The Essence and Implementation of Ideological and Political Education within College English Curricula: A Grounded Theory Analysis

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Abstract: This study adopts the grounded theory approach to critically examine the essence and implementation of Ideological and Political Education (IPE) within college English curricula at Chinese Universities. We analyzed a corpus of 80 award-winning lesson plans from the "Teaching Star Competition" held by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press to establish specific constituents that comprise IPE and identify the instructional methodologies incorporated in the teaching process. The research shows that IPE strategically merges language proficiency training with civic education, aiming to cultivate a strong national identity, solid cultural pride, and global competencies. To be more detailed, the core categories of IPE encapsulate critical thinking, professional ethics, and cross-cultural communication skills, which are based on the innovative use of technological resources and adaptive pedagogical strategies. IPE has also elaborated on the comprehensive assessment mechanisms to measure cognitive and affective outcomes, making it a multidimensional activity. Following a three-stage coding process, this study aims to contribute to this discussion regarding ideological and political education integrated into Chinese higher education institutions. The finding and conclusion in this study drawn for future curriculum developments and reformulation of educational policy suggest ways IPE could better serve in fostering well-rounded individuals capable of contributing to national and global contexts.

Keywords: Ideological and Political Education; College English; Grounded Theory; Curriculum Development.

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Introduction

Modern Chinese education attaches great importance to English as a lingua franca worldwide and a significant factor that influence students' worldviews and cultural paradigms. Then, college English curricula are commonly treated as compulsory and core general education courses by almost all Chinese universities and colleges, and they play an irreplaceable role in counting towards students' graduation. A historical overview of the English Curriculum associated with social ideologies addresses the dual needs to protect and promote Chinese cultural values, simultaneously experience global perspectives, and foster a comprehensive worldview (Hu & Adamson, 2012). Furthermore, regarding the ideological and political ideology, China's national secretary general has clearly highlighted the significance and pointed out the concept of "cultivating people by virtue" (Tan, 2023). These educational practices aim to enhance students' cultural confidence, aligning with national education reform's nationwide goals. Given students' diverse professional and academic backgrounds, strategically integrating Ideological and Political Education (IPE) within college English curricula has become a widely discussed topic in education.

In this respect, the "Guidelines for the Ideological and Political Construction of Higher Education Courses" issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2020) put forward that all universities, teachers, and courses are to assume responsibility for giving academic content ideological and political education to create the coordinated educational effect. Similarly, the "College English Teaching Guide" (2020) by the College Foreign Language Teaching Advisory Board also states that the objective of the English curriculum goes far beyond language training; it is a powerful implement for a well-rounded education that strongly promotes the core values of socialism. The overall objectives of college English curricula should help students build up linguistic capability and create awareness and a sense of pride in national identity and culture.

However, despite clear directives and an urgent need for IPE integration in college English, the concept of IPE has been defined incompletely. As a result, many conclusions come to lack methodological rigor. Current empirical research tends to generalize this idea, overlooking IPE in specific educational contexts. Furthermore, most of the literature has provided theoretical analyses, not the actual application of the strategies analyzed (e.g. Li & Pan, 2022; Li, 2020). For this reason, this study has taken a qualitative grounded theory approach, using 80 lesson plans from college English classrooms across mainland China to analyze them systematically. The study aims to comprehensively explore the essence of IPE from different dimensions and uncover the pathways through which IPE is implemented, hoping to provide an actionable insight that will potentially inform future policy and pedagogical practices.

Literature Review

Lesson Plan and Its Enactment

A lesson plan is a comprehensive guide of the course or curriculum created by teaching practitioners, which sets the course's or curriculum's objectives, content, the undertaken procedure, and evaluation criterion. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), lesson plans indicate what students are to learn and how their learning is to be assessed so that the activities for learning are in accordance with the desired outcomes. Apart from such organizational benefits, lesson plans play a crucial role in outlining what needs to be achieved pedagogically before, during, and after classroom instructions. The insight given helps teachers maintain a good flow of thoughts while in teaching. Additionally, the insight enables instructors to anticipate potential challenges that students might face, allowing them to modify lessons to meet students' needs. For students, well-structured

lesson plans provide clarity, set expectations, and create a learning environment where learning objectives are transparent and achievable (Marzano, 2007). These references illustrate how lesson planning is essential to teaching and learning.

Furthermore, formulating and implementing lesson plans are crucial in fostering students' moral and ethical development. Yusra and Lestari (2018) add that lesson plans imbued with moral values are essential in guiding students to consciously engage in moral acts. According to their research in an Asian teaching context, the best way of instilling moral values in students is by teachers incorporating them into their lesson plans, as it is likely that the students will quickly internalize such values and positively affect their moral growth. Similarly, Freebody and Freiberg (2000) think that implicit moral education rooted in the lesson plan may subtly instill values through the very organization of the lesson plan and the form of delivery. This process binds together social and local orders that find classroom reflections through the activities, holding students and teachers accountable. Teachers can also identify their teaching practices and the broader ethical standards that the community holds (Demerath, 2018). Above all, researchers highlight that this strategic alignment with the lesson plan and teaching is essential so that the moral lessons envisioned by educators are effectively passed on to students.

IPE Theoretical Foundation and Integration

The theoretical foundations of IPE encapsulate rich ancient Chinese educational tradition, rooted in a long history of integrating moral and civic values. Indeed, the origin of IPE could be significantly associated with the Confucian ethos of "self-cultivation, family harmony, state governance, and world peace", during the Spring and Autumn Periods (770-481 BCE). This pedagogical philosophy evolved through multiple dynasties, from the focused degree on filial piety of the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) to the Tang examination system, which merged multiple intellectual traditions into one cohesive whole. These currents of history underpin ancient faith in cultivating a person who would be both morally sound and talented.

The legitimacy of socialist rhetoric supports language teaching in contemporary times, ensuring that Chinese culture and political ideology have their full impact. According to Wang (2014), curricula do not only pursue educational purposes; they are designed to foster national identity and further governmental goals, like the reputation associated with the "Chinese Dream." Recent research works at great length to show how IPE can be practically integrated into the English curriculum in China by outlining how socialist pedagogies are mobilized for language teaching in a way that involves civic engagement on the part of students (Liu & He, 2022; Zhang & Fagan, 2016). These references demonstrate that IPE in China is dynamic and evolutionary, showing how its deep historical roots continue to inform and shape modern educational practices and objectives.

Values Education and Challenge

The interplay between IPE and values education in academic settings forms a critical component of pedagogical dynamics. Values education as part of the hidden curriculum had been discussed and researched comprehensively before the advent of the IPE ideology. Giroux and Penna (1979) further elaborate that the hidden curriculum may strongly influence social education in classrooms where students form their perceptions and interactions based on values, which are dispersed through everyday educational practices. Values conveyed by the hidden curriculum have a significant role in shaping the attitude of the student's normative behavior and expectations of society; this also has a powerful effect on the mentality and socialization of the students, state Halstead and Xiao (2010).

However, the challenge lies in identifying

and addressing the hidden values, especially in a particular cultural and professional context. In this regard, Stanley (2010) critically analyzes the hidden curriculum within Chinese tertiary English teaching. He argues that Westernized teaching methodologies and values can subtly steer the perception of Chinese cultural and social norms. This finding highlights the tensions between Western educational paradigms and Chinese educational goals, providing insight into how unspoken educational practices may affect students' professional pathways and ethical perspectives (Phillips & Clarke, 2012; Xu, 2023). In sum, addressing these hidden aspects can lead to a more holistic and aligned educational approach, ensuring that the values intended by educational institutions are those actually experienced and absorbed by students.

Research Aims and Problems

IPE represents a critical intersection between the field of language education and that of civic education. Despite its recognized importance in higher education, there continues to be much uncertainty about IPE's precise content and dimensions. Our group seeks to clarify the essence of IPE; and explore the conceptualizations of the subject and its ways of being implemented in real teaching scenarios. This paper's first objective is to systematically delineate and define the content that IPE includes. The second objective is to examine practical mechanisms through which IPE is realized in constructing and delivering college English courses. Through these inquiries, the study will articulate the operational pathways and propose actionable insights to enhance the efficacy of IPE within the broader scope of educational reform in China. Thus, two detailed research questions are formed as follows:

Research Question 1: What content and elements do IPE encompass within College English curricula?

Research Question 2: How is IPE practically implemented and realized in the construction and delivery of college English curricula, following

specific methods or mechanisms?

Methods

This study adopts the Grounded Theory (GT) approach through data analysis. GT is a research method that works in a reverse manner, generating theories and concepts from collected data analysis rather than testing a hypothesis. GT operates exceptionally well where little is known about a phenomenon when the researcher looks for newer insights to identify new insights and concepts (Charmaz, 2006). The advantage of using GT is that it generates theories directly grounded by the data and has high validity and applicability in a real-world setup.

In particular, the GT approach is compelling in educational research since outcomes and processes are likely to be influenced by contexts and individual experiences (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019). Through the use of MAXQDA 2022, a specialized software design for qualitative research analysis, this study meticulously applies these coding steps illuminated in GT to analyze lesson plan scripts. In integrating IPE in college English curricula, GT is applicable because it unfolds the exploration of educational practices in nuances and ideologies without the constraints of preconceived theories (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Grounded theory helps to explore in-depth how IPE is conceptualized and applied in China's unique context. This is important given that integrating IPE into academic curricula involves complex dynamics between educational policy, instructor implementation, and student acceptance.

Data Collection

This study gathered data through a thorough examination of 80 college English curriculum lesson plans developed and certified from 2018 to 2023, totaling over 71,000 words. Those lesson plans specifically came from the Chinese national award-winning entries of the "Teaching Star Competition" held by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research

Press (FLTRP), a prestigious publishing house established in 1979 by Beijing Foreign Studies University. FLTRP is known to be one of the most famous and authoritative publishing houses in China, specializing in foreign language education. This annual event starting from 2013 opens the contest to all university teachers of foreign languages all over China, promoting the sharing of innovative and excellent pedagogical practices.

The selected lesson plans can represent high instructional design standards and have been rigorously inspected by a panel of experts and experienced educators. This process would ensure that each plan fulfills the rigorous criteria for pedagogic efficacy and represents a diversity of approaches to implementing IPE in college English teaching. Data collection information is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Basic Information of Lesson Plan Collection

Year	Institution	Focus	Number
2023	College	EGP	1
		ESP	4
	University	EGP	18
		ESP	5
2021	College	EGP	2
		ESP	1
	University	EGP	10
		ESP	3
2019	College	EGP	6
		ESP	0
	University	EGP	4
		ESP	0
2022	College	EGP	3
		ESP	1
	University	EGP	7
		ESP	0
2020	College	EGP	2
		ESP	2
	University	EGP	8
		ESP	3

To maintain a systematic organization of data, we uploaded all lesson plans into the MAXQDA software using a specific name format that conveys essential information about the sources of lesson plans. The convention for naming lesson plans is: [Year of collection]_[Institution type] _ [Academic focus]_[Sequential ID].

Year records the four-digit year that the lesson plan was composed. Institution type indicates the disciplinary focus of institutions and the specialized teaching context. There are eight categories of institutions delineated; for example, codes COC/COU stand for comprehe nsive colleges/universities; STC/STU for science and technology colleges/universities; MEC/MEU for medical colleges/universities. Academic focus indicates if the course aims for a general English purpose (EGP) or a specific educational or professional purpose (ESP). For instance, a document entitled "2017_MEU_ESP_LP64" would be data corresponding to a lesson plan written in 2017 for a medical university, particularly targeting students for English for Specific Purposes, possibly with specificity for students majoring in clinics.

Theoretical Saturation and Validation

Theoretical saturation occurs at that point where more collection and analysis of the data fail to bring in new insights or concepts that could contribute to the development of the theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Initially, out of the 80 lesson plans secured; 50 were randomly selected for thorough transcription and coding, from which narrative arcs were constructed to form the preliminary theoretical model. Subsequently, the other 30 lesson plans later underwent open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to test and ensure that new categories or concepts would not emerge. These analyses did not identify new categories beyond those already coded from the initial 50 lesson plans. Hence, the saturation level of the categories was considered to be reached, and the data was

representative and exhaustive.

To further enhance the reliability of the results, three researchers cross-checked the results of coding and emerging models independently of each other. As in-serve English instructors, the researchers reflected on their daily teaching practices and initially demonstrated a diversified awareness that influenced the analytical consensus. However, eventually, a level of comfort and agreement was achieved among the researchers after numerous discussions. After comparing these results, theoretical saturation was experienced; it was then determined that the research model had reached a state of theoretical saturation, indicating that the developed theory adequately represents the phenomenon under study.

Results

As conceptualized by Corbin and Strauss (2014), a three-stage coding process of the grounded theory was deployed in the process. Open coding involves breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data, as well as identifying discrete happenings, events, and other information in the data. Axial coding follows and relates categories to their main categories based on categories' properties and dimensions. This phase is directed towards by providing a new sense of understanding about the phenomenon under the study. Selective coding is a process of integrating and refinement the theory by choosing the core category, validating those relationships, and filling those categories that need further refinement and development.

Open Coding

The initial step of open coding stages was carried out on a line-by-line basis for 80 lesson plans. Individual sentences, phrases, or even words were appropriately selected as separate coding segments. Each selection was made according to the relevance of the main themes of the texts and their significance in conveying aspects of IPE practices. In this stage, 589 original segments were highlighted through detailed coding. These segments were then abstracted into concepts, each representing a synthesis of related events and themes. The abstraction process translated complex narratives into analytic units that would be manageable in nature, yet allowed further examination and interpretation for further process. Ultimately, 589 segments led to the formation of 131 distinct concepts.

Further refining these concepts consisted of sorting their properties and putting similar concepts into common categories. Considering the 131 different types of conceptual codes, 20 categories were distinguished, demonstrating a structured progression from specific events to broader educational themes. As shown by Table 2, such categorization was oriented not only by the inherent property of the concepts but also by their thematic coherence and relevance to the implementation of IPE in college English curricula.

Table 2: Open Coding Process and Conceptualization

Categories (N=20)		Conceptualization
A1.	Cultivating critical thinking and analytical skills	Enhance abilities to engage in critical and independent thinking through logic and analysis
A2.	Enhancing learning strategies and autonomous learning	Encourage independent search for learning resources and nurture self-learning skills
A3.	Strengthening professional ethics, knowledge, and skills	Enhance professional knowledge and skills while instilling strong professional ethics
A4.	Learning from idols and historical figures	Learn from historical figures, understand traditional culture
A5.	Understanding socialist achievements and current affairs	Focus on awareness of achievements in socialist construction and relevant current events

Categories (N=20)		Conceptualization
A6.	Cultivating socialist core values and virtues	Emphasize the importance of socialist core values and personal virtues in content
A7.	Developing global perspectives and communication	Enhance global perspectives and their ability to understand and engage in cross-cultural exchanges
A8.	Understanding and disseminating Chinese culture	Strengthen understanding of Chinese culture and socialist core values through various activities
A9.	Enhancing cooperation and teamwork skills	Develop abilities to collaborate effectively through group discussions and team projects.
A10.	Developing humanistic literacy and aesthetics	Use literature and the arts to enhance humanistic literacy and appreciation of beauty
A11.	Cultivating basic English language skills	Improve English proficiency across listening, speaking, reading, and writing
A12.	Perform deep learning and analysis	Improve comprehension and analytical skills through specific designed activities
A13.	Using multimedia resources and platforms	Utilize platforms and multimodal teaching resources for technological integration
A14.	Evaluation of learning outcomes	Employ diverse methods to assess students' learning outcomes and values
A15.	Completing authentic learning tasks	Guide students in completing authentic learning tasks and enhance their practical skills
A16.	Enhancing public speaking and expression	Improve students' public speaking and expressive abilities through expressive activities
A17.	Digital learning skills and using platforms	Teach students to utilize digital resources and personalized evaluation platforms
A18.	Constructing a diverse evaluation system	Build a multifaceted evaluation system that incorporates various feedback channels
A19.	Integrating extracurricular resources and activities	Utilize extracurricular resources to design activities, creating learning scenarios and practical experiences.
A20.	Encouraging interest and meeting emotional needs	Use various teaching methods to cater to students' interests and emotional needs.

Axial Coding

During the axial coding phase of this study, relationships between the categories developed in open coding were analyzed to understand the multifaceted influences on the integration of IPE. The axial coding reflected that the principal focus identified and the implications related to IPE implementation (Main categories can be seen in Table 3).

Table 3: Axial Coding Results

Main Categories (N=5)		Categories	
B1.	Personal holistic development goal	A1.	Cultivating critical thinking and analytical skills
		A2.	Enhancing learning strategies and autonomous learning
		A3.	Strengthening professional ethics, knowledge, and skills
		A9.	Enhancing cooperation and teamwork skills
		A10.	Developing humanistic literacy and aesthetics
		A11.	Cultivating basic English language skills

Main Categories (N=5)		Categories	
B2.	Societal and cultural context	A4.	Learning from idols and historical figures
		A5.	Understanding socialist achievements and current affairs
		A6.	Cultivating socialist core values and virtues
		A7.	Developing global perspectives and communication
		A8.	Understanding and disseminating Chinese culture
B3.	Instructional planning and resources	A13.	using multimedia resources and platforms
		A17.	Digital learning skills and using platforms
		A19.	Integrating extracurricular resources and activities
		A20.	Encouraging interest and meeting emotional needs
B4.	Teaching interaction and students engagement	A12.	Perform deep learning and analysis
		A15.	Completing authentic learning tasks
		A16.	Enhancing public speaking and expression
B5.	Outcome assessment and assurance	A14.	Evaluation of learning outcomes
		A18.	Constructing a diverse evaluation system

Following a standardized axial coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), causal conditions were represented by critical thinking, language skills, and professional ethics that could motivate students. The influence of societal and cultural dimensions, such as national, ideological and local values, shaped the contextual background. Intervening conditions were realized through multimedia tools and strategic course design to facilitate IPE integration. Action/ interaction strategies consisted of collaborative and interactive teaching methods. This stage of axial coding provided insights into the interaction between educational strategies and contextual factors affecting IPE integration.

Selective Coding

Selective coding was done in the final stage to help refine and synthesize the theoretical framework that had been developed from axial coding. This phase identified four core categories, and each category represents a strategic dimension in the educational framework. These dimensions weave together the previously coded segment, category, and main categories into a cohesive model that exemplifies the complexity and depth of effective IPE implementation. How these core categories interrelate and interact with each other has been further investigated to build a framework that underpins the holistic development of students' ideological and linguistic competencies, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Holistic outcomes-oriented integration of IPE (C1) underlines a comprehensive education outcome that combines the development of critical thinking and ethical standards with ideological education, linguistic competence, and other educational tasks.

Dynamic adaptation and contextualization of curriculum (C2) ensures that the curriculum remains relevant and practical due to the continuous redefinition of its content with respect to dynamic educational, cultural, and social requirements.

Technology-enhanced, resource-supported pedagogy (C3) advocates effective pedagogical practices using digital tools and educational resources
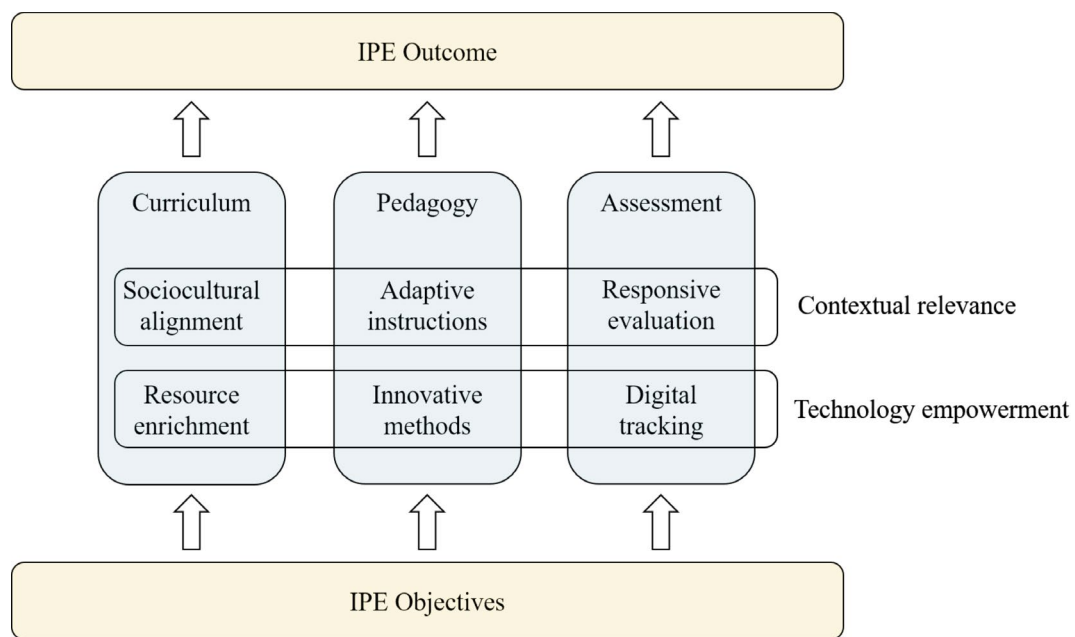
Figure 1: Selective Coding and Model

to enrich teaching and engage learners.

Integrated and collaborative assessment mechanisms (C4) suggest a multidimensional assessment system that evaluates student outcomes in totality and incorporates feedback mechanisms set between educators and students.

These connections show that IPE implementation is aligned with objectives, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment in the most optimum ways for educational outcomes. In the same vein, other intervening conditions, such as the utilization of technology, are considered centrally located to provide the necessary support to pedagogic strategies and the assessment process. Within this embedded context—including the integration of distinct Chinese cultural characters and contemporary global and local issues—is the possibility for deeper engagement with the IPE.

Discussion

Richness and Dynamics of IPE Essence

IPE in college English curricula is multi-dimensional, requiring students and teachers to have an all-around understanding that spans cultural, social, and educational dimensions. This study reflects that the rich cultural connotations of IPE are deeply influenced by societal and cultural contexts, which necessitate an integration of divergent knowledge domains, skills, emotional attitudes, and values. Relevant excerpts include:

Cultivate a critical thinking mentality, reject one-sided, selective, and prevailing sentimental environmentalism, and form one's correct view of environmentalism. (2022_COU_EGP_LP61)

Develop students' independent and peer-to-peer capacity for mutual support through enhancement (2023_STU_EGP_LP2)

Cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills; promote the effective dissemination of excellent Chinese culture, such as traditional Chinese medicine. (2022_MEU_EGP_LP38)

It is worth noticing that IPE curricular design, in particular, goes beyond the primary acquisition of English language skills to encompass the development of critical thinking, self-empowered learning, and intercultural communication capabilities.

Learn concepts and methods for general business presentations … Master key steps and requirements of an effective business presentation, including the 3S and 3C models for

presenting. (2019_AFC_ESP_LP72)

Study the path of a major country's rise from good to great in conjunction with modern Chinese history. (2020_STU_EGP_LP59)

As seen from those excerpts, IPE also introduces students to their relevant professional fields, significant achievements in the history and reality of Chinese society, and deeds reflecting morality and ethics, along with historical examples of moral education.

Be a strong advocate of the "Belt and Road" initiative; commit to growing as cultural ambassadors and outstanding talents who are propitious to carry forward Sino-foreign friendship and tell Chinese stories to the world in their own ways. (2023_COU_EGP_12)

Introduce the concept of a "community with a shared future for mankind" and elaborate on what China has done and gained in building such a community. (2022_COU_EGP_32)

The societal and cultural contexts in which IPE operates are essential in shaping the curriculum. Much of it involves learning from historical figures and understanding the successes of modern socialist construction, which are instrumental to the development of a solid national identity and broad worldview (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Educational content like this dynamic fusion of traditional Chinese values with the requirements for modern societal participation seeks to fashion well-rounded individuals who are culturally aware and morally upright.

One such curriculum calls for holistic and adaptive strategies to respond to the present and emerging educational and social landscapes. This need is seen in how educational goals are structured: enabling personal holistic development of individuals (Luo & Chan, 2023).

The IPE practices will continue evolving in response to the changing dynamics. This involves a careful balancing of language instruction with ideological content, ensuring that students not only achieve linguistic proficiency but also develop a deep understanding of their cultural and ethical obligations as global citizens.

Enhancing IPE through Comprehensive Evaluation

All learning outcome assessment in IPE need to consider the very essence: it is intrinsically multidimensional. The aim is to implement an assessment system that puts together dimensions of cognition, affect, and skills, wherein the evaluation would be comprehensive and suitably consider educational objectives focused on developing well-rounded individuals. The linguistic and developmental targets-based assessment reflect indicators and standards that are tailored to different stages of students' growth, from developing positive attitudes toward learning to understanding social values, enhancing critical thinking skills, and cross-cultural communication. Excerpts can be found as:

In this way, students can access the learning content through the Internet and deepen their knowledge of real cases, audio resources, and micro-lessons by engaging in learning activities and tasks. Through feedback from homework assignments, teachers could analyze common learner issues and then adopt appropriate teaching strategies. (2021_COU_EGP_42)

Additionally, technology and learning platforms have played crucial roles in facilitating diverse performance evaluation. Integrating digital tools allows for a more dynamic assessment process, where digital evaluations complement oral tests, group work, and written assignments. The practice of digital assessment also supports a hybrid teaching approach, where formative assessments provide continuous feedback, and summative assessments evaluate the culmination of learning achievements. In assessment, technologies are used, such as online quizzes, digital portfolios, and interactive peer assessments to build up a richer and more engaging learning experience

reflective of how people interact digitally today.

Student assessment in this unit is guided by a teacher-student collaborative assessment philosophy integrating formative and outcome-based approaches. The approach includes students participating in online courses, group works, classroom output, and performance expressed in written and oral forms. The collaborative approach to assessment involves individual, within-group, inter-group, and teacher evaluations. (2020_COC_EGP_52)

Assessment should involve multiple evaluators that go beyond the traditional teacher-centered assessments. There is room for other alternatives, including student self-assessment, peer review, and student-teacher collaborative evaluation, which emphasize the importance of students' role in their learning processes. That alternative assessment would provide a variety of perspectives in assessing students' progress and their long-term development. It encourages students to actively engage in their learning process, reflect critically on their progress, and participate in the educational community to improve their learning experiences.

Research Limitations and Future Studies

Several limitations of this research are mentioned, providing suggestions and areas for future studies. First and foremost, the dataset only consisted of lesson plans published by one publisher, FLTRP. While FLTRP enjoys its reputation for rigorous pedagogical standards, relying on a single publisher might limit the generalizability of the findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Individual lesson plans may not reflect the usual classroom environment, further skewing this analysis toward idealized implementations of IPE. Moreover, the self-reported nature of such lesson plans, which were designed to excel in competitions primarily, could further introduce bias into the study, underscoring the need for broader empirical validation across diverse educational contexts.

The language of lesson plans was primarily Chinese, as the mother tongue of most students and teachers. The native language ensures depth in the response but can limit the complexity of insights that may be captured in a more linguistically diverse setting. The focus on a monolingual dataset limits the generalization of findings to different linguistic and cultural educational frameworks using English as a medium for conducting classes. Future studies could enrich those findings through a mixed-methods research approach, including observations and interviews within settings where students are native English speakers or share different first languages.

This study's analysis of the IPE effect did not fully consider demographic factors in reality, such as cultural background and teachers' prior knowledge. In actual teaching, these variables could play a role in shaping educational dynamics and students' reception of the delivered ideological content. This limitation thus suggests another possible direction for future research: by replicating the proposed model across various educational settings, and more nuanced interactions could emerge between different demographic factors and IPE efficacy.

While different educational strategies and their theoretical underpinnings were well stipulated within the study, there are certain shortages to fully explain the practical application and student reception of these strategies. As such, future research could analyze how these lesson plans are implemented in classrooms and their impact on students' learning after a semester's learning. It would be enhanced by qualitative inquiry through focus groups and case studies that test teacher and student perceptions about pragmatic challenges and successes of the IPE as washback. Such investigations could provide a more grounded theoretical construct posited in this study and greatly contextualize the integration of IPE into college English curricula around China.

Conclusion

The current research has systematically investigated the essence and implementation of IPE in the College English curricula across universities and colleges. The grounded theory analysis elucidates a synthesis of multiple educational strategies aiming for the cultivation of both linguistic proficiency and ideological and political education. The multifaceted nature of IPE has been illuminated in the open, axial, and selective coding of 80 lesson plans. It shows the dynamic interplay of contextualized educational content, specifically the cultivation of national identity, supported by teaching practices that impart English language skills and enable an understanding of Chinese cultural and socialist values. In summary, the IPE as an educational approach encompasses more than language acquisition; it is intricately connected with ideological indoctrination, aiming to shape students' worldviews and ethical frameworks to reflect national priorities and China's global stance.

One noticing feature identified is the strategic implementation of digital spaces in fulfilling these pedagogical processes, as a clear reflection of future implications where technology comes to the fore in delivering ideologically charged content. This technology integration not only enriches the teaching and learning experience but also ensures that these educational goals are attended to with high efficacy. Furthermore, the coding process in our study points toward some robust assessment mechanisms that seek to evaluate the multidimensional, student-centered outcomes of IPE. This emphasizes the holistic development approach: outcome-oriented and collaboratively structured. Such assessment is crucial in enhancing a comprehensive educational experience geared toward preparing students for their roles as informed global citizens and competent professionals in a fast-changing socio-political environment.

In conclusion, the essence of IPE within college English curricula as uncovered by this research, highlights a sophisticated educational paradigm where strategic integration with language education serves as media for moral and ideological instructions. Further, a detailed analysis of lesson plans proves what is taught and how within IPE, and paints a clear depiction of its practical implementation within the higher education setting. As China proceeds on the global stage, IPE will undoubtedly remain a pivotal approach in shaping future generations' ideological and ethical dispositions. Therefore, this paper is not only meant to enrich relevant IPE academic discourse but likewise provides an impetus for guiding insights into possible future educational curriculum enactment and reformation. Moving forward, further research on relevant educational strategies and their impacts will be essential to ensure students continue to effectively meet the evolving needs of students and society, thereby reinforcing the foundational goals of Chinese educational policy and its broader socio-political objectives.

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