

Curriculum Ideology and Politics in High School English Reading Classes: A Case Study of Unit 4 in PEP Compulsory English Book 2

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Abstract

Based on the perspective of disciplinary core literacy, this paper explores the practical integration of curriculum ideology and politics (CIP) in high school English reading and thinking classes. It first analyzes the theoretical significance of combining CIP with the cultivation of English core competencies—language ability, learning strategies, cultural awareness, and thinking quality—highlighting how this integration promotes students' comprehensive development and value formation. Taking the Reading & Thinking section of Unit 4 in Required English Book 2 by People's Education Press as a case study, the paper proposes teaching strategies including precise goal setting, in-depth mining of ideological and political elements in textbooks, and embedding value guidance throughout the teaching process. The practice demonstrates that these strategies effectively realize the organic fusion of disciplinary literacy and CIP, enhancing both students' language skills and moral qualities, and advancing the educational mission of fostering well-rounded talents with international vision and social responsibility in high school English education. This study offers practical examples for English teachers to implement CIP and enriches the theoretical and practical framework of curriculum ideology and politics in language teaching.

Keywords: curriculum ideology and politics, core subject literacy, senior high school english, reading and thinking class

1. Introduction

Since the concept of "Curriculum Ideology and Politics" (CIP) was proposed, it has attracted extensive discussion and attention within China's educational community. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that teachers should not only focus on political education courses but also value the implementation and integration of CIP within teaching activities of all courses. This requires unifying explicit and implicit education, fully exploring ideological and political education resources, and appropriately embedding them into other subject teaching activities, achieving comprehensive education for all students throughout the entire teaching process (Zhang, 2019). In the context of globalization, the role of the English subject in China's education system has become increasingly important. The revised General High School English Curriculum Standards (2017 edition, 2020 revision) propose that students need to cultivate and develop core literacy in English learning: language ability, learning strategies, cultural awareness, and thinking quality. In recent years, the integration of CIP with English subject teaching has been recognized as a crucial pathway for fostering students' all-round development. English, as a tool for international communication, not only serves the purpose of language acquisition but also provides a unique thinking. Therefore, exploring how to effectively embed ideological and political elements into English reading and thinking classes is of great significance for both theoretical research and practical teaching. Combining CIP with English disciplinary core literacy not only enhances students' core competitiveness in English but also promotes their holistic development, nurturing them to be citizens with global vision and social responsibility. This integration supplements traditional English teaching content and deepens its teaching objectives and methods.

To explore the implementation paths of CIP in high school English classrooms, this paper analyzes the significance and fundamental principles of integrating CIP into high school English teaching based on a literature review. Furthermore, it takes the Reading & Thinking section of Unit 4 in PEP Compulsory English Book 2 as a case study to investigate strategies for embedding CIP in high school English reading and thinking classes, aiming to provide practical teaching suggestions for English teachers, enrich the learning environment, and promote effective implementation of CIP in high school English education.

2. The Significance of the Integration

Currently, the academic consensus views CIP as a curriculum concept that fully exploits ideological and political education elements within various courses. It uses the curriculum as a carrier to impart knowledge while emphasizing the guiding role of core values of socialism throughout all courses and teaching activities, aiming to unify explicit and implicit education to build a holistic educational environment (Li & Lu, 2020). CIP is not a separate course but a cultivation and transmission of ideology and values, selectively endowing a group of courses with moral education connotations suitable for ideological and political integration (Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, CIP in foreign language courses is led by foreign language teachers who integrate the concept of moral education organically into all aspects of foreign language teaching, including content, classroom management, evaluation systems, and teacher conduct, striving to shape students' correct worldview, outlook on life, and values (Wen, 2021).

The term "core literacy" was first proposed by the OECD in its 1997 DeSeCo project. In 2012, OECD also proposed a framework of key competencies for 21st-century students, including ten key skills organized into four domains: ways of thinking, methods of working, use of tools, and living in the world. In China, the concept of core literacy officially appeared in the 2014 Ministry of Education document on deepening curriculum reform and implementing moral education as a fundamental task. Core literacy is defined as the personality traits and key abilities that students gradually form during their education, aligning with lifelong development and social needs. At the disciplinary level, it represents the concentrated educational value of a subject, encompassing students' correct values, necessary character, and key competencies developed through learning the subject.

Within the senior high school English curriculum, the English reading course serves as a platform for cross-cultural exchange among students and simultaneously provides teachers with a bridge for integrating curriculum-based ideological and political education. The reading texts in the People's Education Press (PEP) senior high school textbooks encompass a broad spectrum of content, covering diverse dimensions and facets, including, but not limited to, social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of various nations. These reading materials incorporate elements of moral education while also embodying connotations of ideological and political education, demonstrating rich humanistic spirit and distinct ideological characteristics. Consequently, the English reading course possesses unique advantages in implementing ideological-political education within the curriculum. Chen Jun and Xiao Li (2021) argue that in current senior high school English reading instruction, the phenomenon of "overemphasizing surface-level comprehension of texts at the expense of in-depth exploration of their connotations" remains pronounced. The "over-intellectualized" and "fragmented" nature of reading instruction hinders the realization of the subject's educational value and impedes the effective achievement of its educational goals. Therefore, English teachers need to guide senior high school English reading pedagogy with the concept of "curriculum-based ideological and political education," implementing it concretely within teaching activities to enhance the educational efficacy of the subject curriculum.

In conclusion, the pedagogy of the English reading course constitutes a crucial pathway for implementing and advancing curriculum-based ideological and political education. Teachers must fully utilize the abundant ideological-political elements embedded within the reading materials to effectively promote the development of ideological-political education within the English curriculum, thereby genuinely fulfilling its educational function. Integrating CIP with the cultivation of English disciplinary core literacy not only improves students' language ability, enabling better expression and understanding of cultural connotations in English, but also enhances their intercultural communication skills and cultural confidence through cultural awareness. The improvement of thinking quality helps students critically analyze complex information, while learning strategies lay the foundation for lifelong learning. Through this integration, English teaching transcends mere language knowledge and skills transmission to guide students in establishing correct values and outlooks, cultivating high-quality talents with an international vision and social responsibility, and fulfilling the educational mission of English in the new era.

3. Teaching Principles of High School English Reading and Thinking Class

3.1 Organic Integration

The integration of ideological and political elements in high school English reading and thinking classes must follow the principle of organic integration, achieving a natural and seamless effect. This means that ideological and political goals (such as humanistic spirit, cultural confidence, social responsibility, and patriotism) should be deeply intertwined with and inseparable from language knowledge learning (vocabulary, sentence patterns, discourse), reading ability development (comprehension, analysis, reasoning, critique), and thinking skills cultivation (critical thinking, innovation). The key lies in deeply mining ideological and political touchpoints embedded in texts (characters' virtues, cultural phenomena, social issues, author's attitudes) and precisely

designing chains of thought-provoking questions and in-depth critical activities (e.g., group discussions on values, simulated debates on ethical dilemmas, project-based learning to solve practical problems), allowing value guidance to naturally emerge during text analysis, meaning exploration, and language practice. The evaluation system should also integrate ideological and political dimensions, focusing on students' value judgments, thinking quality, and social responsibility in reading comprehension, oral expression, and writing assessments, avoiding mechanical preaching or disjointed approaches.

To achieve true organic integration, teachers should carefully select and adapt teaching materials so that ideological and political elements are embedded in authentic language contexts rather than being imposed externally. For example, when analysing literary texts or news articles, teachers can guide students to reflect on oral dilemmas, cultural differences, or social responsibilities inherent in the content. Classroom activities such as debates, role-plays, and collaborative projects can foster both language proficiency and value reflection. Moreover, assessment criteria should be adjusted to include not only linguistic accuracy and fluency but also students' ability to express and defend their viewpoints on ethical or cultural issues, ensuring that value education is naturally woven into every aspect of the learning process.

3.2 Comprehensive Education Involving All Personnel, the Whole Process, and All Aspects

Ideological and political education in high school English reading and thinking classes is a systematic project requiring all personnel (teachers and all students), the whole process and all aspects in classes to work together. All-personnel participation is fundamental, in which teachers' educational responsibilities are clarified.----they must fully recognize their important role in CIP, combining teaching with moral education by imparting knowledge and skills alongside cultivating students' character and values. Secondly, schools should strengthen top-level design and organizational management of CIP, establish a comprehensive CIP teaching system, conduct teacher training and research activities, and improve teachers' CIP teaching abilities. Additionally, ideological and political work teams should collaborate closely with subject teachers to form a joint educational force. Finally, social educational forces should be mobilized by strengthening cooperation with enterprises, communities, and social organizations, establishing off-campus practice bases, inviting industry experts, model workers, and outstanding alumni to campus for lectures and practical guidance, broadening students' horizons, and enhancing their social responsibility and sense of mission.

Whole-process integration guarantees ideological and political education by following educational laws. Teaching objectives and content for CIP should be tailored to students' age, cognitive level, and psychological development, achieving progressive and spiral ideological and political education. CIP should permeate all teaching links, from goal setting, content selection, teaching methods, to evaluation implementation, reflecting ideological education requirements. Teachers should guide students' thinking and discussion, stimulate interest and participation, enabling students to accept ideological education subtly. All-aspect penetration requires expanding educational scenarios beyond the classroom to extracurricular activities (English reading clubs, drama societies, themed bulletin board competitions, holiday essays), online spaces (recommendation of quality resources, guiding rational online discussions), and campus cultural environments (bilingual quotations, cultural displays), constructing a multidimensional network of in-class and out-of-class, online and offline, school-family-society collaborative education, forming a powerful educational synergy.

3.3 Adhering to Students' Cognitive Laws

The effectiveness of ideological and political education in high school English reading and thinking classes fundamentally depends on following students' cognitive laws. Teaching design must be student-centered, fully considering their cognitive level (developing abstract thinking but needing concrete support), interests (growth, social hot spots, popular culture), thinking characteristics (desire for independent thinking, resistance to indoctrination), and the critical period for value formation. Content selection should be close to students' lives and concerns (e.g., digital literacy, fan culture, pursuit of dreams), starting from concrete text characters and events, guiding students through layered questioning from phenomena to essence, avoiding empty grand concepts. Simultaneously, it should emphasize the value of language learning as a tool to understand the world, spread China's voice, and serve national development, enhancing confidence through cultural comparison. Methods should strongly employ activities that stimulate subjectivity and critical thinking (group cooperation, deep discussions, open debates, Socratic seminars, role-play), use multimedia to create emotional resonance, and promote internalization through reflective writing. Evaluation and feedback should focus on process observation and guided inspiration, paying attention to students' logicity, criticality, inclusiveness, and value orientation in thinking collisions, applying differentiated instruction to ensure precise and effective value guidance that reaches students' minds and hearts.

Furthermore, teachers should recognize that high school students are transitioning from concrete to more abstract forms of reasoning. Instruction should scaffold students' understanding by moving from familiar, everyday scenarios to more complex social or ethical issues. Incorporating students' interests can increase engagement and make ideological content more relatable. Interactive methods, such as scenario-based discussions, peer teaching, and reflective journals, help students internalize values while developing higher-order thinking skills. By aligning teaching strategies with students' cognitive development, educators can make ideological and political education more meaningful and effective, promoting both intellectual growth and moral maturity.

4. Teaching Strategies for Integrating Disciplinary Core Literacy and Curriculum Ideology and Politics in Reading and Thinking Class

Taking the Reading and Thinking section of Unit 4 "History and Traditions" in Compulsory English Book 2 by People's Education Press as an example, this section discusses teaching strategies to integrate disciplinary core literacy and CIP in high school English reading and thinking classes.

4.1 Set Clear Teaching Objectives Under the Curriculum Orientation

Teaching objectives are the direction and fulcrum of a lesson and the foundation for integrating disciplinary core literacy and CIP. Teachers should formulate clear and specific objectives based on curriculum standards, textbook content, and students' actual conditions, establishing a dual-objective system that embeds ideological and political value coordinates into the core competencies of language ability, learning strategies, cultural awareness, and thinking quality. This ensures knowledge transmission, literacy cultivation, and value guidance simultaneously.

In designing objectives, teachers must ensure clarity and alignment with students' cognitive levels and learning needs. Clear objectives provide directional guidance, ensuring teaching content revolves around disciplinary core literacy, while objectives suited to students' situations stimulate motivation. When students clearly understand expected outcomes, they engage more actively and purposefully. While designing objectives based on core literacy, teachers should integrate CIP educational elements to cultivate correct outlooks on life, values, and the world, fostering social responsibility and patriotism. The integration of ideological goals requires subtle design, especially focusing on cultural awareness and thinking quality, so students receive ideological enlightenment and value guidance while learning language skills.

In the case of Unit 4 "History and Traditions," Reading and Thinking section, the teacher sets three objectives based on disciplinary core literacy and CIP integration:

Understand important words and expressions by explaining them with the help of context;

Know about the history of the UK by summarizing and retelling its history;

Be aware of the importance of learning history and what is in the name of our country through group discussions and oral reports.

These objectives cover language ability and learning strategies (understanding key vocabulary and phrases via context and summarization) as well as cultural awareness and thinking quality (learning and retelling UK history, understanding the meaning of "united" in the UK context, and extending discussion to China's history and culture reflected in the country's name). While cultivating critical thinking and analytical skills, the teacher subtly integrates patriotic reflection, helping students establish correct outlooks on life, values, and the world.

4.2 Deeply Explore Ideological and Political Elements in Textbooks to Construct Teaching Frameworks

Textbooks are important carriers of teaching content. Deeply mining ideological and political elements in textbooks is key to integrating disciplinary literacy and CIP. English textbooks often contain rich ideological and political educational resources related to nature, culture, history, and society of different countries, providing materials for cultivating intercultural communication and cultural confidence, as well as opportunities for ideological education. Teachers should analyze the unit theme and deconstruct different texts within the unit to explore thematic meanings, then mine ideological elements to build an organically integrated content framework.

For Unit 4 "History and Traditions," the teacher starts from the unit theme "Human and Society," further decomposes the themes of different texts, especially the Reading and Thinking text "What's in a Name?" This unit includes five lessons focusing on human and society, human and nature, and human and society. The Reading and Thinking lesson serves as a bridge, guiding students from discussing Chinese culture—Confucius and his philosophy—to exploring world history—British history—and finally to a combined discussion—foreign backpackers' experiences in China. The text "What's in a Name?" echoes the unit theme of history and tradition. The teacher constructs a content framework moving from China to the UK and back to China, using "travel" as a context. This leads students from Qufu (Confucius's hometown) to the UK, then from knowledge needed for

traveling to the UK to knowledge needed to invite British friends to China. This framework guides students to explore the meaning of "United" in both the UK and China, two multi-ethnic countries, and extends to the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. It encourages students to recognize that cultural exchange and mutual learning drive historical development, cultivating an open and inclusive cultural mindset and global vision, and establishing correct outlooks on life, values, and the world.

4.3 Permeate Value Orientation Throughout the Process to Strengthen Educational Effectiveness

Embedding value orientation throughout the teaching process is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness of ideological and political education. Teachers should consciously integrate value guidance into every stage of the reading and thinking class, allowing students to be subtly influenced and educated, thereby achieving effective integration of disciplinary literacy and CIP and enhancing educational outcomes.

In Unit 4 "History and Traditions," the teacher incorporates CIP throughout pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading activities. The lesson introduction uses an AI digital character to create a travel context, asking students, "What do you need to know for your journey to the UK?" This stimulates interest and curiosity while cleverly introducing the ideological theme of history and tradition, laying a foundation for subsequent text study and ideological education. During reading, the teacher designs tasks at different levels to guide students to deeper understanding and mining of ideological elements. Students first skim the text to answer why the kingdom is united and whether "united" means everything is the same, leading them to think about how multiculturalism coexists harmoniously within one country. In close reading, activities such as matching, fill-in-the-blanks, and Q&A help students understand the historical process of the UK's constituent parts joining and leaving the kingdom. These tasks enable students to master text details and gain clearer knowledge of British history, subtly receiving value education on multicultural tolerance and historical heritage.

Post-reading discussions are carefully designed to deepen students' understanding of the importance of studying history and patriotism, through topics like "Why is it important to study history?" and "What's in the name of the People's Republic of China?" Students not only learn famous quotes and specific expressions but also enhance teamwork and language skills, fostering patriotism and national pride. Finally, the teacher summarizes the lesson, emphasizing key knowledge points, elevating ideological education, and strengthening educational effects. Homework assignments, such as writing a short essay introducing China and creating mind maps comparing Chinese and British historical characteristics and unity methods, reinforce disciplinary literacy and continue ideological education.

5. Conclusion

Practice has shown that through in-depth interpretation of text connotations, creation of authentic contexts, and design of critical thinking activities, language ability cultivation, cultural awareness enhancement, thinking quality development, and learning strategy training can naturally integrate with ideological goals such as patriotism, cultural confidence, and social responsibility in a "salt dissolved in water" manner. This not only effectively strengthens the educational value of the English subject but also provides frontline teachers with operable and replicable examples for implementing CIP. It has important practical significance for consolidating the moral education foundation of English teaching and cultivating new-era talents with both an international vision and cultural consciousness. Future research may further explore differentiated implementation strategies across different lesson types and educational stages, continuously deepening the connotation construction and practical innovation of English curriculum ideology and politics.

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