Sustainable Development in English Learning for Chinese College Students: An Integrated Approach of Ideological and Political Education into English Teaching Methodology

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Abstract: This paper explores the integration of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) into English teaching methodology as a strategy for sustainable development in English learning among Chinese college students. It tries to replace the conventional teacher-centered, test-oriented methodology with student-centered, interest-oriented, and culturally-integrated approach, using English Teaching Methodology course as a case study to investigate how the integration of IPE into English teaching methodology can bolster autonomous learning and thus, sustainable development of English language learning among Chinese university students. It inspires students with patriotic feelings and the mission of spreading Chinese culture in English, ultimately fostering a more engaging and continuous learning environment for students.

Keywords: Ideological and Political Education, English Teaching Methodology, Sustainable Development, College English Learning

1. Introduction

The Chinese government has made significant efforts to improve English education, but challenges persist in promoting sustainable development in English learning among Chinese college students. The prevalent teacher-centered cramming education and test-oriented teaching hinder students' autonomous learning and communication skills. The lack of integration of cultural and ideological learning further limits students' understanding of language in a broader socio-cultural context. This research focuses on the English Teaching Methodology course and explores a student-centered, interest-oriented, and culturally-integrated pedagogical approach to foster autonomous learning for sustainable English language development. By integrating IPE into English teaching methodology, the study aims to address these challenges and enhance language education. The objectives of this study are:

To investigate the impact of an interest-driven and culturally integrated approach on fostering autonomous learning among Chinese university students.

To assess the impact of integrating IPE into English teaching methodology on sustainable English language development among Chinese university students.

2. Literature Review

Holec's [4] pioneering work on learner autonomy defines it as the ability to take charge of one's own learning, which has since become central to language education. Autonomy entails not just the capacity, but the willingness of learners to manage their own learning [1]. In the context of language learning, this includes aspects like determining objectives, defining content, and monitoring progress [6]. So acquiring autonomous learning ability is a must for Chinese college students' sustainable development in English Learning.

IPE has developed into an institutionalized system in Chinese universities [7]. For the integration of

IPE into college English teaching, Bingyan Zhu and Shixiang Liu [13] first analyze the current situation of ideological and political education in college English teaching, adopt blended teaching mode in Integrated Skills Course 2nd edition to to integrate ideological and political elements like Chinese classics, traditional culture into English teaching.

A body of research has identified the shortcomings of traditional teacher-centered and test-oriented English teaching in fostering autonomous learning [10]. While Nicholas Bremner, Nozomi Sakata and Leanne Cameron [2] made a systematic review and found that Learner-Centred Pedagogy (LCP) could increase students' motivation and confidence. Additionally, Yuti Ran [9] integrating Chinese culture and ideological learning with western culture in English teaching can make good effect in understanding of the target language. Reaves, Chapparo, Bunch and Jagger [11] demonstrate that an interest-oriented approach significantly enhances students' motivation and engagement. However, few studies explore how an English teaching methodology that integrates IPE can foster autonomous learning, marking a clear gap in the literature.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to investigate the integration of IPE into English Teaching Methodology in a Chinese university setting. The research seeks to explore how this pedagogical shift influences students' autonomy and the sustainable development of their English learning.

3.1. Research Design

The research employs a case study design, which provides an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context [12]. This approach allows us to focus on the specific context of the English Teaching Methodology course and its unique characteristics, such as the integration of IPE. It further enables us to explore students' English learning experiences, perspectives, and learning outcomes.

3.2. Participants and Setting

The participants in this study are English major students of Grade 2020, 54 students, enrolled in English Teaching Methodology course, which lasts 12 weeks in Jingdezhen Ceramic University, Jiangxi Province, China. The course is representative of typical English teaching methods in China, making it a suitable case for this investigation.

3.3. Teaching Practice

3.3.1. Cultivating Autonomous Learning Ability

Autonomous learning is a learner-centered, interest-driven activity where students continuously learn and adapt, adhering to the age-old proverb: "It is never too old to learn". Autonomous learners are more motivated, show better academic performance, and have higher self-efficacy [14]. Thus, fostering learner autonomy in English language learning can be an effective strategy for sustainable development in English education among Chinese university students.

Specific autonomous learning activities include setting realistic learning goals, choosing English learning materials that align with students' professional specialties, and interest-based learning approaches. Such strategies can transform the English learning experience, making it more personalized and motivating.

Learning English through Chinese unique traditional culture and western relative culture could drive students to learn in great interest. Like in Jingdezhen, excellent Chinese ceramic culture and western ceramic culture should be explored and imperceptibly integrated with the combination of ideological and political elements and teaching materials so that students can learn English as well as spread the excellent Chinese culture. Besides, students should combine English with their own interest, for example, they can enjoy some English materials relative to travelling around the world since most people like world travelling with all curiosities.

By doing this, students learn English no longer for only passing the various tests, instead, the learning process not only caters to the development of language skills but also facilitates the

comprehension of cultural nuances and the cultivation of a global mindset. By utilizing English as a medium to understand and appreciate diverse cultures, students can develop a broader perspective, fostering cultural empathy and intercultural competence, critical elements in today's interconnected world.

3.3.2. Integrating IPE

To carry out ideological and political teaching in English teaching method, teachers should gradually equip students with correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, good professional ethics, Chinese feelings and international vision, sense of social responsibility, humanistic and scientific literacy, spirit of cooperation, spirit of innovation, and basic discipline education.

The problem that this research aims to solve is the currently facing challenge, which is the difficulty of integrating ideological and political elements into various disciplines of the English major, deeply exploring the ideological and political teaching elements in English Teaching Methodology, and the specific measures include the following aspects:

(1) Explore the content of the textbook. Each unit and chapter of English Teaching Methodology textbook and other textbooks contains a certain educational and humanistic significance. By exploring, teachers can expand their knowledge and culture of other disciplines, apply them to English teaching, cultivating a diverse awareness of foreign language talents, and exploring materials related to their values.

(2) Choose teaching cases with ideological and political elements as supplementary content. English language materials about Core Socialist Values and English language materials involving western values can be selected as teaching cases.

(3) Using collaborative learning with situational performance to naturally integrate ideological and political content. Based on The Research on the Application of Situational Teaching in College English Teaching [8], the researcher mainly integrates the elements of teacher values in the textbook content and the ideological and political language materials in the supplementary content into two-or-more-student collaborative oral output learning tasks through the creation of flexible and diverse teaching activities. The use of situational performance methods that not only enlivens the atmosphere but also allows students to experience learning while playing, and is more conducive to the effective integration of textbook content and ideological and political culture, allows students to achieve organic integration between contents in the process of completing learning tasks together, .

(4) Making use of mobile phone for students' IPE-integrated English autonomous learning: Xuexiqiangguo, as a quality platform supervised by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), with plenty of political and ideological articles as well as diversified Chinese unique culture in English, was the top app to propose to students for their autonomous learning materials.

(5) Practice by themselves. The best teaching is through words and deeds, and the best learning method is to personally teach and practice. Strictly follow the Core Socialist Values and excellent teachers.

3.4. Research Instruments

This study utilizes two primary research instruments: learning logs and semi-structured interviews. Both tools allow for a nuanced exploration of students' experiences and perceptions in the English Teaching Methodology course.

3.4.1. Learning Logs

Learning logs serve as a powerful tool for students to document their journey throughout the course and their English learning. These logs consist of weekly logs in which students record their English learning experiences, materials, feelings, progress, and areas for improvement. The reflective nature of these logs fosters students' autonomy, promotes deeper learning, and provides rich qualitative data for the study (Lee & Cha, KW, 2017).

In this research, students are guided to maintain weekly learning logs throughout the course to reflect on their learning process, how they use their autonomy in learning, their perceptions of the IPE integration in the course, and the impact of these factors on their English language learning and development.

3.4.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Towards the end of the course, semi-structured interviews are conducted with a randomly selected 10% the participants. These interviews provide an opportunity to delve deeper into individual experiences, perceptions and feelings, complementing the data gathered from learning logs.

The interviews follow a guide comprised of open-ended questions designed to prompt discussion on key research areas, including experiences with the IPE-integrated English Teaching Methodology, its influence on autonomous learning, and suggestions for improvement. The semi-structured format allows for follow-up questions and deeper exploration based on participants' responses.

The basic questions of the interview are around the following ones:

How did the integrated approach impact your motivation, engagement, and sense of ownership over your learning?

Have you noticed any changes in your understanding of culture and values through English since the integration of IPE into your English language classes? Please explain.

Do you think the integrated approach has influenced your ability to use English for intercultural communication? If so, in what ways?

Based on your experience, what suggestions do you have for improving the integrated pedagogical approach used in your English language classes? How do you think is better for your sustainable development of English learning?

In conclusion, both these instruments, used in combination, allow for a comprehensive understanding of the students' learning experiences, providing a robust base for data analysis and interpretation.

3.5. Data Collection

Data collection employs the above two instruments: learning logs and semi-structured interviews.

3.5.1. From Learning Logs

Participants were required to write their logs based on Table 1 at the end of each week.

Table 1: Learning Log

Topic Covered	Teaching Method Experienced (Teacher-centered/Test-oriented/Others)	Perception of the Teaching Method	Experiences with Autonomous Learning	Experiences with Cultural and Ideological Learning	Any Changes Noticed in English Learning Approaches /Strategies	Comments and Suggestions
…	…	…	…	…		

Here the the instructions to students for them to fill up the table well:

Topic Covered: Briefly describe the main topic of the lesson.

Teaching Method Experienced: Describe the teaching method(s) used by the teacher in the lesson. Was it teacher-centered, test-oriented, or something else?

Perception of the Teaching Method: Reflect on how you felt about the teaching method. Was it engaging, effective, uninteresting, confusing, etc.?

Experiences with Autonomous Learning: Describe any opportunities you had for independent study, problem-solving, creative thinking, etc. during the lesson.

Experiences with Cultural and Ideological Learning: Reflect on any elements of cultural or ideological education incorporated into the lesson. How did they impact your learning and engagement?

Any Changes Noticed in English Learning Approaches/Strategies: Observe and note any changes you're noticing in your approach to learning English. Are you trying new strategies? Has your attitude changed? Are you becoming more motivated, confident, etc.?

Comments and Suggestions: Any additional observations, insights, or suggestions for future lessons can be included here.

Table 1 allowed students to reflect deeply on their learning experiences and provided rich qualitative data for research analysis.

3.5.2. From Semi-Structured Interviews

Towards the end of the course, semi-structured interviews were conducted, with 5 students from the class. The researcher made appointments with the interviewees in advance, choosing the office at a quiet time so that the interviewees would feel free to express their honest opinions and experiences.

The interview guide the questions on participants' experiences with the IPE-integrated English Teaching Methodology, its influence on their autonomous learning, and their suggestions for improving the course so as to be more helpful for their sustainable development in English learning.

3.6. Data Analysis

The study employs thematic analysis to interpret the data, a method widely used for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data [3]. The analysis process involves several stages, including familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

3.6.1. For the Learning Log

All the students' logs were carefully read, coded and analyzed. Two lessons were chosen at random for showing the result of most common responses from the students.

Table 2: Data Analysis for the Learning Log

Topic Covered	Teaching Method Experienced	Perception of the Teaching Method	Experiences with Autonomous Learning	Experiences with Cultural and Ideological Learning	Any Changes Noticed in English Learning Approaches/Strategies	Comments and Suggestions
Language & Language Learning	Interest-driven/ Culturally integrated	Positive	Felt motivated to set personal learning goals and explore own interests in English learning	Gained insights into cultural values through language learning	Started using more authentic materials and interactive resources in Xuexiqiang guo	Suggested more cultural activities in class
Teaching Listening and Speaking	Interest-driven/ Culturally integrated	Positive: More engaging	Enjoyed communicative language activities and real-life tasks	Developed a better understanding of different cultural norms and communication styles	Becoming more confident in telling Chinese stories in English	Suggested more role-playing activities in class

Table 2 learning log analysis demonstrates that the interest-driven and culturally integrated teaching method positively impacted students' motivation, engagement, and cultural understanding. It also encouraged autonomous learning and promoted the use of authentic language resources [5]. The findings from the learning logs are further complemented by the interview data, which will be presented in the next section of the data analysis.

3.6.2. For the Interview

Table 3 was created to organize the responses and themes that coded from the interviews. Among the five interviewees, one most representative response was chosen to illustrate in the table.

Table 3 provides a clear overview of Participant 1's responses to each interview question, categorized under relevant themes, representing common themes across the responses of all participants. Their feedback highlights the positive impact of the integrated approach on motivation, engagement, cultural awareness, intercultural communication skills, and offers valuable suggestions for further improvement.

Table 3: Participant 1 for all the interview questions

Interview Questions	Participant 1's Response	Themes
(1) How did the integrated approach impact your motivation, engagement, and sense of ownership over your learning?	"I found the integrated approach very motivating since we got to explore topics that genuinely interested us. I even got a sense of mission and responsibility to use English to inherit and promote the excellent language and culture of China, so I'm driven to learn English better."	Increased Motivation
	"Learning about different cultures through English lessons made everything more interesting. It was like traveling the world from our classroom, and that kept me involved and focused."	Enhanced Engagement
	"I felt a greater sense of ownership over my learning because I had the freedom to choose topics for exploring and discussing. It gave me a chance to take charge of my learning journey."	Heightened Sense of Ownership
(2) Have you noticed any changes in your understanding of culture and values through English since the integration of IPE into your English language classes? Please explain.	"The integration of cultural elements in English classes definitely improved my cultural awareness. I learned about Chinese traditional culture and IPE from Xuexiqiangguo, which fills me with patriotism and confidence in knowing and spreading Chinese culture to the world."	Improved Cultural Awareness and gained patriotism
	"Studying culture through English made me appreciate the diversity that exists globally. It also taught me to be more open-minded and respectful of different perspectives."	Appreciation for Diversity
(3) Do you think the integrated approach has influenced your ability to use English for intercultural communication? If so, in what ways?	"Yes, the integrated approach has positively influenced my ability to use English for intercultural communication. Through cultural discussions, I learned how to communicate more effectively with people from diverse backgrounds."	Enhanced Intercultural Communication
(4) Based on your experience, what suggestions do you have for improving the integrated pedagogical approach used in your English language classes? How do you think is better for your sustainable development of English learning?	"I think having more personalized learning paths would make the integrated approach even better. It would allow students to focus on areas they are truly interested in, which can lead to more meaningful language learning."	Personalized Learning Paths
	"To further improve sustainable English learning, incorporating authentic language use in real-life situations and diverse cultural contexts would be beneficial. This way, we can apply what we learn in practical scenarios."	Authentic Language Use

4. Results and Discussion

The results are from the analysis of the learning logs and semi-structured interviews in alignment with the two objectives of the study. Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data [3].

First, the integration of IPE into the student-centered, interest-oriented, and culturally-integrated approach had a significant positive impact on students' motivation and engagement. By exploring topics of personal interest within the English language classes and connecting them to Chinese culture and values, students were motivated to actively participate in their language lessons. This approach fostered a greater sense of ownership over their learning journey, contributing to increased motivation and sustained engagement in the language learning process.

Second, Participants demonstrated improved cultural awareness through exposure to diverse cultural and ideological content in language learning. The integration of IPE enriched their understanding of Chinese culture, values, and the mission of spreading Chinese culture with English. This enhanced cultural awareness empowered students to use English more effectively for intercultural communication, boosting their confidence in cross-cultural interactions.

Thirdly, the student-centered and interest-oriented approach, incorporated with IPE, encouraged students to take responsibility for their language learning process. By setting personal learning goals and utilizing authentic resources, students engaged in autonomous language learning experiences. The emphasis on autonomy and authentic language use contributes to sustainable language development beyond the classroom.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study explored the integration of IPE into English teaching methodology as a strategy for sustainable development in English learning among Chinese college students. The student-centered, interest-oriented, and culturally-integrated approach, combined with IPE, demonstrated significant positive impacts on students' motivation, engagement, cultural awareness, and language skills.

The implications of the study are twofold. For language education practice, the integration of IPE and cultural content can create a more engaging and relevant learning environment. Providing opportunities for autonomous learning and authentic language use can foster sustainable language development and enhance students' intercultural communication skills. As for future research, further investigation is recommended to explore the long-term effects of this integrated approach on language proficiency and intercultural competence. Additionally, studying its application in diverse language proficiency levels and cultural contexts can provide valuable insights into its generalizability and effectiveness.

In conclusion, the integration of IPE into English teaching methodology, using a student-centered, interest-oriented, and culturally-integrated approach, shows promise for fostering sustainable development in English learning among Chinese college students. The study encourages a pedagogical shift that values cultural diversity, autonomy, and intercultural competence in language learning, supporting the overall goal of sustainable development in English learning for Chinese college students.

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