

## Chinese Ideological Elements on College Business English Course Material

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**Abstract:** The growing presence of China on the world stage, as exemplified by the Belt and Road initiative, fuels a strong need for educated managers specialized in international business. Given that English is still widely accepted as the lingua franca of global trade, it is imperative to foster skilled professionals through Business English courses. There is, however, a double difficulty in incorporating such course into more the national ideological objectives of China. This paper aims to investigate how one of the most popular general Business English textbooks "Business English: Viewing, Listening and Speaking" is imbued with ideological values in order to echo with China's educational purposes. The study is concerned with examining the textbook's role in producing well-rounded, globally competitive graduates who are able to not only communicate proficiently but also genuinely embody Chinese national values as they navigate through an increasingly complex and shifting global paradigm within the paradigms of socialist vision.

### 1. Introduction

In the intricate landscape of contemporary education, where diverse ideological perspectives converge, promoting the Chinese spirit is paramount in higher education institutions. The 2020 "Guideline for Ideological and Political Course Construction in Institutions of Higher Learning," issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education, exemplifies this urgent concern, posing the fundamental question: "Whom should we train, how should we train, and for what ends?" (Ministry of Education, 2020)[1]. The guidelines go beyond simply emphasizing these questions, explicitly outlining measures that colleges must implement to ensure students are exposed to Chinese ideologies across all disciplines and aspects of study. Moreover, the guidelines assert that "cultivating morality and educating people" is a paramount criterion for assessing all college work (Ministry of Education, 2020)[1].

This paper examines how these principles are woven into the framework of the Business English curriculum, specifically focusing on how the "Business English: Viewing, Listening and Speaking" program aims to cultivate business professionals who possess both a global economic perspective and a strong sense of Chinese Characteristics. This optional course for English majors, "Business English: Viewing, Listening and Speaking," seeks to develop international compound talents proficient in both English and business. Recognizing the inherent presence of Western cultural elements within the course, teachers are tasked with guiding students toward correct values and exploring these elements through the lens of ideological and political content. The Ministry of Education's outline underscores the state's commitment to constructing course ideology and politics in higher education, placing heightened expectations on the integration of these principles into the field of Business English.

## 2. Methodology

This study employed a teacher-applied inquiry and reflective analysis approach to examine the integration of ideological principles within "Business English: Viewing, Listening, and Speaking." This widely used textbook in Chinese universities provided a unique opportunity to explore how ideological elements were incorporated into a practical, skills-based subject like Business English. The research sought to understand how these ideological elements were presented in the textbook, how they were translated into classroom practice, and how they impacted students' learning and understanding of both language and cultural values.

This study utilized a blended approach combining elements of teacher research and student feedback:

**Teacher-Applied Inquiry:** This study focused on a reflective analysis of teaching methodology. Through semi-structured interviews with teachers who used the textbook, the study explored their understanding of the textbook's ideological elements, their strategies for integrating them into their teaching, and their perceptions of student responses. This process allowed for a deeper understanding of how teachers interpreted and implemented ideological content in the classroom.

**Focus Group Discussions:** To gain student perspectives on the ideological elements presented in the textbook and classroom, focus group discussions were conducted. These discussions allowed students to voice their experiences, challenges, and understandings related to the integration of ideological elements within their Business English learning.

**Reflective Journal Entries:** Student reflective journal entries provided rich, personal insights into their experiences with the textbook and the classroom. These entries revealed how students understood and processed the ideological messages presented and how they connected these messages to their own values and understanding of the world.

The data collected through these methods was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and motifs related to the integration of ideological elements within the textbook and classroom. This involved categorizing and labeling relevant text segments and data points, identifying recurring themes and patterns, and analyzing the implications of these themes in relation to broader cultural and political values. This comprehensive approach, integrating teacher reflection, student insights, and thematic analysis, provided a dynamic and nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between education, ideology, and cultural transmission in the context of Business English education in contemporary China.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Integration of Ideological Elements

The integration of ideological elements into Business English curriculum is not simply about promoting national values but rather about creating a nuanced understanding of cultural differences, fostering a sense of civic responsibility, and developing a critical awareness of global issues. This study examines key stages where these elements are woven into the teaching practices using the "Business English: Viewing, Listening and Speaking" textbook.

Course ideology and politics puts forward a new concept, a new mode and a new responsibility of talent cultivation that integrates moral education and professional teaching, which implies the social responsibility and historical mission of teachers to "perform, learn and teach oneself with virtue" (Xi Zhuxi 2017:379)[2], as well as the social responsibility and historical mission of transmitting socialist core values. Therefore, course ideology and politics fully connects with the principle of "implementing the ideological-political education for all students in the whole process and in all directions". In this way, it can build up a synergistic development between core curriculum and ideology curriculum through the innovation of curriculum design and teaching methods. Then, we can build a curriculum system in which the professional courses and the ideology and politic courses go in the same direction, which can let the students receive ideological nurturing gradually and realize the win-win development of professional education and ideological and political education.

For the business English course, teachers have long been focusing on teaching and learning

practical foreign language knowledge. They ask students to improve their business English ability, but neglect the cultivation of values and the learning of excellent traditional Chinese culture. In the new era, higher foreign language education requires that foreign language courses must be a unification of values leadership and language knowledge teaching, with the aim of shaping students' values, enhancing their national spirit, improving their ability to express Chinese excellent thoughts and culture in foreign languages, telling Chinese stories and building cultural confidence in the process of teaching knowledge and cultivating language ability. (Peng Xiaofei, 2022)[3].

Therefore, in the face of the current complex and changeable international environment, it is of great significance to integrate the elements of ideology and politics into the teaching process of Business English: Viewing, Listening and Speaking. First of all, the ideological and political elements of this course is an important carrier for realizing the teaching objectives. The "Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate Foreign Language and Literature Majors in General Institutions of Higher Education (Upper)-Teaching Guidelines for English Majors" issued by the Ministry of Education last year makes a clear exposition of the cultivation objectives: "Business English aims to cultivate talents specialized in international affairs with good English language skills and professional business knowledge, good humanistic qualities, strong intercultural competence, and business communication skills" (English Major Teaching Guidance Sub-committee of the Teaching Guidance Committee for Foreign Language and Literature Majors of Higher Education Institutions of the Ministry of Education, 2020:47)[4]. Focusing on enhancing students' deep understanding of Chinese pattern, they can use their knowledge to explain China's economic development goals, safeguard national interests, and realize the national goal of talent cultivation in the future.

Secondly, courses with ideological-political elements may effectively help students shape correct values. Business English: Viewing, Listening and Speaking is not only helpful for students' listening skills, but also an important carrier for students to contact with western ideas and business culture. Since students recognize the western world through the perspective of business English, they are very susceptible to the influence of western ideology in the textbook. Therefore, the integration of the ideological elements with socialist core values, such as patriotism, dedication, honesty and friendliness, into the course can guide students to find the differences between Chinese and western cultures and ideologies, and to cultivate their patriotic and courageous qualities. (Peng Xiaofei, 2022)[3]

Finally, the integration of course ideological elements into the construction of this course is good for students to tell Chinese stories in a better way. In addition to cultivating students' business English knowledge, another major goal of the course is to teach students to command business discourse, so that they can cope with the complex international economic situations and better safeguard China's interests. At the same time, students will be able to express and spread their business knowledge in foreign languages, which will help Chinese culture go farther.

### **3.2. Teaching Cases of Course Ideology-Politics**

The integration of ideological elements within the Business English curriculum requires a nuanced approach, one that cannot be rigidly imposed but must be deeply embedded within the course's objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessments. "Business English: Viewing, Listening, and Speaking," a compulsory course for Business English majors, exemplifies this approach. While aiming to achieve the traditional goals of English proficiency and business acumen, the course also seeks to fulfill the ideological and political goals outlined by the Ministry of Education. This can be seen in the third unit, "It's Been Such a Lovely Evening," which explores the differences in Chinese and Western dining etiquette. Through carefully crafted questions and assignments, students not only learn about the cultural depth behind business practices but also develop their ability to communicate these ideas effectively in English. This unit, therefore, serves as a practical example of how ideological education can be naturally integrated into traditional Business English instruction, cultivating cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication alongside linguistic proficiency.

#### **3.2.1. Question Introduction: Fostering Intercultural Awareness**

Lessons often begin with engaging activities designed to introduce students to contrasting cultural

perspectives, stimulating critical thinking and communication skills. One example is the use of visual stimuli, such as photographs of different dining experiences (buffets, Chinese banquets, Western meals, and fast-food restaurants), to spark discussions about the cultural nuances of food preferences and dining etiquette. These activities encourage students to articulate their observations in English, fostering intercultural awareness and sensitivity. This is commonly done by asking a question or several questions at the beginning of learning to activate schemata.

Question introduction is a common way used by teachers at the beginning of a new class, which can activate the atmosphere of the whole class, a good question can make the students active and fully stimulate their interest in learning English. To set appropriate questions for students, teachers should help students develop a growth mindset as they need to learn by themselves during university period, thus getting rid of their dependence on teachers. Foreign scholar and famous psychologist Carol Dweck, and professor Angela Duckworth analyzed growth mindset and grit from psychological point to tell the students that success does not only rely on IQ and appearance, but also perseverance, and students should be well prepared for future difficulties and challenges.

In the third unit, the author introduces the class content by asking questions supplemented by relevant pictures. The author first shows students four pictures of different diets, namely buffet, Chinese food, Western food and fast food, which leads to the discussion of Chinese and Western diets and leaves a clear and vivid impression to students. In this session, the teacher should be a good guide to break down the teaching objectives through one question after another, so as to let the students deeply understand the ideological and political elements of this unit. For example, while students are looking at the pictures, let them discuss in groups what type of food each picture corresponds to, and which picture's food is the most suitable for entertaining Chinese clients and give the corresponding reasons. And the whole process should be expressed by students in English. This is a good way to practice students' oral expression skills and develop their growth mindset. At the same time, let other students make supplements: what are the advantages of Western food? Why is Chinese food most suitable for entertaining Chinese customers? How much is food wasted behind Chinese table manners?

For example, in the first question, a student's answer is that the advantages of Western food are simplicity, elegance and quietness, while Chinese food is more lively and suitable for entertaining guests to express their welcome. However, Chinese people love to face-saving, when inviting guests, especially important guests for dinner, they will order more food to show their respect for the guests without considering whether they can eat the food or not. Therefore, food waste has become a common problem on Chinese dinner table. As this kind of topic is closely related to students' daily life, it is easy to attract their attention and the classroom atmosphere will be very relaxed. After the discussions, students can understand the situation of food waste in China naturally and have a concept in their mind, but it is not very strong yet.

### **3.2.2. Thematic Refinement: Cultivating National Values**

Building upon these introductory discussions, the textbook delves into the theme of food conservation, highlighting its importance within Chinese society. This is often achieved through guided classroom debates and comparative analyses that explore the cultural values of face-saving and pragmatism in relation to Chinese and Western dining practices. This exploration highlights the prevalence of lavish banquets in China, often leading to food waste, and encourages reflection on the importance of sustainable practices. By contrasting these practices, the textbook emphasizes the value of prudence and conservation within Chinese culture, aligning with socialist core values of honesty and dedication (Ministry of Education, 2020)[1]. Additionally, visual aids, such as documentaries focusing on food waste in China, further enhance comprehension and instill a sense of urgency regarding these values.

The session of question introduction can effectively arouse students' recognition of saving food, and in the subsequent teaching session, teachers and students also have a consensus, which naturally transits to the next session, i.e., the learning of the text content. Before starting teaching, the teaching objectives should be clearly defined and combined with the content of the textbook. Teachers should design good topics so that students can fully participate in the classroom activities of values

exploration. Taking Business English videos, audios and passages as the medium, the course digs the ideological and political elements in the teaching content, and refines the core values of socialism (patriotism, dedication, honesty, friendliness, etc.). For this reason, teachers must, through the in-depth analysis of the content, allow students to gain a sense of understanding beyond knowledge, to achieve the purpose of ideological and political education in a natural way and obtain effective influence (Wu Yan 2019; Yue Manman, Liu Zhengguang 2020)[5-6].

In this unit, the teacher first lets students read the article to master the background information. Then students find out that the theme is business etiquette that needs to be paid attention to when entertaining clients, and the main sentence of one paragraph is "In China, banquets are hosted with varying degrees of extravagance, usually in a restaurant." This refines the theme: when it comes to entertaining guests, Westerners usually eat more simply, while Chinese banquets are more formal and elaborate. Here come the questions: Why is extravagance at dinner quite common in China? What may happen to customers if they order more than they can eat in Western countries? Teachers can incorporate ideological elements into the course from the difference between Chinese and Western food cultures, pragmatism or face-saving. Chinese people are hospitable, which is manifested in their food, i.e. food should be rich in variety, followed by large quantity, without caring whether they can finish it or not. The Westerners, on the other hand, emphasizes pragmatism. They order food on demand rather than quantities.

The realization of this process requires teachers to be very familiar with the content of the textbook and pay attention to each lesson, thinking about how to rationally connect the values of food conservation to the text. Meanwhile, teachers should pay attention to refine the correct values hidden in the content and inspire students to think the problem from a different perspective, triggering the students' "intellectual resonance, emotional resonance, and value resonance" (Cheng JiaoLin, 2020:33)[7]. Here, we can also show a video on the current situation of food waste in China, 460 million tons of food being wasted every year, which can satisfy the food needs of 190 million people in a year. This will further make students realize the importance of saving food and help them establish the value of food conservation.

### **3.2.3. Summary and Evaluation--Enhancing Students' Value Awareness of Food Conservation**

The integration of ideological elements within the "Business English: Viewing, Listening, and Speaking" curriculum aims to cultivate students' awareness of national values and promote critical reflection on cultural differences. One example is the focus on food conservation, where students engage in discussions about Chinese and Western dining practices. Through these discussions, guided by teachers, students analyze the cultural significance of different dining customs and explore the issue of food waste, particularly within a Chinese context. This process encourages students to engage with the traditional virtue of food conservation and to reflect on its relevance to their own values. After these discussions, students are encouraged to synthesize the main ideas, make connections between different perspectives, and express their own understanding of the topic. This promotes critical thinking and encourages them to internalize the discussed values, applying them both within the academic setting and beyond (Wu Yan, 2019)[5]. Teachers also encourage peer evaluation, allowing students to provide constructive feedback to each other and further solidify their learning. This fosters a greater sense of responsibility and a commitment to promoting positive societal change.

Students' reflective journal entries and feedback from focus group discussions highlight the effectiveness of this approach. One student wrote, "The discussions helped me realize how much food we waste in China, and it made me think about how to be more mindful of my own consumption." Another student noted, "I learned that food conservation is not just about saving money but also about respecting our resources and protecting our environment." Teachers confirmed these observations, noting that students were actively engaged in the discussions and demonstrated a greater awareness of the social and environmental implications of food waste. "The students were really engaged in the discussions and brought up a lot of interesting points," said one teacher. "It was clear that they were thinking critically about the issue of food waste and its connection to Chinese culture."

To enhance the impact of these lessons, teachers utilize various strategies. After group discussions,

students are encouraged to synthesize the main ideas and make connections between the different perspectives presented. This promotes critical thinking and encourages students to express their own understanding of the topic. Furthermore, teachers encourage peer evaluation, allowing students to provide constructive feedback to each other and further solidify their learning. This approach ensures that students internalize the values discussed, fostering a greater sense of responsibility and a commitment to promoting positive societal change.

#### 4. Conclusion

The effective intertwining of ideological and political education within Business English curricula enhances students' proficiency in English and business acumen while also fostering a deeper understanding of their national identity and cultural values. This interdisciplinary approach, which seamlessly integrates ideological elements into the teaching of practical skills, has been met with positive feedback from both students and teachers, suggesting its practical and effective nature. Teachers play a pivotal role in this process, acting as both conduits of knowledge and guides for cultivating a sense of civic responsibility. By fostering compliance with national educational mandates and promoting a deeper resonance with national values, teachers create environments where students develop professional proficiency while embracing a robust sense of cultural identity and civic responsibility.

This study examines the connection between course ideology-politics and "Business English: Viewing, Listening, and Speaking" through a case study of the third unit. The findings indicate that successful integration requires teachers to: 1) deeply identify with socialist values and be passionate about their teaching, 2) possess solid academic knowledge and be well-versed in the textbook content, and 3) actively create a classroom environment that facilitates the exploration of ideological elements within the context of specialized knowledge. This encourages students to reflect on their own values and understanding of their role in society, fostering a deeper sense of national identity and responsibility.

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