

The Integration of Ideological and Political Education into ERWT Courses in Private Chinese Universities: An OBE-Guided Curriculum Reform Study

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Abstract: *This study investigates the integration of ideological and political education (IPE) into English reading, writing, and translation (ERWT) courses at Chinese private undergraduate institutions. Drawing on the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework, the study responds to deficiencies in moral education, limitations in teaching resources, and weak institutional support. Through a mixed-methods approach applied over four semesters in representative private universities, the curriculum reform utilized tiered ideological content, diversified teaching strategies, and formative assessments such as interpretive and translation proficiency tests. The findings indicate that embedding IPE in ERWT courses enhances students' cultural identity, critical thinking, and ideological recognition while aligning Western materials with Chinese core values. The study further proposes a replicable teaching model and teacher development strategies that foster holistic moral education. This research supports national curriculum reform and offers valuable insights for the sustainable development of moral education in higher education settings.*

Keywords: *Ideological and Political Education, OBE, Private Undergraduate Institutions, English Teaching, Curriculum Reform*

1. Introduction

In recent years, ideological and political education (IPE) has been positioned as a strategic priority in China's higher education reform [1], with increasing emphasis on its integration into professional courses. English reading, writing, and translation (ERWT) courses, serving both as linguistic training platforms and cultural interfaces, are naturally situated at the intersection of language acquisition and ideological cultivation. This dual function becomes particularly complex in private undergraduate institutions, which often grapple with limited instructional resources, non-standardized curricula, and student populations with diverse academic backgrounds and ideological orientations.

Unlike public universities with longstanding traditions and systematic IPE frameworks, private institutions in China emerged relatively recently and lack established models for embedding political values into discipline-specific instruction [2]. Consequently, ERWT instructors in these settings frequently face the dilemma of teaching language skills through predominantly Western content while lacking the tools to meaningfully embed Chinese values. The situation is further complicated by the influence of unregulated digital spaces, post-pandemic psychological shifts among students, and the persistent dominance of imported textbooks that often omit local cultural perspectives.

To address these multifaceted challenges, this study adopts the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) model as a guiding philosophy for curriculum reform. OBE emphasizes backward design by defining clear learning outcomes aligned with both cognitive and affective domains, making it especially suitable for integrating ideological content into skills-based instruction. By reconfiguring teaching strategies, materials, and assessment methods within this framework, the research aims to explore whether ERWT courses in private universities can effectively foster both language competence and moral development.

This paper presents the design, implementation, and outcomes of an ERWT curriculum reform project conducted in private universities in northwestern China. It explores the viability of integrating IPE into language instruction in non-elite institutions and proposes replicable strategies for aligning foreign language education with national ideological objectives.

2. Background and Rationale

Private undergraduate institutions in China occupy a unique position within the national higher education system. Though they serve a growing segment of the student population, these institutions often face systemic disadvantages, including limited teaching resources, weak institutional support for moral education, and the absence of coherent frameworks for curriculum ideological integration. This structural gap is particularly visible in foreign language education, where imported English textbooks overwhelmingly present Western narratives, values, and epistemologies, leaving little room for the cultivation of national cultural identity or political awareness [4].

Students in these institutions typically belong to a generation shaped by rapid technological change, economic prosperity, and a post-pandemic psychological climate. Their ideological orientation is frequently influenced by unregulated online environments, fragmented media consumption, and a consumerist value system [3]. Without proper curricular intervention, many students demonstrate weak political literacy, individualistic tendencies, and diminished recognition of collectivist or national narratives. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified this trend, with prolonged isolation and information exposure contributing to ideological ambiguity and emotional vulnerability.

At the instructional level, many ERWT teachers lack both awareness and training in ideological education. Teaching practices are primarily skill-based, centered on grammar, vocabulary, and translation exercises, with limited integration of cultural or political content. The disconnect is further exacerbated by outdated, Western-dominated textbooks and rigid course structures that offer few opportunities to contextualize language learning within Chinese social or ideological frameworks.

From an institutional perspective, ideological and professional courses remain largely segregated. Few universities have established evaluation mechanisms or incentive structures that reward ideological content integration in language courses. This separation reflects a broader misalignment between political education mandates and actual classroom practices, particularly in the less-resourced private sector.

Against this backdrop, the need for a curriculum model that simultaneously develops students' linguistic competencies and strengthens their ideological foundations becomes urgent. The integration of tiered ideological content into ERWT courses, guided by the OBE model, offers a promising path forward. By aligning teaching content with students' cognitive development and cultural readiness, and by embedding political values organically into language instruction, ERWT courses can serve as effective conduits for moral cultivation. This research is grounded in the belief that language is not a neutral medium but a vehicle of values, and that English instruction in China must reflect the cultural and ideological responsibilities of contemporary higher education.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to design, implement, and evaluate an ideological and political education (IPE) curriculum integrated into English reading, writing, and translation (ERWT) courses. The research was implemented through a series of classroom-based teaching interventions and reflective evaluations conducted over four consecutive semesters in private undergraduate colleges located in northwestern China. These institutions were selected for their representative challenges in moral education, curriculum design, and faculty development within the private higher education sector.

The curriculum reform followed the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) model, aligning with Shaanxi Province's action plan for ideological integration in professional English instruction [5]. This framework emphasizes backward design, prioritizing defined learning outcomes over ad-hoc teaching strategies. Learning outcomes were aligned across three domains: language competence, ideological recognition, and cultural expression. The course structure was divided into tiered levels—basic and advanced—tailored to students' varying cognitive abilities and English proficiency levels. The basic tier focused on developing foundational skills with embedded ideological keywords and cultural metaphors, while the advanced tier encouraged critical reflection and intercultural comparison.

The instructional process was redesigned into three progressive phases: pre-class, in-class, and post-class. Pre-class activities included guided readings and value-oriented warm-ups designed to activate prior knowledge and cultural awareness. In-class sessions incorporated thematic discussions around ideological content embedded in revised reading passages and translation texts. Post-class tasks

focused on expressive output, requiring students to apply political and cultural content in reflective writing and English-Chinese translation tasks.

To ensure alignment between instructional strategies and learning outcomes, formative assessment replaced the traditional midterm and final exams. Two core tools were used: interpretive translation tests and oral interpretation stage assessments. These tests measured both language skills and students' ability to internalize and express core socialist values and Chinese cultural elements. Sample scoring criteria included value alignment, rhetorical appropriateness, and cultural sensitivity.

In addition, data was collected from classroom observations, student feedback, and teacher reflection journals. Teacher training workshops were also held to equip instructors with the pedagogical tools and ideological literacy required for effective implementation. These workshops included model lessons, ideological literacy modules, and collaborative lesson planning sessions.

Through this integrated methodological design, the study aimed to explore whether IPE-infused ERWT courses, under the OBE framework, could improve not only linguistic competence but also students' moral cognition and cultural identity.

4. Findings and Implementation Strategies

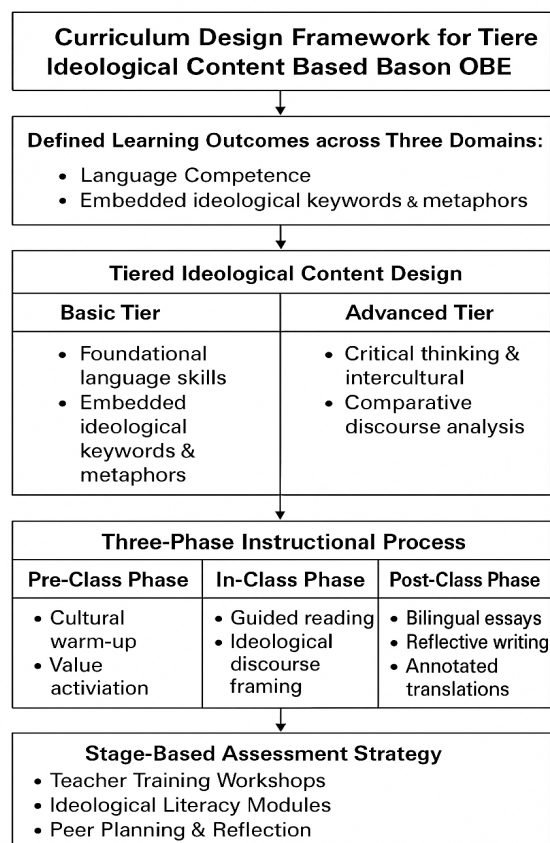


Figure 1 Curriculum Design Framework for Tiered Ideological Content Based on OBE

The implementation of ideological and political education (IPE) in English reading, writing, and translation (ERWT) courses followed a phased strategy integrating curriculum restructuring, classroom pedagogy, and assessment reform, as is shown in Figure 1. Findings are drawn from longitudinal observations, student performance samples, and teacher feedback journals, offering insight into the feasibility and impact of the reform.

The tiered design of ideological content (basic vs. advanced) was adapted from Zhang's model for private university curriculum reform, which demonstrated efficacy in scaffolding students' ideological and linguistic development [6]. At the basic level, reading and translation materials were infused with keywords and concepts related to core socialist values, such as collectivism, patriotism, and cultural confidence. At the advanced level, students engaged in comparative discourse analysis between

Chinese and Western narratives, promoting critical reflection and intercultural communication skills.

Supplementary materials were developed to address the ideological gaps in standard Western-centric textbooks. These included timely commentaries, contemporary case studies, and parallel texts rooted in Chinese political thought and cultural traditions. A value-based reading module, derived from current events and national development policies, was introduced to reinforce ideological themes across units.

The instructional process was structured into three phases: pre-class cultural activation, in-class ideological immersion, and post-class expressive application. Pre-class tasks such as concept maps and value identification encouraged students to reflect on personal beliefs in relation to national values. In-class instruction included guided close reading, contextual vocabulary expansion, and political discourse framing. Post-class assignments required students to articulate ideological insights through bilingual reflective essays and annotated translations.

To ensure ideological resonance, teachers selected topics that highlighted shared human values (e.g., community, justice) while aligning them with the Chinese governance model. This approach enabled a subtle yet consistent value transfer that complemented language instruction.

Table 1 Rubric Comparison between Traditional Exams and Stage-Based Assessment

Dimension	Traditional Exam	Stage-Based Assessment
Focus	Grammar and Vocabulary	Ideological Integration + Language Use
Assessment Type	One-time test	Interpretive/Oral Tasks
Feedback Cycle	End-of-term	Ongoing
Content Depth	Surface-level	Contextual + Reflective

Traditional summative assessments were replaced by formative tools that emphasized process, comprehension, and ideological depth. Following Chen's framework on the ideological function of translation tasks [8], the researcher designed two primary evaluation formats: interpretive translation tests and oral interpretation stage tests, as is shown in Table 1. These assessments measured both linguistic competence and students' ability to internalize and express core values through translation.

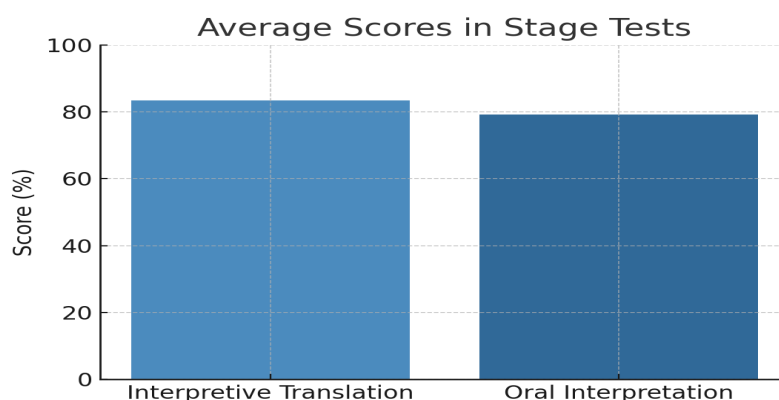


Figure 2 Sample Score Distributions in Translation and Interpretation Assessments

These assessments not only tracked language proficiency but also revealed students' developing ability to integrate cultural and political meaning. Data from performance rubrics indicated a measurable increase in students' recognition and accurate expression of ideological content, as is shown in Figure 2.

As Liu's study on IPE implementation pathways noted, teacher training must address both pedagogical skills and ideological literacy [7]. This research similarly facilitated a role shift—from language technicians to moral facilitators—through collaborative lesson planning. Faculty reported improved confidence in integrating political content and greater awareness of their dual responsibility as language educators and moral mentors, as is shown in Figure 3. Peer lesson planning and post-lesson reflections contributed to building a collaborative instructional culture.

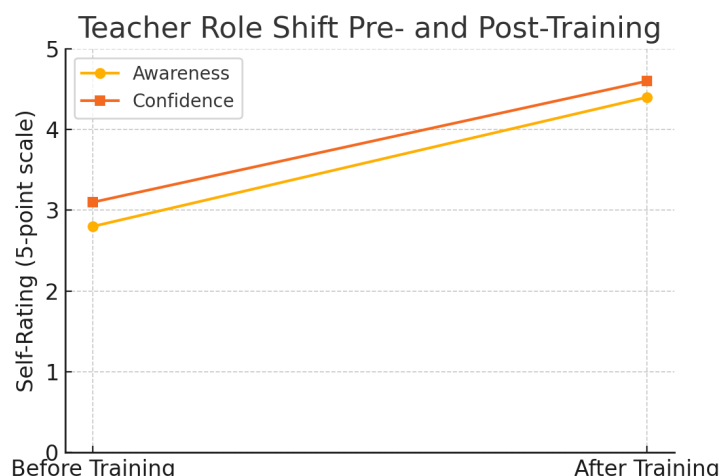


Figure 3 Teacher Role Shift before and after Ideological Training Workshops

5. Academic and Social Implications

The integration of ideological and political education (IPE) into ERWT instruction, grounded in the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework, generates multiple layers of academic, practical, and social value, particularly within the underexplored context of private undergraduate institutions.

This research addresses a critical gap in the literature by developing and applying a replicable pedagogical model for embedding ideological education within skill-based English instruction. Most existing studies on curriculum-based IPE integration have focused on public institutions or humanities courses, leaving foreign language education in the private sector under-represented. By adapting OBE's backward design principles to align language outcomes with ideological competencies, this study provides a theoretically sound and pedagogically actionable model for interdisciplinary integration.

At the classroom level, the curriculum reform demonstrated measurable improvement in students' ideological awareness, cultural identification, and language application. Students' enhanced cultural identification, particularly in articulating Chinese perspectives in English, resonates with Wang's findings on the fusion of language instruction and national identity [9].

From the instructor's perspective, the reform led to a shift in professional identity—from language technicians to cultural facilitators and moral educators. The participatory teacher training model contributed to faculty empowerment and enhanced the sustainability of the IPE integration strategy.

Beyond the academic setting, the reform supports broader national educational goals aimed at fostering patriotism, cultural self-confidence, and collective consciousness among university students. By leveraging ERWT courses as vehicles for cultural transmission, the model helps bridge ideological gaps between students' lived experiences and national narratives.

The curriculum model also responds to current societal challenges, such as ideological drift in digital spaces and generational detachment from collective values. It promotes a classroom culture that counters passive learning and cultivates critical thinking, value discernment, and civic responsibility—qualities essential for shaping socially responsible graduates.

6. Conclusion and Future Directions

This study confirms that the integration of ideological and political education (IPE) into English reading, writing, and translation (ERWT) courses is both feasible and impactful within private undergraduate institutions when guided by the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework. By realigning course objectives, restructuring classroom activities, and reforming assessment practices, the curriculum succeeded in advancing not only students' linguistic competencies but also their ideological recognition, cultural identity, and critical reflection skills.

The tiered design of ideological content, combined with a multi-phased instructional model and

stage-based evaluations, proved effective in bridging the perceived disconnect between Western learning materials and Chinese ideological values. Importantly, the shift in teacher identity—from skill transmitters to moral facilitators—emerged as a key enabler of long-term curriculum transformation.

These findings carry implications beyond the immediate institutional context. As private universities continue to expand and diversify, they must be equipped with instructional models that promote both academic rigor and moral education. The strategies explored in this study offer a replicable pathway for similar institutions seeking to align language instruction with national educational mandates.

As Zhao's work on moral literacy development suggests [10], longitudinal studies tracking students' post-graduation civic behavior could further validate the sustained impact of IPE-integrated language instruction. First, longitudinal studies tracking the sustained impact of IPE-infused language instruction on students' ideological development and civic behavior are needed. Second, cross-regional comparative studies may explore how cultural, administrative, or resource differences influence implementation outcomes. Additionally, further refinement of assessment tools for ideological learning in language contexts would enhance evaluation validity and instructional feedback.

Acknowledgements

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