

# Integration of ideological and political education into college English teaching

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**Abstract:** *By continuously improving the teaching resources, classroom tasks, and teaching methods, exploring the integration path of college English and ideological and political education provides an effective method for the college English curriculum to serve the cultivation of international talents with cultural confidence. In this process, it is essential to incorporate Chinese political values and principles into the teaching of college English in order to ensure that students have a holistic understanding of not only the language but also the socio-political context. By aligning college English education with ideological and political education, universities can foster a new generation of talented individuals who not only possess excellent language skills but also have a firm grasp of China's political landscape and its development trajectory. This integrated approach to education ensures that international talents are equipped with the necessary knowledge and cultural confidence to effectively contribute to global conversations while upholding the core values and interests of the Chinese nation.*

**Keywords:** *ideological and political education; college English; Chinese culture; practice*

## 1. Introduction

In an era marked by globalization and cultural exchange, the role of higher education in cultivating well-rounded individuals with a strong sense of cultural identity and political consciousness cannot be overstated. The call for the integration of ideological and political education with classroom teaching in universities reflects the evolving educational landscape in China. This article explores the integration of ideological and political education into college English teaching, emphasizing the significance of this fusion in shaping the minds of young learners. By examining the necessity of implementing ideological and political education in the curriculum, elucidating integration pathways, and discussing the practical approaches to this integration, this article underscores the pivotal role of college English in fostering cultural confidence and political awareness among students.

In December 2016, the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Universities put forward new requirements for ideological and political work in higher education: "We must make good use of classroom teaching, improve ideological and political theory courses, enhance the affinity and pertinence of ideological and political education, meet the growth and development needs and expectations of students. All other courses should also fulfill their responsibilities and integrate with ideological and political theory courses, forming a synergy." [1]The fundamental task of talent cultivation in universities is to cultivate socialist builders and successors with both integrity and competence, and the teaching concept has gradually evolved from offering several ideological and political courses to comprehensive ideological and political education. As the most widely taken public basic course in universities, college English has already become one of the main platforms to promote ideological and political education through continuous practice. Its humanistic characteristics enable the integration of language teaching and ideological and political education elements, achieving comprehensive and all-round education. Through the combination of implicit education and explicit education, exploring humanistic connotations, promoting human values, establishing cultural confidence, and cultivating a Chinese sentiment, college English not only meets the needs of intercultural communication but also enhances students' political literacy, achieving the goal of coordinated education.

## **2. The necessity of implementing ideological and political education in the curriculum**

### ***2.1 The phenomenon of "mute" Chinese culture***

After China's reform and opening up, it actively integrated into the international community, and English education flourished. However, there was also a large influx of Western ideological and value systems, leading to the "mute" phenomenon of Chinese culture in foreign language teaching and the dissemination of a culture of worshipping the West. [2] College English teachers shoulder the responsibility of introducing the essence of Western culture to students, criticizing or filtering its shortcomings. During teaching, teachers can guide students to correctly understand the "freedom and democracy" advocated by developed countries, understand the current situation and social contradictions of Western countries through English news, increase the proportion of teaching materials related to Chinese traditional culture and values, strengthen the reading and translation of Chinese culture, and tell the "China story" together with students using English to promote healthier and more beneficial cultural exchanges between China and the West.

### ***2.2 The problem of "emptiness" among college students***

Xu Kaiwen from the Psychological Health Education and Counseling Center of Peking University proposed the concept of "emptiness disease" and found that 30% of Peking University students have "emptiness disease" - lacking values, not knowing what they want and why they exist. Although college students live in abundance, they lack correct life views and values, and the proportion of suicide, anxiety, and depression is increasing year by year.

As teachers of humanities, we can help students establish correct values and find the meaning of life through teaching materials in English teaching. Through discussions, speeches, and other methods, we can guide students to replace the utilitarian thoughts of seeking fame and fortune with ideals of building a stronger country, and fill the emptiness in their hearts with great love for their country and the world, enabling them to learn with goals, live meaningful lives, and have motivations. Curriculum-based ideological and political education is not only about political and ideological education but also about helping students establish noble ideals and find their own values. Education is not a tool for making a living or acquiring money; it is a way to achieve oneself and fulfill dreams. In addition to imparting knowledge, teachers should also pass on their life experiences and patriotic sentiments to students, helping them shape positive values, stay away from "emptiness disease," and strive for their own ideals and happiness.

### ***2.3 The issue of "utilitarianism" in English teaching***

For many years, college English teaching has been evaluated based on students' pass rates in the CET-4 and CET-6 exams, leading to an excessive focus on exam-related content and neglecting its humanistic function. In 2017, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guidelines for College English Teaching," which pointed out that as part of higher education's humanistic education, the college English curriculum should balance the "instrumentality" and "humanistic" nature. English teaching should remove the goal of "utilitarianism" and, guided by the educational concept of "cultivating moral character and nurturing talents," leverage the advantages of humanities disciplines to achieve the nurturing function of ideological and political education within the curriculum and contribute to the dissemination of Chinese culture to the world. By incorporating Chinese traditional culture and values, guiding students to establish correct values and find meaning in life, and balancing instrumental and humanistic aspects of English education, ideological and political education contributes to the holistic development of students and promotes cultural exchange on a global scale.

## **3. Integration Pathways**

### ***3.1 Incorporating value shaping into knowledge imparting***

With the prevalence of smartphones, college students have access to a more abundant range of knowledge sources, but the form in which they acquire knowledge has become fragmented. This leads to a tendency for students to rely on information selectively and lack patience in researching topics. Teachers should gain a deep understanding of students' learning habits, keep up with the times, and choose concise articles or video resources that are both timely and synchronous, and that foster political

identification and cultural confidence, based on textbooks and syllabi. For example, news from China Radio International (CRI), English articles on the "Study Strong Country" app, and English documentaries introducing Chinese culture can all be used as supplementary materials in and outside the classroom. The ideological and political connotations within the teaching materials can be explored, seeking the correct value orientations on topics such as China's rejuvenation, psychological development, gender equality, and energy crises. This will guide students to differentiate between right and wrong, establish correct values, and subtly integrate ideological and political education into classroom discussions.

In terms of intercultural communication, it is important not to overly emphasize Western history and culture but to focus more on spreading Chinese culture and fostering recognition of one's mother tongue culture. Through student speeches, PPT presentations, and assignments, students should be able to express Chinese cultural phenomena in English and tell Chinese stories in English, fostering a natural acceptance of patriotic education and cultivating cultural confidence and a sense of homeland. Taking Unit Four, "The American Dream," from the new edition of College English as an example, students would be required to watch the movie "The Great Gatsby" and the documentary "Amazing China" and collect materials to create a PPT presentation using the themes of the American Dream and the Chinese Dream. Through comparing the two dreams, students can explore the differences in their connotations. Group discussions will allow for continuous examination and adjustment of speculative content, helping students recognize that the former emphasizes individual striving from a personal perspective, while the latter showcases the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through the path of socialist development. Imparting knowledge needs value guidance, and curriculum-based education requires knowledge to carry values. [3] A language classroom imbued with ideological and political connotations is no longer just a training ground for language skills but a nurturing ground for humanistic spirit, a practical base for patriotic education, and an important bridge for bilateral cultural exchange.

### ***3.2 Integrating explicit and implicit education***

In March 2019, a symposium for ideology and political theory course teachers pointed out that "we must uphold the unity of explicit education and implicit education, tap into the ideological and political resources inherent in other courses and teaching methods, and achieve full-scale education for all individuals throughout the entire process." In college English teaching, explicit education can be seen as direct positive education that encompasses language knowledge and intercultural communication, while implicit education can be seen as indirect and implicit education in value shaping and the promotion of traditional culture. "Implicit ideological and political education refers to the infiltration and integration of ideological and value-oriented educational factors into educational content, goals, and processes. It allows the educated to unknowingly accept the pre-arranged and designed education, ultimately achieving the realm of educating in a subtle manner." [4]

College students are entering adulthood and have developed a strong sense of self-awareness. If we simply impose "big truths" on them, it may easily lead to a rebellious mentality. However, if we present these "big truths" as "small truths" and explain each "small truth" in a reasonable manner, [5] students will be more receptive. We can select English materials that are closely related to daily life and current affairs, and carefully design teaching activities to create a relaxed and free educational environment. In this way, we can subtly incorporate socialist values and the profound Chinese culture into the curriculum. By providing correct guidance on issues such as students' mental health, interpersonal relationships, cultural life, and consumption concepts, we encourage them to compare and contemplate, allowing them to find answers on their own. This approach not only helps improve students' political literacy and cultural confidence but also cultivates a correct outlook on life and values, while enhancing their critical thinking abilities.

The integration and complementation of explicit and implicit education is an innovative attempt in promoting ideological and political education within the English curriculum. By exploring the ideological and political implications within each unit, making full use of multimedia resources, and designing various classroom activities, we can create excellent English lessons centered around ideological and political themes. Students who are immersed in a pleasant and relaxed educational atmosphere for a long period of time will unknowingly receive enlightenment and education, improve their language skills, receive moral guidance, enhance their humanistic accomplishments, and strengthen their critical thinking abilities. Thus, they will reap rewards in terms of knowledge accumulation and strengthened consciousness.

### ***3.3 Implementation of Ideological and Political Concepts in Curriculum Practice***

In language learning, which is a practical activity, teachers need to not only impart language knowledge but also teach students how to apply it freely and fluently. By designing various classroom activities related to ideological and political themes and encouraging student participation, teachers can combine ideological and political concepts with curriculum practice, significantly improving the effectiveness of teaching.

For example, task-based teaching can be used to assign group tasks where students discuss or engage in debates on ideological and political themes in the curriculum. This encourages students to seek truth through brainstorming and elevates their consciousness. Using situational teaching methods, students can perform short plays in English that align with the themes in the textbook, or they can combine current events with video assignments, requiring students to report and comment on English news. These activities enhance students' critical thinking abilities.

Furthermore, flipped classrooms can be implemented by assigning English speeches or PPT assignments related to Chinese culture and ideological and political topics. Students can access resources such as "China Daily" in libraries or online to learn about the country's major policies and collect useful phrases and sentences. After class, a workshop on Chinese culture can be established, involving activities such as calligraphy, learning traditional Chinese opera, and making kites. In addition, international students or foreign teachers are invited to appreciate Chinese culture, participate in knowledge sharing activities, and develop cultural identity and confidence through practical participation.

When course content is internalized through practical activities, it is better grasped by students. When students' cognitive and emotional resonance turns into internal motivation, they will re-examine themselves and engage in profound thinking about life and the future, leading to the sublimation of their thoughts.

### ***3.4 Building an Integrated Ideological and Political Platform through Blended Teaching***

Currently, Internet usage among college students has reached 100%, with an average daily usage time of approximately 7.3 hours on smartphones, accounting for half of their available work and study time (16 hours). [6] We should adapt to students' new learning methods and keep up with the fast-paced development of technology. By fully utilizing the instantaneous and convenient nature of the Internet and new media, a blended teaching approach that combines online and offline interactions can be implemented. Prior to class, the flipped classroom model can be utilized by uploading ideological and political videos and related materials for students to watch and complete pre-class tasks. After class, platforms such as online classrooms can be used to assign essays or discussions, allowing students to exchange ideas on ideological and political content. This increases interaction and communication between teachers and students. Platforms like U-campus can be used to create tests that consolidate learning content. The advantages of online and offline learning enable students to achieve optimal learning efficiency through continuous communication and negotiation with their teachers. [7]

In limited classroom teaching time, it is difficult to ensure that every student can share and discuss ideological and political content. However, using online platforms allows for the participation of all students. They can share China's stories, communicate their thoughts on ideological and political topics, complete video assignments, and write reports on ideological and political studies. Students can be inspired by their teachers' classroom teachings and also observe their peers' completed assignments, facilitating mutual learning and improvement, and ensuring high quality completion of coursework.

Learning English is a gradual process that cannot rely solely on a few hours of classes each week. Through online learning platforms, students can be assigned daily reading, listening, or vocabulary tasks. It is also possible to provide English micro-courses or online courses related to ideological and political topics, using data on the number of times or duration of student learning to monitor their progress. By maintaining consistent learning habits, students' English language skills will improve rapidly, resulting in more effective learning outcomes.

University English textbooks cover a wide range of topics, and each teacher approaches them from different angles. Schools can organize teachers into research teams to brainstorm and develop moral and educational materials for each unit. They can also establish an English ideological and political learning platform to share online learning content with students, helping them access high-quality learning resources.

#### **4. Practical approaches to integrating ideological and political education into college English teaching**

##### ***4.1 Incorporating current events and real-world examples***

One practical approach for integrating ideological and political education into college English teaching is by incorporating current events and real-world examples. English teachers can select news articles, opinion pieces, or documentaries that cover relevant political issues. By engaging students in discussions and activities centered around these materials, teachers can help students explore the connections between language, culture, and politics. For example, analyzing media coverage of a political event or debating the pros and cons of a policy decision can deepen students' understanding of how language is used to shape public perception and influence political discourse.

##### ***4.2 Promoting critical thinking and analysis***

Promoting critical thinking and analysis is another important approach to integrating ideological and political education into college English teaching. English teachers can design activities, such as debates, presentations, or in-depth research projects, that encourage students to critically examine different perspectives on political issues. By guiding students to analyze evidence, evaluate arguments, and form their own opinions, teachers can empower students to think independently and develop a deeper understanding of complex political concepts. This approach helps students become informed and engaged citizens who can actively contribute to social and political discussions.

##### ***4.3 Providing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue***

Engaging students in cross-cultural dialogue is a practical approach to integrating ideological and political education into college English teaching. English teachers can design activities, such as group discussions, role plays, or intercultural exchanges, that enable students to share their perspectives and experiences related to political issues. By fostering an inclusive and respectful learning environment, teachers can help students develop empathy, appreciate different viewpoints, and enhance their intercultural communication skills. Through these interactions, students can gain a broader understanding of global political systems and develop their own cultural confidence.

##### ***4.4 Emphasizing ethical considerations***

Emphasizing ethical considerations is another practical approach for integrating ideological and political education into college English teaching. English teachers can include activities or discussions that require students to critically evaluate the ethical implications of political decisions or actions. By exploring questions of justice, equality, and human rights, students can develop a deeper appreciation for ethical values and their application in political contexts. This approach encourages students to consider the moral dimensions of political issues and cultivates their sense of social responsibility.

##### ***4.5 Incorporating reflective learning strategies***

Incorporating reflective learning strategies is a practical approach to integrating ideological and political education into college English teaching. English teachers can incorporate reflective writing activities or journals that prompt students to contemplate their personal beliefs, values, and identity in relation to political ideologies. By allowing students to express their thoughts and emotions in a structured format, teachers can foster self-awareness, introspection, and critical self-reflection. This approach helps students develop a deeper understanding of their own political perspectives, biases, and cultural identity.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the integration of ideological and political education into college English teaching is not merely an educational experiment but a strategic imperative in nurturing a new generation of well-informed, culturally confident, and politically conscious individuals. The necessity of this integration lies in countering the "mute" Chinese culture, addressing the problem of "emptiness" among college students, and rectifying the issue of "utilitarianism" in English teaching. The pathways to integration

encompass value shaping, the harmonious coexistence of explicit and implicit education, curriculum practice, and blended teaching methodologies.

Integrating ideological and political education into college English teaching requires the implementation of practical approaches that promote active learning and critical thinking. By incorporating current events, promoting critical thinking, providing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue, emphasizing ethical considerations, and incorporating reflective learning strategies, college English classrooms can become dynamic spaces that empower students to engage with complex political issues and develop a strong sense of cultural confidence and political awareness. By adopting these practical approaches, college English teaching can play a pivotal role in shaping informed and engaged citizens who are equipped with the necessary language skills and critical thinking abilities to contribute to society. Through these innovative approaches, college English teachers can empower students with not only language skills but also a deep appreciation of their cultural heritage and a well-rounded understanding of contemporary political and social issues. By merging linguistic proficiency with ideological and political acumen, students are better prepared to engage in meaningful cultural exchanges, contribute to their nation's development, and navigate the complexities of our interconnected world. This integration, therefore, serves as a testament to the evolving landscape of higher education in China, where the cultivation of global citizens with cultural confidence and political awareness is at the forefront of pedagogical endeavors.

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