

Cultivating Cultural Confidence in College English Teaching from the Perspective of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education

Tingting Cong

Basic teaching and research department, Changchun Technical University of Automobile, JiLin
ChangChun, 130000, China

Abstract

Within the framework of curriculum-based ideological and political education, college English teaching serves not only as a process of language skill acquisition but also as a critical arena for value guidance and cultural education. Faced with the dominant influence of Western culture in the context of globalization, integrating Chinese cultural elements into English instruction to enhance students' cultural identity and confidence has become an urgent issue. This paper explores pathways for systematically fostering cultural confidence among university students in English classrooms by optimizing teaching content, innovating pedagogical methods, and incorporating comparative studies of Chinese and Western cultures under the perspective of curriculum-based ideological and political education. The study advocates constructing a student-centered teaching model that integrates value cultivation with language learning, guiding students to effectively communicate China's stories in cross-cultural communication, enhancing national consciousness and ethnic pride, and ultimately achieving the fundamental goal of moral education and talent development.

Keywords

curriculum-based ideological and political education; college English teaching; cultural confidence; cultural education; cross-cultural communication

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In recent years, the Chinese higher education system has placed increasing emphasis on the integration of ideological and political education into all academic disciplines—a pedagogical reform initiative widely known as curriculum-based ideological and political education (or curriculum). Within this transformative educational landscape, college English teaching is no longer perceived merely as a vehicle for linguistic competence development; rather, it is increasingly recognized as a critical domain for moral cultivation, cultural transmission, and value shaping. As a discipline inherently intertwined with Western linguistic and cultural paradigms, English instruction has historically prioritized linguistic accuracy, communicative efficiency, and exposure to Anglo-American literature and media. While these elements are undeniably important, they have often come at the expense of cultural balance, resulting in an overemphasis on the "instrumental" function of language learning—preparing students to pass exams or communicate in international settings—while underemphasizing its

"humanistic" dimension, which involves fostering critical cultural awareness and national identity.

This imbalance has led to a phenomenon observed in many university classrooms: students who are proficient in using English to discuss Western social norms, historical events, or pop culture, yet struggle to articulate fundamental aspects of their own cultural heritage in the same language. In more concerning cases, prolonged exposure to uncritically presented Western narratives may contribute to a subconscious devaluation of indigenous cultural values, manifesting as cultural disconnection or even uncritical admiration for foreign lifestyles and ideologies. Such outcomes run counter to the broader goals of holistic education and national cultural security in the era of globalization.

Therefore, in the context of intensifying cultural exchanges and ideological competition on the global stage, there arises an urgent need to reorient college English instruction toward a more balanced and reflective model. This involves the deliberate integration of China's fine traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture into the English curriculum—not as an add-on, but as a foundational component of language education. By doing so, educators can help students develop a nuanced understanding of both global and local cultural dynamics, strengthen their sense of cultural identity, and cultivate the confidence to engage in intercultural dialogue as informed and empowered representatives of their own civilization. This shift is not about rejecting foreign cultures, but about ensuring that students are equipped with the cultural literacy and critical thinking skills necessary to navigate cross-cultural interactions with both openness and self-assurance.

1.2. Research Purpose and Significance

This paper aims to explore systematic and practical pathways for cultivating cultural confidence among college students through English language instruction, situated within the framework of curriculum-based ideological and political education. Specifically, it investigates how pedagogical strategies—spanning teacher development, textbook selection, classroom methodologies, and assessment design—can be restructured to support the dual objectives of linguistic proficiency and value formation. The study focuses on identifying actionable models that enable the seamless integration of Chinese cultural content into English teaching without compromising language learning outcomes.

The significance of this research is multifaceted. Theoretically, it contributes to the evolving discourse on curriculum思政 by offering a subject-specific application in the field of foreign language education, thereby enriching the conceptual and practical understanding of how ideological and political values can be embedded in non-political courses. Practically, it provides English instructors with a structured approach to designing culturally responsive curricula, selecting appropriate materials, and facilitating meaningful classroom discussions that promote cultural reflection and pride.

Furthermore, from a societal and educational policy perspective, this study aligns with the national imperative to cultivate "new-era individuals" who are not only globally competent but also deeply rooted in their cultural heritage. As China continues to expand its international presence, the ability of its youth to articulate Chinese values, history, and achievements in English becomes increasingly vital for effective international communication and soft power projection. Thus, this research supports the broader mission of moral

education (li de shu ren) by demonstrating how language classrooms can serve as dynamic spaces for identity formation, cultural empowerment, and patriotic education.

1.3. Overview of the Paper Structure

This paper is structured to provide a comprehensive and logically progressive exploration of cultural confidence building in college English teaching. It begins by establishing the socio-educational context and theoretical urgency of integrating cultural confidence into language instruction. Following this, the study presents a detailed analysis of practical implementation strategies across three key dimensions: teachers, teaching materials, and pedagogical approaches. Each dimension is examined in depth, with concrete examples and methodological recommendations.

Subsequently, the paper addresses the challenges currently hindering the effective implementation of curriculum 思政 in English classrooms—such as teacher preparedness, student engagement, and resource limitations—and proposes targeted countermeasures to overcome these barriers. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes the key findings, reaffirms the importance of a value-integrated approach to language teaching, and suggests directions for future research, including the potential of digital technologies and inter-institutional collaboration in advancing culturally responsive English education. Through this systematic framework, the paper aims to offer both theoretical insights and practical guidance for educators and policymakers committed to transforming college English into a powerful vehicle for cultural confidence and national rejuvenation.

2. Overview of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education and College English Teaching

2.1. Definition and Connotation of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education

Curriculum-based ideological and political education is an educational philosophy that integrates ideological and political education into the teaching of all academic courses, emphasizing value guidance within the process of knowledge transmission. Its core lies in uncovering the ideological and political elements embedded in various disciplines and cultivating students' correct worldviews, life perspectives, and values through subtle, implicit methods, thereby fulfilling the fundamental mission of fostering virtue in education. Curriculum-based ideological and political education does not entail adding a new course, but rather involves reconstructing teaching content and methodologies to achieve holistic, all-process, and all-staff education.

2.2. Characteristics and Challenges of College English Teaching

College English teaching is grounded in language skill development and characterized by its cross-cultural nature, strong instrumental orientation, and frequent engagement with Western cultural content. However, prevalent issues such as "emphasizing language over culture" and "prioritizing input over output" persist in teaching practice. Students are easily influenced by Western values, and their sense of cultural agency remains weak. Achieving a balanced representation of Chinese and Western cultures within language instruction and avoiding cultural voicelessness have thus become critical challenges in contemporary English teaching.

2.3. The Importance of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education in College English Teaching

Integrating curriculum-based ideological and political education into English teaching helps counteract its over-instrumentalization and strengthens its educational function. By incorporating elements of Chinese culture and the core socialist values, it guides students to enhance cultural awareness and confidence in cross-cultural communication, cultivating a new generation of talent equipped with both international perspectives and patriotism. This integration facilitates the synergistic development of linguistic competence and ideological literacy.

3. Pathways to Cultivating Cultural Confidence in College English Teaching from the Perspective of Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education

3.1. Integration of Teaching Content

Traditional Festival Culture Instruction: Systematically incorporate Chinese traditional festival cultures—such as Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival—into English teaching content. Beyond introducing their origins, legends, and folk customs, this approach also explores cultural inheritance and innovation within contemporary social contexts. Organizing thematic activities such as "Telling Chinese Festivals in English" encourages students to narrate festival stories in English and create cultural exhibition panels. This enhances students' initiative and pride in cultural expression, allowing traditional culture to be revitalized through language practice.

Chinese-English Translation Teaching: Increase the proportion of China-themed texts in translation courses by carefully selecting English translations of classical works such as *The Analects* and *Tao Te Ching*, guiding students to compare linguistic styles and cultural conveyance across different versions. Additionally, introduce official English translations of contemporary policy terms such as "carbon neutrality" and "a community with a shared future for humanity," enhancing students' ability to accurately communicate Chinese concepts and reinforcing their sense of responsibility as cultural ambassadors.

Utilization of New Media Materials: Fully leverage short-video platforms, mainstream English-language media (e.g., CGTN, BBC documentaries), and film and television resources by selecting high-quality English-language content such as *Beautiful China* and *Chinese New Year: The Biggest Celebration on Earth* as teaching materials. These authentic and vivid audiovisual resources not only improve the quality of students' language input but also visually showcase China's natural landscapes, technological advancements, and cultural soft power, thereby enhancing the emotional impact and contemporaneity of cultural confidence.

3.2. Pedagogical Innovation

Interactive Teaching: Move beyond the traditional model of one-way teacher instruction by employing group discussions, classroom debates, and question-and-answer sessions on topics such as "individualism versus collectivism" and "comparative views of family in China and the West." By posing open-ended questions, teachers can guide students to understand cultural differences through critical thinking, avoiding blind admiration or rejection of foreign cultures and fostering rational, inclusive cultural attitudes.

Project-Based Learning: Design long-term projects that are practical and inquiry-oriented, such as "Promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage of My Hometown in English" or "Creating an English-Language Promotional Video for a Chinese City." Students engage in the entire process—from information gathering and text writing to multimedia production and final presentation—deepening their understanding of local culture while improving comprehensive language skills and cultural communication literacy.

Situational Simulation Teaching: Create simulated real-world scenarios such as international academic conferences, Sino-foreign cultural exchange exhibitions, and business negotiations, and organize role-playing and dialogue simulations. Through immersive experiences, students develop cross-cultural communication strategies and gain the confidence to express Chinese perspectives when encountering cultural differences, thus enhancing their international communication competence and cultural subjectivity.

3.3. Curriculum System Construction

Curriculum Goal Setting: Explicitly establish "cultural confidence" as a core educational objective in course syllabi, constructing a tripartite framework of knowledge, skills, and values. While continuing to focus on language proficiency, greater emphasis should be placed on the integrated development of students' cultural identity, national consciousness, and global competence.

Teaching Resource Integration: Develop school-based cultural teaching repositories by systematically collecting and organizing high-quality bilingual resources such as cultural readers, classic speeches, and translated policy white papers. Facilitate cross-course sharing and dynamic updating to provide teachers with sustainable instructional support.

Evaluation System Development: Reform the traditional exam-based assessment model by establishing a diversified evaluation mechanism that combines formative and summative assessments. Incorporate classroom participation, project outcomes, and cultural-themed presentations into grading criteria, emphasizing the depth of thought and value orientation demonstrated in students' cultural expression. This ensures the effective implementation of curriculum-based ideological and political education.

4. Challenges and Countermeasures

4.1. Insufficient Teacher Competence and the Construction of Professional Development Pathways

Currently, many college English teachers have long focused on teaching language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with primary emphasis on linguistic forms and exam-oriented outcomes. Their understanding of China's fine traditional culture, advanced socialist culture, and the educational philosophy of curriculum-based ideological and political education (or "course-based ideological education") remains relatively weak. This knowledge gap often results in a lack of capacity to organically integrate elements of cultural confidence into classroom instruction. In practice, teachers may hesitate to incorporate cultural content, fearing it might divert attention from core language objectives, or feel constrained by their limited familiarity with Chinese cultural heritage, leading to superficial or tokenistic integration.

During actual classroom delivery, many teachers worry that introducing ideological and political elements into English courses may overshadow language learning goals, creating a sense of imbalance or “overreach.” At the same time, some lack sufficient knowledge of classical Chinese texts, historical contexts, and contemporary national achievements, making it difficult to accurately and confidently convey Chinese cultural values in English. This competence gap not only hinders the effective implementation of course-based ideological education but also weakens the broader educational function of English teaching — particularly its potential to cultivate cultural identity and intercultural agency.

To address this, universities should systematically build professional development support systems for English faculty. This includes organizing regular training workshops on ideological education, cultural seminars on Chinese traditions, bilingual cultural workshops, and interdisciplinary teaching and research activities. Teachers should be encouraged to participate in model course development, inter-institutional exchanges, and teaching competitions to foster peer learning and innovation. Over time, such efforts can cultivate a team of educators who are not only proficient in language pedagogy but also deeply knowledgeable about Chinese culture and committed to value-based education.

4.2. Low Student Engagement and the Activation of Motivational Mechanisms

Influenced by long-standing exam-oriented education, many students perceive English learning primarily as a means to pass standardized tests such as CET-4/6, IELTS, or TOEFL. Their learning goals are often instrumental—centered on vocabulary memorization, grammar mastery, and test-taking strategies — while cultural contexts and value systems receive inadequate attention. This utilitarian mindset leads students to view cultural education as peripheral or irrelevant, making it difficult for cultural confidence initiatives to achieve deep cognitive and emotional resonance. As a result, students may struggle to articulate Chinese values in English or engage meaningfully in cross-cultural dialogue.

In classroom settings, when teachers facilitate cultural discussions, presentations, or storytelling activities, students frequently exhibit passive compliance, low motivation, and superficial engagement. Many perceive such tasks as disconnected from assessment or future career needs, leading to minimal investment. This disengagement undermines the effectiveness of cultural confidence education and impedes the development of genuine cultural identification. Without intrinsic motivation, students remain passive recipients rather than active constructors of cultural meaning, hindering their transformation from language learners into confident cultural communicators.

To enhance student involvement, institutions should establish diversified incentive mechanisms that integrate cultural practice into formative assessment frameworks. For instance, universities can launch English storytelling contests on Chinese themes, exhibitions of student-created cultural projects, or cross-cultural video production challenges. Outstanding participants could receive academic credits, institutional awards, or opportunities for public recognition. By adopting project-based learning (PBL) and task-driven instruction, educators can guide students to actively research, organize, and express Chinese cultural content, transforming cultural learning from passive reception into active, self-motivated expression.

4.3. Difficulties in Resource Integration and the Innovation of a Shared Platform

Although the internet offers a vast amount of bilingual Chinese-English cultural resources—such as translated classics, official policy white papers, mainstream media reports, and documentary subtitles—these materials are often scattered, inconsistent in quality, and lack pedagogical adaptation. Teachers frequently spend excessive time searching, selecting, and modifying content, which reduces teaching efficiency and risks misrepresentation or cultural misunderstanding. Moreover, high-quality resources are often developed in isolation by individual instructors or departments, limiting their accessibility and reuse across courses, thus perpetuating fragmented and inconsistent cultural instruction.

At present, most universities lack a systematically designed, school-wide cultural teaching repository. Without top-level planning and technical support, resource development remains fragmented and teacher-dependent. For example, multiple instructors may independently create materials on topics like “the Spring Festival” or “Confucian philosophy,” leading to redundant efforts. Meanwhile, in-depth resources—such as annotated English translations of the Analects or international media coverage of China’s poverty alleviation achievements—remain difficult to access and share. This “silo effect” significantly constrains the coherence, continuity, and scalability of cultural education in English courses.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to leverage smart campus infrastructure to establish a university-level, shared platform for English teaching with ideological and political integration. This platform should systematically curate and integrate diverse resources, including classical translations, policy documents, authoritative media reports, exemplary student projects, and peer-reviewed teaching cases. Features such as categorized storage, intelligent search, cross-departmental access, and dynamic updates would enhance usability and sustainability. Additionally, a contribution incentive mechanism could encourage teachers to upload high-quality materials, fostering a collaborative ecosystem of “co-creation, co-use, and co-evaluation.” Such a platform would not only improve teaching efficiency but also drive innovation in value-integrated English education across the institution.

5. Conclusion

This study systematically explores the pathways for cultivating cultural confidence in college English teaching from the perspective of curriculum-based ideological and political education. By innovating teaching content—such as integrating traditional festivals, translating classical texts, and utilizing new media resources—reforming pedagogical methods through interactive, project-based, and situational approaches, and systematically constructing curriculum objectives, resource integration, and evaluation mechanisms, the study achieves effective integration of language instruction with value guidance. The findings indicate that fostering cultural confidence relies on enhancing teacher competence, promoting student engagement, and establishing robust resource platforms, which are essential to overcoming the current imbalance in English teaching that emphasizes instrumentalism over cultural education.

This research provides a practical and actionable framework for the development of ideological and political education in college English courses, emphasizing the cultivation of

students' cultural subjectivity within cross-cultural contexts. Future efforts should focus on promoting inter-institutional resource sharing, strengthening teacher training mechanisms, and exploring the deep integration of digital technologies in cultural teaching, thereby continuously enhancing the educational effectiveness of English instruction.

6. References

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