms of learning content, which can also be a starting point for moral learning, encouraging students’ moral development through goal setting.

In addition to setting moral goals for students, teachers themselves should also create a moral model for students. Many teachers come from normal colleges, and setting an example for students is an inherent requirement of normal education. Therefore, teachers should correct their behavior, have the courage to admit their shortcomings and make corrections. In the process of communication with students, teachers should change their thoughts, communicate with students in a friendly and equal attitude, and make efforts to establish a new kind of friendly relationship between teachers and students. By setting moral examples, teachers can not only improve their personal quality and promote professional development, but also gain more respect and understanding from students.

## 4.2. Establishing Moral Learning Objectives

English teachers should integrate morality into their teaching in a planned, purposeful, and systematic manner based on the structural system and unique educational value of the English subject (Wu, 2018). Any teaching should be guided by a clear objective, moral learning objectives also guide the design of teaching activities and ultimately influence the effect of moral learning. Therefore, when teachers integrate moral learning into English teaching, they should first establish the objective of moral learning according to the text. Taking “click for a friend” as an example, this text is an argumentative essay that explains how to establish and maintain friendship in the high-tech era. This text discusses the popular online dating nowadays, but many students do not have awareness about this topic. With the development of the Internet, making friends becomes more convenient, how to choose the right friends and how to maintain friendship has become a problem for some students. Therefore, based on the particularity and complexity of the current network environment, this study has formulated the following moral learning objectives. Firstly, students can distinguish the authenticity of online friendships and protect their network security by learning the content of text. Secondly, students can understand the meaning of friendship correctly and engage in appropriate interactions with others. Thirdly, students can recognize the merits and shortcomings of the internet and protect their own rights and interests. Moral learning objectives can help teachers clarify the focus of moral learning and optimize the design of moral learning activities.

## 4.3. Setting up Moral Learning Contexts

English subject moral learning can only be carried out in real language contexts, so that students can seize the opportunity to strengthen positive emotional experiences during language training, and gain real life insights and influences (Zhuang, 2024). With the promulgation of the New Curriculum Standards and the deepening of the concept of “curriculum ideology and politics”, many teachers have begun to introduce moral learning into high school English teaching. However, due to lack of experience and heavy teaching tasks, many teachers have not realized the importance of constructing contexts in English teaching for cultivating students’ moral learning. Taking the textbook of FLTRP (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press) as an example, in the text “Just a brother”, the text tells the story of Alistair giving up the opportunity to win the championship and helping his brother near the finish line of the 2016 World Triathlon Series in Mexico when his brother was about to fall. This text has high moral value and can stimulate students’ thinking about the relationship between family and competition, allowing them to appreciate the true essence of success. Therefore, in order to achieve the educational value of this lesson, teachers should set up corresponding moral contexts for students: if you and your brother are both runners, and your brother is also your only competitor in a race that determines the qualification for the finals, he is about to fall at the finish line due to a previous unhealed injury. Will you pick him up or will you abandon him and continue to finish the race? The teacher asks the students to perform pair work in response to this context, with two students playing different roles and presenting the story ending to the whole class through performance. The design of this context is derived from the original context, but due to cultural differences, students do not know much about the World Triathlon series, so the teacher cleverly recreates the context and designs a context that is in line with students’ cognition and close to students’ life knowledge, which helps students quickly enter the role and achieve the goal of English subject education.

Besides, after the students’ performance, the teacher can innovate the situation again. “If you were a referee, what decision would you ultimately make?” The design of the context focuses the perspective on the referee this time. Based on this context, it can not only trigger students to think about the winning criteria, but also facilitate the development of students’ critical thinking. This is a two-choice competition, and it is worth students to think deeply about who qualifies or what other decisions will be made by the judges. After completing these two situational problems, students can have a deeper understanding of family affection, meanwhile, they can learn what scientific and fair competition is.

## 4.4. Utilizing Multimodal Resources

In English teaching, multimodal discourse integrates multiple models (such as words, sounds and images) to convey information, which is an important part of English teaching materials and plays a pivotal role in shaping students’ values (Chen, 2023). At present, in the new textbook, the editor has added a “starting out” section, which is often accompanied by corresponding pictures and videos, indicating that the new textbook has increased its emphasis on multimodal teaching. Multimodal teaching aims to stimulate students’ learning motivation by mobilizing their multiple senses. In fact, relying solely on the multimodal materials in each unit’s “starting out” section cannot achieve

comprehensive cultivation of students' moral learning. Students' understanding of the connotation of moral learning requires a large amount of input of moral learning materials, but the multimodal materials in this section are more helpful for teachers to achieve unit teaching objectives. Therefore, in order to achieve the effect of moral learning cultivation, teachers need to apply more multimodal resources. Students are more deeply touched in the intuitive scenes and experiences provided by vivid and diverse resources (Song, 2022). Furthermore, when using multimodal resources to cultivate students' moral learning, teachers should select typical resources that are easy for students to understand. At the same time, teachers should also pay attention to the connections between various models and combine a variety of models skillfully.

#### **4.5. Making Good Use of Exams and Exercises**

In addition to the moral learning materials provided in textbooks, exercises in exams and assignments can also serve as models for moral learning. At present, many English teaching and research centers have begun to explore the moral learning elements in textbooks. With the continuous deepening of related research and practice, many teachers have also learned the methods of exploring the moral learning elements in textbooks and incorporated moral learning goals into teaching objectives. However, many teachers have not noticed that discourse exercises in daily assignments and exams can also be used as a way to cultivate students' moral learning. There are many discourses in English test papers and assignments, and if teachers choose and analyze them correctly, many discourses can also be used as moral learning materials. In English test papers, the three major thematic contexts are evenly distributed, which can provide students with moral cultivation from different dimensions.

More importantly, continuation task section in the new English college entrance examination can become a major platform for students' moral learning. Continuation task is a new component of the English college entrance examination, which requires the continuation of the story based on the first sentence of two paragraphs after reading the article, and the content of the continuation must conform to the direction of the story. In English teaching practice, there is often an implicit requirement that the ending of the continuation should conform to the correct values and pursue truth, goodness, and beauty. The genre of articles in this section is mostly narrative, and most of them contain moral stories, which is very beneficial for students' moral learning cultivation. Therefore, when teachers analyze this type of question, they should not only sort out the elements of the narrative, key words, and sentence structures for students, but also guide students to appreciate the moral cognition, emotions, and behaviors in the text, as well as help students internalize and consciously apply the moral knowledge learned in the text to practical life.

#### **4.6. Carrying out Extracurricular Practice Activities**

Currently, most moral learning in primary and secondary schools is conducted in the classroom, with a lack of extracurricular moral learning activities and a relatively single form of moral learning. Therefore, it is even more necessary to make up for their shortcomings in social practice through moral learning activities carried out by schools (Xu, 2021). In addition to classroom activities, extracurricular

practical activities play a crucial role in cultivating students' moral learning. Extracurricular activities provide students with opportunities for moral practice. Currently, many schools have established personalized clubs and study groups to meet students' interests and improve their communication skills. Therefore, English clubs should take on the responsibility of cultivating students' moral learning after class. Club leaders should take English learning as the basis to organize and carry out activities that can not only promote students' language skills but also enable students to develop moral learning. For instance, the speech contest, essay contest and drama contest on the theme of moral learning can promote students to spontaneously collect and explore knowledge and information about moral learning, and also accelerate the internalization of moral behavior. Furthermore, the school can provide assistance for implementation of extracurricular activities based on the existing conditions of the school, such as the establishment of English radio stations, English corners, and strengthening communication between the family and the school (Zhang, 2024). Extracurricular practice complements in-class moral learning activities to a certain extent, and extracurricular activities can provide students with an opportunity to apply moral knowledge and perform moral behavior.

#### **4.7. Creating a Moral Learning Atmosphere**

Harmonious and unified internal circulation is the guarantee for implementing disciplinary education. The primary responsibility of schools is to build a good ecosystem for talent cultivation (Jiang, 2024). As an important place for students' moral learning cultivation, the atmosphere of schools affects the effectiveness of moral learning implementation. At present, some primary and secondary school administrators are not aware of the importance of campus moral learning environment. The moral learning management of some schools only depends on the moral learning department, while other departments pay little attention in cultivating students' moral learning. In fact, currently, the moral learning requirements of many schools for students only are limited to the moral learning speech at the beginning of the semester and the mechanical check whether students comply with the high school code of conduct formulated by the school. Therefore, in order to improve the efficiency of moral learning and promote the integration of moral learning and subject teaching, school administrators should work with front-line teachers to create a good campus moral learning environment, infiltrate the correct values into every corner of the campus, and guide students to apply what they learn in class to campus activities, so as to fully infiltrate moral learning (Zhang, 2024). In campus life, there are some implicit moral learning resources that have not been utilized. For example, many schools are now creatively designing their own weekly newspaper. In the weekly report, in addition to the school's important news and important notices, the school can also set up a moral learning section. This section encourages all teachers and students in the school to submit articles, allowing them to share stories of moral learning around them and their own moral learning experiences. If the story is sufficiently typical or educational, the moral learning director can share this part of the content throughout the school at the weekly morning meeting. Finally, for those who have made significant contributions or outstanding achievements, schools can reward them, forming a moral learning cycle that can stimulate students' enthusiasm

and interest.

## 5. Conclusion

The implementation of deep moral learning in English teaching is a necessary way to promote deep learning and carry out the fundamental task of fostering morality and educating individuals (Tan, 2024). At present, with the continuous deepening of the concepts of “curriculum ideological and political education” and “subject moral learning”, which will play a greater role in Senior English teaching and further improve the way talent is cultivated. Since learners are growing individuals, moral learning can guide their future development appropriately. Moral learning, as a major challenge in English teaching, requires teachers to continue exploring ways to integrate it with English teaching. Besides, education administrators should also change their views, reconstruct moral learning goals, and build a new platform for students through in-class activities and extracurricular practices, constantly updating students’ moral cognition and encouraging correct moral behavior.

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