

Integrating Ideological and Political Education with Critical Thinking Development in *English for Graduate Students*: A Pedagogical Exploration

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Abstract

This study uses the course *English for Graduate Students* as a case study to explore specific strategies for integrating ideological and political dimensions and critical thinking into English language instruction. The objective is to develop a cohesive approach that interweaves foreign language education, ideological and political engagement, and the cultivation of critical thinking skills. This research aspires to provide valuable insights into enhancing students' critical thinking by foregrounding ideological and political elements within course texts. By doing so, it seeks to subtly shape students' worldview, life outlook, and values while promoting political identity, cultural self-confidence, and personal development within foreign language education.

Keywords

English for Graduate Students, Ideological and Political Elements, Critical Thinking

1. Introduction

In recent decades, critical thinking has gained increasing recognition in higher education, both domestically and internationally, and English teaching is no exception. Concurrently, the Ministry of Education has issued the *Guiding Outline for the Ideological and Political Construction of Curriculum in Colleges and Universities* (hereinafter referred to as the *Outline*), reinforcing the fundamental mission of fostering moral development and nurturing well-rounded individuals in higher education institutions. The *Outline* stipulates that ideological and political

education within curricula should emphasize key aspects, such as political identity, national consciousness, cultural literacy, constitutional and legal awareness, and moral development. It further highlights the need to systematically instill socialist core values and reinforce students' ideals and beliefs. Liu (2021) argues that embedding ideological and political education in foreign language curricula at the university level is integral to the nation's future development. Her research synthesizes studies from the macro, meso, and micro levels within the foreign language field over the past three years, exploring how fostering critical thinking can guide students in engaging with broader societal issues. She contends that this pedagogical approach aids students in developing a well-founded understanding of socialist values, fostering a deep-seated connection to national identity and responsibility. The emphasis placed by academic circles on the intersection of critical thinking skills and ideological-political education within English curricula will continue to shape both theoretical and practical advancements in integrating these domains effectively.

Based on the thematic design of teaching activities centered on textual content, combined with the incorporation of multimedia-based skill-building exercises, this study integrates curriculum-based ideological and political instruction with the development of students' critical thinking skills. This integration is achieved through structured language input and the presentation of student work, with the broader objective of advancing teaching methodologies, fostering diverse competencies, and reinforcing the pedagogical principle of character development through education. This study identifies the ideological and political dimensions embedded within the curriculum, establishes clear instructional objectives, curates relevant multimedia materials, and formulates structured teaching activities. Together, these elements form a dynamic, closed-loop instructional model encompassing curriculum-based multimedia-driven cognitive exercises, student achievement presentations, and evaluative feedback.

This approach represents a practical application of the BIPA model (Liu, 2021) and the "four-in-one" curriculum-based ideological and political instruction framework (Zhang & Wang, 2021). This model prioritizes value shaping as its core, integrating values into language learning through thematic tasks. Knowledge transmission and capability development are intertwined to enhance students' language proficiency and critical thinking skills. Task-driven learning engages students in practical activities that promote active learning and application of both language and values. This holistic approach emphasizes value shaping supported by knowledge and capability development, all driven by meaningful tasks. Furthermore, the selection of multimedia resources aligned with the core themes of the primary texts serves as an effective mechanism for integrating educational principles into both language acquisition and critical thinking exercises. This structured approach facilitates students' transition from passive "material users" to active "material analysts" through a synthesis of classroom engagement and independent study, as well as input-output learning cycles. Ultimately, this meth-

odology strengthens students' confidence in Chinese cultural narratives while nurturing cross-cultural competence and fostering an appreciation for multicultural inclusivity.

2. Literature Review

This section first examines existing research on curriculum-based ideological and political instruction, followed by an analysis of scholarly work related to the cultivation of critical thinking in English language education. Additionally, it briefly reviews studies exploring the intersection of these two domains. The final segment identifies a research gap within the literature, establishing the foundation for the present study.

2.1. Studies on Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Instruction in Domestic and International Contexts

The introduction of *China's Education Modernization 2035* presents new challenges for talent development. Additionally, in 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the *Outline*, underscoring that “curriculum-based ideological and political teaching” is a fundamental responsibility of all educators, aiming to systematically advance ideological and political instruction in higher education and fulfill the fundamental mission of cultivating virtue through education. The *Outline* emphasizes that ideological and political teaching should prioritize key areas such as political identity, national consciousness, cultural literacy, constitutional and legal awareness, and moral development.

Scholars have primarily examined “curriculum-based ideological and political teaching” in English education from both macro and micro perspectives. At the macro level, research has focused on defining the conceptual framework of curriculum-based ideological and political instruction and identifying embedded ideological and political elements (Cai, 2021; Wen, 2021). Wen (2021) articulates the conceptual framework of ideological and political instruction within foreign language courses as follows: “Led by foreign language instructors, the principles of moral cultivation are seamlessly embedded into various dimensions of foreign language teaching, including course content, classroom management, assessment structures, and teachers' interactions and conduct. This integration is dedicated to playing a constructive role in shaping students' worldviews, life perspectives, and value systems, demonstrating that curriculum-based ideological and political instruction is a vital component of holistic education”.

Additional studies explore curriculum structure and course clustering (Wang, 2021) as well as pedagogical models, such as Liu's (2021) BIPA model (Course Background, Input Course Content, Process Teaching Process, and Assessment Teaching Evaluation) and Zhang & Wang's (2021) “Top-level design-excavation of materials-refinement process-innovative evaluation” framework. At the micro level, scholars and educators have investigated specific strategies for integrating curriculum-based ideological and political instruction into English teaching, often

aligning these approaches with specific textbooks or courses to develop curriculum-informed ideological and political teaching designs (Xiao & Huang, 2021). However, empirical research on systematically embedding ideological and political elements into instructional practices remains limited. In particular, studies evaluating the effectiveness of curriculum-based ideological and political instruction are insufficient, leaving a gap in understanding its practical outcomes.

Furthermore, the integration of ideological and political instruction into teaching material development has emerged as a prominent research focus. Key areas of investigation include embedding ideological and political content in primary and secondary education curricula, defining principles for incorporating ideological and political elements into textbook design (Sun, 2019), and constructing textbooks informed by curriculum-based ideological and political principles (Wang, 2018; Wang, 2021). Yet despite these advancements, no comprehensive set of textbooks has been specifically compiled with the explicit aim of fostering moral development while serving as a dedicated ideological and political curriculum resource. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to have the awareness of exploring the ideological and political elements in existing English textbooks.

Compared to research conducted in China, empirical studies on this topic are more prevalent in international contexts. For instance, LePage et al. (2011) investigate how teachers conceptualize morality and implement moral education to support students' ethical development in Türkiye and the United States. Similarly, Asif et al. (2020) employ a mixed-method research approach to examine moral concepts, pedagogical strategies, and underlying rationales among English instructors in Chinese and Pakistani universities. Moreover, researchers have applied diverse theoretical frameworks to explore this subject. For example, while Wu & Navera (2017) use evaluation theory to examine the integration of values in secondary school English teaching materials. These empirical studies offer valuable methodological and theoretical insights for domestic scholars and educators seeking to conduct empirical research on curriculum-based ideological and political instruction.

2.2. Relevant Studies on Critical Thinking Ability

Critical thinking skills in higher education encompass abstract reasoning, logical analysis, effective argument evaluation, and the ability to engage in reflective judgment. Over the past two decades, scholars have increasingly focused on fostering students' critical thinking abilities. Research in this domain can be categorized into three areas: defining the sub-skills of critical thinking, constructing assessment models, and investigating pedagogical approaches to critical thinking development in higher education. Regarding sub-skills, various models have been proposed. In the area of assessment, researchers have developed critical thinking evaluation scales, such as the Cambridge Thinking Skills Assessment (CTSA) and Wen et al.'s (2009) model. Additionally, scholars have explored strategies for cultivating critical thinking within university curricula. For instance, Wen et al.

(2010) argue that traditional English curricula focused primarily on language proficiency hinder students' cognitive development and higher-order thinking skills.

In defining and conceptualizing critical thinking, scholars frequently highlight the fundamental role of thinking quality. For instance, [Facione et al. \(2000\)](#) assert that thinking qualities represent an individual's intrinsic cognitive tendencies, which influence how they habitually interpret, evaluate, and respond to people, events, and their environment. In practice, learning is shaped by intrinsic motivation; thus, fostering students' internal drive to employ critical thinking as an essential analytical tool enhances their ability to master these skills. This connection between intrinsic motivation and intellectual engagement underscores the inseparability of critical thinking skills and thinking quality. [Paul and Elder \(2005\)](#) argue that the ultimate goal of critical thinking instruction should be character development. They distinguish between those who merely possess critical thinking skills and those who embody the intellectual virtues of an impartial critical thinker. Impartial critical thinkers exhibit intellectual humility, empathy, rationality, integrity, courage, and autonomous reasoning. Similarly, [Delibove \(2005\)](#) contends that while American higher education institutions have long emphasized critical thinking, students' overall proficiency remains inadequate. One of the primary reasons for this shortfall, according to Delibove, is the artificial separation of critical thinking instruction from character development, treating the two as distinct, skill-based training programs. Research suggests that bridging this divide could serve as a key strategy for improving students' critical thinking abilities.

Since the 1980s, Chinese academic circles have progressively acknowledged the importance of researching critical thinking abilities among foreign language learners. Over the past two decades, theoretical advancements in China have led to the development of influential models for critical thinking, assessment frameworks, and pedagogical strategies aimed at cultivating students' critical thinking skills ([Feng, 2015](#)). From a practical perspective, numerous scholars have explored various approaches to teaching critical thinking to English majors, drawing on diverse course examples and instructional perspectives. In addition to language skills training, the teaching of English is guided by ability training, with attention paid towards cultivating both comprehensive language application skills and critical thinking abilities. Although national standards have underscored the significance of integrating theory with practice in developing students' critical thinking, most frontline English educators tend to prioritize critical thinking skills while overlooking an equally essential component—thinking quality. These two aspects of critical thinking are inherently interconnected. To ensure that students internalize critical thinking as a habitual cognitive tool, enabling them to align with socialist core values when engaging in interpersonal interactions and decision-making processes, educators must emphasize the cultivation of thinking quality alongside technical skills.

2.3. Relationship between Critical Thinking and Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Teaching

The *Outline* further stresses the necessity of systematically integrating socialist core values into the curriculum to reinforce students' ideological commitment and belief systems. These ideological and political dimensions outlined in the *Outline* are closely linked to the concept of thinking quality, which is an essential component of critical thinking ability. As students engage in critical thinking skills training, it is advisable to help them seek to demonstrate, thorough inductive and deductive means, the merits and cause of ideology as future contributors to socialist society, uphold core socialist values, and inherit China's rich cultural traditions. This intellectual foundation should serve as the guiding principle for students to cultivate discernment and ethical judgment, ensuring that critical thinking is applied effectively and responsibly. Consequently, critical thinking is not merely a set of cognitive skills that can be taught and acquired; it is also intrinsically connected to moral education.

Given this interrelationship between critical thinking and curriculum-based ideological and political instruction, and considering the objective of fostering talent with Chinese characteristics, critical thinking can be defined as the systematic and rational evaluative capacity that individuals develop within social interactions—an ability that is inseparable from ethical reasoning. Foreign language educators, while teaching linguistic and cultural knowledge, should prioritize moral education, reinforcing the overarching goal of cultivating virtue through instruction and enhancing students' critical thinking abilities in this context. The advancement of critical thinking skills, in turn, reciprocally strengthens moral consciousness, as the two processes are mutually reinforcing. Concomitantly, it becomes essential that we explore effective ways to organically integrate critical thinking development with curriculum-based ideological and political teaching, thereby nurturing future socialist successors who prioritize ethical integrity, commit to lifelong learning, and integrate theoretical knowledge with practical action. This approach ultimately contributes to the modernization of China's education system.

In summary, while the integration of critical thinking skills with ideological and political elements in educational practice has garnered significant attention from the academic community, there remain areas requiring further refinement. Specifically, two key aspects necessitate improvement. First, there is an absence of a systematically designed curriculum-based ideological and political framework within existing textbooks. Consequently, it is essential to analyze and identify ideological and political elements already embedded in current teaching materials while incorporating additional content that has not yet been addressed. This expansion would ensure a more comprehensive alignment with the principles of curriculum-based ideological and political instruction. Second, research examining the intersection of curriculum-based ideological and political instruction with the development of critical thinking skills remains notably underexplored. The

integration of critical thinking cultivation within ideological and political education presents a novel perspective for the construction of teaching materials. Unlike other disciplines, language instruction is inherently linked to cultural and political ideologies, functioning as a medium for social and cultural reproduction. Therefore, drawing upon Liu's BIPA model (2021) and Zhang & Wang's (2021) "Four-in-One" framework for curriculum-based ideological and political instruction, this study aims to explore a cohesive approach to integrating these components into English instruction for graduate students. The objective is to facilitate the seamless incorporation of ideological and political education within the curriculum while systematically fostering students' critical thinking abilities.

3. An Integrated Teaching Model for Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Instruction in Conjunction with Critical Thinking Cultivation for the Course of *English for Graduate Students*

3.1. An Overview of the Course *English for Graduate Students*

The course *English for Graduate Students* is a compulsory public course for graduate students, and its design is influenced by national education policies. The *National Standards for the Teaching Quality of Foreign Language and Literature in China* specify key instructional requirements for English courses. These include structuring teaching units around thematic content, integrating elements of language, literature, translation, and cultural knowledge, and employing communicative language tasks to enhance students' proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. Classic themes are utilized to provide insights into the historical and cultural landscapes of English-speaking nations, while contemporary topics are incorporated to reflect societal progress and modern civilization. The ultimate objective is to equip students with the ability to apply their linguistic knowledge effectively in real-world communication. Moreover, students are expected to leverage their acquired knowledge and linguistic competencies to critically engage with contemporary issues, discuss real-world challenges, articulate well-reasoned opinions, and refine their critical thinking skills. Given the structured nature of the course—encompassing systematic knowledge acquisition, comprehensive skill development, and the enhancement of cognitive abilities—it provides an effective framework for embedding ideological and political education while systematically fostering students' critical thinking capabilities.

3.2. An Integrated Teaching Model

Language inexorably functions as a fundamental medium for developing higher-order cognitive skills. In language instruction, this implies that students do not merely acquire linguistic proficiency for its own sake but rather as a means of enhancing their analytical and reasoning abilities, extending beyond the confines of the language classroom (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Sun (2019) posits that "language skills without critical thinking ability are poor language skills, and they

can neither understand nor produce texts/discourses with rich meaning and logical rigor”. In alignment with this perspective, Sun proposes eight guiding principles for Critical English Teaching (TERRIFIC): Target, Evaluate, Routinize, Reflect, Inquire, Fulfill, Integrate, and Content. Based on these principles, educators should implement innovative instructional strategies across all facets of English teaching for graduate students. The objective is to enhance students’ linguistic proficiency while concurrently developing their critical thinking skills, ultimately improving the overall quality of talent cultivation.

It is important to emphasize and remind educators that curriculum-based ideological and political instruction in English education should adhere to the fundamental educational policy of fostering virtue through education. Throughout the instructional process, educators must create opportunities for students to critically engage with Western cultural representations found in textbooks. Through meaningful classroom interactions—both between teachers and students and among students themselves—learners can actively engage in the processes of targeting, evaluating, routinizing, reflecting, inquiring, fulfilling, integrating, and analyzing content. This structured approach enables students to develop independent judgment, achieve the explicit learning objectives of acquiring subject knowledge, professional competencies, and cultural literacy, and enhance critical thinking capabilities, including reasoning, articulation, and communication skills. Moreover, this pedagogical approach facilitates the implicit learning objectives of foreign language education, which encompass political identity formation, cultural confidence, and personal development.

4. The Integration of Ideological and Political Elements and the Cultivation of Critical Thinking Ability through the Teaching of *English for Graduate Students*: A Case Study

The course “English for Graduate Students” encompasses both explicit and implicit educational objectives. While advancing students’ professional knowledge base and enhancing their critical thinking abilities, it is also essential to emphasize political identity, national consciousness, cultural literacy, legal awareness, and moral development. Currently, the textbook used at the authors’ institution is the *Comprehensive Course*, compiled by Xiong Haihong, which covers a diverse range of topics, including English language, literature, culture, science and technology, society, and history. The majority of the texts within this course consist of explanatory or argumentative essays. Educators can effectively integrate ideological and political elements by carefully structuring lesson plans. By comparing linguistic, literary, and cultural similarities and differences between China and foreign nations, students can engage in a more nuanced exploration of civilizations, fostering a balanced and objective perspective on both Chinese and global cultures. This pedagogical approach not only cultivates intellectual curiosity but also refines students’ appreciation for cultural diversity in a subtle yet profound manner. Additionally, the incorporation of relevant Chinese literary and cultural materials

aligned with the themes of the texts can further strengthen students' awareness of their own cultural heritage. This strategy ultimately supports the development of a well-rounded worldview and reinforces students' values regarding life, society, and morality.

The subsequent section presents a case study derived from the textbook to demonstrate how ideological and political elements can be identified within the text and how critical thinking skills can be cultivated through instructional design. Unit 4, titled "Love and Loving Relationship", examines contemporary American attitudes toward marriage and the ways in which marriage is navigated in modern society. The essay delves into the complexities of love, exploring its multiple dimensions—including romantic love, familial love, and self-love—as well as the challenges and rewards associated with fostering healthy relationships. The author seeks to persuade readers to develop a rational perspective on marriage, approach marital challenges thoughtfully, and strive to build fulfilling relationships. Within this context, students' critical thinking skills can be developed through a variety of instructional activities.

Building upon Sun's (2019) TERRIFIC Framework, the following section outlines a tentative application of this framework to the teaching of this unit, with necessary adjustments in the sequencing of specific steps.

A step-by-step task-based (Willis, 1996) process used to implement the model is detailed as follows:

Pre-task: Introduction and Initial Exploration, where Target, Evaluate, Routinize, Reflect, and Inquire are involved. More specifically:

The teacher will introduce the learning objectives: 1) Language Skills: Enhance students' reading comprehension, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills; 2) Content Knowledge: Facilitate understanding of the different types of love and the characteristics of loving relationships; 3) Critical Awareness: Provoke critical reflections on societal norms, cultural values, and personal beliefs about love and relationships.

Then a pre-reading discussion will be conducted to evaluate students' previous knowledge on the topic of the text: "What does love mean to you" after watching a video of different interpretations of love by people of different ages from different countries. Students are also encouraged to write a reflective essay on their initial understanding of love and relationships, with peer review feedbacks on these essays organized.

While-task: Critical analysis of the text, with interdisciplinary connections to the wider context.

In this session, both Content and Inquiry and Integrate will be emphasized. In particular, Content mainly involves deepening understanding of the text. The teacher will start from structure analysis of the text and invite students to retell the main idea of each part, and organize activities that explore the themes of love and relationships in depth, such as creating mind maps. Then close reading activity will be conducted, where students analyze key passages from the text or con-

sider the author's choice of lexis and vocabulary, focusing on language, tone, and rhetorical strategies.

Furthermore, Inquiry plays an important role, mainly aiming to promote critical inquiry. During the process of close reading, the teacher can provide a set of critical questions to guide students' analysis of the text. Questions could include: "How does the author define love, and do you agree with this definition?", "What challenges do people face in maintaining loving relationships, according to the text?", "How does the text challenge or reinforce traditional views of love?"

Post-task: Reflection and evaluation

In this session, Integrate, Evaluate and Fulfill are applied.

Integrate is involved in this stage, mainly by connecting the text to its broader contexts. For instance, the teacher can invite student to participate in real-world application by facilitating a discussion on how the concepts of "love and relationship" can be applied to students' personal lives and future relationships. Another potentially interesting topic is people's perceptions of love and relationship globally and the social and cultural reasons behind. Students are invited to do a group presentation on these topics after research and group activities.

In terms of "Evaluate", the teacher will provide feedback on students' presentation, and discuss key take-ways from this unit. Based on the outcome of evaluation, the teacher can check whether students have fulfilled their learning objectives.

It should be noted that educators will be provided effective training and relevant multimedia materials such as videos or reading materials related to the topic of the text beforehand. All the teachers that teach this module will conduct routine meetings in advance, to discuss the appropriate procedures to implement this model, the combination with proper after-class reading materials rich in ideological and political elements related to the topic of the text, and approaches to provide effective feedback and assessment. Meanwhile, the School of Foreign Languages also provide necessary assistance. For instance, the School buys a multilingual corpus, which is highly beneficial for language learning as it provides a wealth of authentic language examples that enhance learners' understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and real-world usage. It offers tools for cross-cultural comparison and translation practice. Additionally, it serves as a valuable resource for educators to design teaching activities and conduct research. A multilingual corpus helps learners develop language skills and cultural awareness while providing intuitive insights into language patterns.

Compared with the traditional language instruction that focuses solely on language skills, it is noticeable that the integration of ideological and political education can enhance critical thinking in an all-around manner. To be more specific, by reflexively exploring the ideological and political elements embedded within the activities in this unit, particular emphasis can be placed on fostering students' cross-cultural awareness, deepening their understanding of the differences between Chinese and Western perspectives on marriage and love, and encouraging

them to develop a well-founded perspective on these concepts. Students can engage in comparative analyses of marital and romantic values in China and Western societies, discussing contemporary views on marriage among young people, the motivations for remaining single, and the advantages and disadvantages associated with various relationship choices. Additionally, discussions can explore prevalent societal phenomena such as fear of marriage, trial marriages, hidden marriages, and the increasing preference for non-marital lifestyles. These discussions should remain open-ended while maintaining a constructive and reflective orientation.

However, incorporating national or ideological narratives into language instruction requires a thoughtful and balanced approach to minimize potential biases. To address this, it is essential to carefully select a diverse range of materials that represent multiple perspectives and voices, ensuring that students are exposed to a variety of viewpoints rather than a single context. Additionally, fostering an environment that encourages critical thinking and open discussion can prompt students to question and analyze the sources of information and the underlying assumptions. By equipping students with the skills to recognize and challenge biases, and by promoting a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of language and culture, it is hoped to mitigate the potential for bias.

Furthermore, educators can guide students in contemplating and addressing potential challenges they may encounter in their future marriages. As highlighted in the text, marriage is inevitably accompanied by various difficulties, and effectively recognizing, mitigating, and resolving these issues is crucial. While navigating such challenges may not always be straightforward, a stable and harmonious marriage plays a fundamental role in the well-being of individuals, families, and society. To facilitate this understanding, students can be encouraged to deliberate on topics such as the significance of marriage for both men and women, the evolving roles of women in professional and domestic spheres, and the aspects of marriage that individuals find most challenging to tolerate. Teachers can prompt students to adopt a dialectical approach by considering perspectives related to social stability and prosperity, economic development, cultural traditions, legal reforms, personal growth, and familial well-being. Additionally, integrating discussions on core socialist values will help students cultivate a rational perspective on marriage and relationships, reinforce their awareness of familial and societal responsibilities, and prepare them for the commitments associated with marriage in the future.

In sum, through the design of the *English for Graduate Students* course, instructors should align their teaching strategies with national and societal development needs while systematically identifying the ideological and political dimensions embedded within the texts. It is essential to structure discussions in accordance with the themes of each unit, integrating students' academic disciplines and backgrounds into comparative analyses of Chinese and Western political, economic, historical, cultural, and legal systems. By critically engaging with ideolog-

ical and political themes, students can enhance their analytical and evaluative skills through comparison, debate, and judgment. This process not only fosters ideological awareness grounded in emotional understanding but also facilitates political identity formation, shaping students' values and strengthening their national consciousness.

From the perspective of critical thinking cultivation, the processes of identifying, analyzing, and evaluating are fundamental components of critical reasoning. Developing students' critical thinking skills enhances their self-confidence, self-awareness, and capacity for sound judgment across various academic disciplines and real-life situations. Effective ideological and political instruction aimed at fostering critical thinking should incorporate the following strategies: First, educators should pose thought-provoking and intellectually challenging questions. Second, it is essential to provide students with adequate time for reflection, thereby fostering their capacity for independent inquiry. Finally, students should be encouraged to engage in discussions, presentations, debates, and collaborative learning activities. Additionally, structured exercises such as surveys, competitions, and interactive exercises should be integrated to reinforce ideological and political elements through diverse instructional approaches. Students must learn to think autonomously, analyze issues critically, compare perspectives, distinguish key arguments, and articulate their insights from multiple viewpoints. This approach not only enhances the overall effectiveness of learning but also strengthens cognitive abilities, promotes the development of independent reasoning, reinforces national self-confidence, and prepares students to become high-caliber professionals with strong ideological and political awareness, advanced expertise, and a deep sense of historical responsibility.

5. Conclusion

Curriculum-based ideological and political instruction is not confined to a specific subject or course type; rather, it represents an overarching pedagogical philosophy. Graduate-level courses serve the dual purpose of imparting academic knowledge and fostering students' intellectual and ideological development. These courses play a crucial role in shaping students' worldview, life perspective, and value system. In postgraduate English education, it is imperative to integrate ideological and political instruction into an in-depth exploration of textbook content. This method not only facilitates the acquisition of English language proficiency but also concurrently cultivates students' moral awareness and ethical sensibility.

As a practical educational approach in postgraduate English instruction, curriculum-based ideological and political teaching should be systematically incorporated into future course designs. Educators must embed this pedagogical framework throughout the curriculum to cultivate future socialist contributors who embody a well-rounded development of moral character, intellectual competence, physical well-being, aesthetic appreciation, and a strong work ethic.

Furthermore, research on enhancing students' critical thinking abilities within

the field of foreign language education has yielded theoretical and practical innovations. However, the overall impact remains suboptimal. One contributing factor is that educators often neglect to incorporate both cognitive development and moral reasoning when fostering students' critical thinking skills. The issuance of the *Outline* presents an opportunity to reassess the instructional model used for training English majors in critical thinking. Educational philosophies must adapt to contemporary developments while considering the psychological foundations of Chinese culture. The pedagogical approach that integrates curriculum-based ideological and political instruction with critical thinking aligns with the cognitive framework of Chinese cultural traditions and embodies the scientific principles of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the modern era. The synthesis of these two educational dimensions is expected to further enhance students' cognitive development and moral values.

Since the approach is primarily theoretical at this stage, several steps are needed for testing and evaluating its practical application in a real classroom setting. Following this initial testing, subsequent rounds of testing should be conducted across varied classes to validate consistency and adaptability. However, several challenges are anticipated, including the complexity of students' individual differences and dynamic classroom environments. Other challenges include managing limited class time, ensuring student engagement, and requiring teachers to adeptly integrate ideological elements into language instruction. Addressing these challenges will require collaboration among educators, researchers, and students to ensure successful implementation and continuous improvement.

To sum up, this study serves as an initial exploratory effort in integrating curriculum-based ideological and political instruction with critical thinking in the *English for Graduate Students* course and, as such, is not exhaustive in its scope. Nevertheless, given demographic challenges in China, influence of globalization and Western neoliberal commercialization on social fabrics and institutions such as marriage and normative sociocultural behaviors, it is hoped that this research will provide a foundation for the broader application of this integrated teaching model, ultimately benefiting a wider student population.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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