



A Study on the Innovative Practice of the Ideological-Political Instruction of Foreign Language Majors in the Era of New Liberal Arts

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Abstract

After China enters the new era, higher education is moving towards a new stage of high-quality development and construction, in which “the ideological-political instruction” plays a key role. Since foreign language majors are more exposed to foreign discourses, cultures and thoughts, they have their distinctive characteristics in ideological-political instruction. As an important part of the ideological-political instruction, the ideological-political instruction of foreign language courses is of great significance to the construction of the quality system of higher education development in the new era, and it also plays an important role in the strategic structure of the construction of new liberal arts. The article focuses on the ideological-political instruction in curricula of foreign language majors in the era of the construction of new liberal arts and discusses the concepts, principles, current problems and implementation paths of the ideological-political construction of foreign language courses from the three aspects of connotation and goals, current situation and existing problems as well as innovative paths and strategies. It aims to provide a reference path for the ideological and political construction of foreign language courses.

Subject Areas

Language Education

Keywords

New Liberal Arts, Foreign Language Majors, The Ideological-Political Instruction, Innovative Practice

1. Introduction

At the end of April 2019, 13 government departments, including the Ministry of Education, officially launched the “six excellence and one top-notch” plan 2.0, proposing the construction of New Engineering, New Medicine, New Agriculture and New Liberal Arts must be comprehensively promoted. Among them, the New Liberal Arts are supposed to promote the connotative development of higher education in China and win the battle to revitalize undergraduate education in an all-around way so as to further improve the service ability and contribution level of education to society [1]. Different from the traditional liberal arts, the new liberal arts promote the innovative development of liberal arts education through interdisciplinary integration and cultivate applied compound talents to meet the needs of national social development. In the construction of new liberal arts, foreign language education is in a special position connecting China and the world. Language is the carrier of human civilization, so foreign language learning is not only language learning but a medium for students to contact the world, and students are exposed to the value and ideologies of the West during the process of language learning [2]. Therefore, how correctly guiding students to understand the differences in cultural ideology between China and Western countries by applying Marxist philosophy and enabling students to establish national and cultural self-confidence are the focus of the ideological-political construction of foreign language courses, which can greatly promote the cultivation of application talents with strong political quality and international vision who can become a bridge between Chinese and foreign cultures and tell Chinese stories well. At the same time, the ideological and political curriculum of foreign language majors puts forward higher requirements for foreign language teachers: foreign language teachers should not only be familiar with Western ideology and culture, but also have the ability to have firm ideals and beliefs, being good at teaching, and guiding the value of students in a way to moisten things silently. Taking the new liberal arts as the background, this paper makes a progressive explanation from three aspects: the connotation and goal, the current situation and existing problems as well as the innovative path and strategy of the ideological-political instruction of foreign language courses.

2. The Connotation and Goal

In December 2016, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the National College Ideological and Political Work Conference that it was necessary to do a good job of ideological and political education in colleges and universities with classroom teaching as the main channel. “All other courses should also play their roles well and fulfill their responsibilities”, so various types of professional courses should give full play to the ideological and political education function of the curriculum and achieve the goal of “All kinds of professional courses and ideological and political theory courses are in the same direction, forming a synergistic effect” [3]. In the context of the party and the country’s comprehensive

promotion of new liberal arts education in the new era, Wu Yan, director of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of education, proposed a new path for foreign language education from March 22 to 24, 2019. He believes that great attention should be paid to the important role of foreign language education in accelerating the construction of socialist cultural power in the new era, strengthening national cultural soft power, enhancing China's influence and appeal in the world and disseminating Chinese ideas. "High quality" has become a key word in the construction of foreign language higher education. In addition, one of the hot topics of the "two sessions" just held in 2021 is to promote the high-quality development of higher education, strive to improve the quality of undergraduate education, strengthen the construction of first-class universities and disciplines, so as to link the cultivation of talents in higher education with the major strategic needs of the country, and train successors for the construction of socialism in the new era. On March 20, 2021, at the fifth national high-end forum on foreign language education reform and development in Colleges and universities, director Wu Yan of the Department of higher education of the Ministry of education comprehensively explained the cultivation of high-quality foreign language talents in Beijing with the background of new liberal arts, which has injected new connotation and objectives into the ideological-political instruction of foreign language courses under the background of the new liberal arts.

2.1. The Connotation: Integration, Comprehension and Going Global

Instead of simply opening a course or holding some activities, curriculum politics is a classroom concept that integrates ideological and political education in specialized courses. Although there are different opinions on the connotation of curriculum politics in academic circles, the basic point of view is consistent; that is, curriculum politics is a new era curriculum view that emphasizes the excavation of ideological and political education resources of various professional courses in colleges and universities [4]. "Curriculum politics" is to extend the ideological and political education in colleges and universities from the main channel of ideological and political curriculum to all majors [5]. On this basis, the ideological and political education of foreign language curriculum develops its own "carrying capacity", "linkage force" and "influence". The three "forces" interact with each other, and the "trinity" relationship is shown in **Figure 1** below.

In **Figure 1**, "carrying capacity", namely "Sinicization" of foreign language education, is the first major element of the ideological and political connotation of foreign language courses. Firstly, it's necessary to make sure that foreign language education is under the leadership of the party. Only in this way can it take deep root in the socialist theory with Chinese characteristics and unswervingly follow the road of foreign language education development in line with Chinese characteristics. Secondly, foreign language education should pay attention to the universal law of foreign language education theory all over the world and the

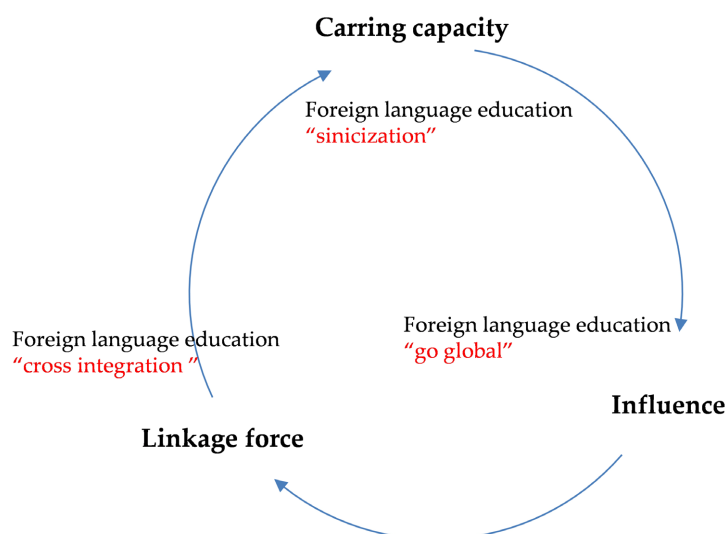


Figure 1. The connotation of “three forces”.

special law of countries' differences. And then, combined with the national conditions of foreign language education in China and the characteristics of foreign language subjects, it can accurately and selectively introduce western foreign language teaching theories, so as to proceed from objective reality and teach students in accordance with their aptitude, so that foreign language education can carry the essence of China. “Linkage force” is the “cross integration” of foreign language education, which is the second major element in the ideological and political connotation of foreign language curriculum and the key to the connotative development of foreign language education. The ternary space theory divides the world into the physical world, spiritual world and information world. Language plays an important fundamental role in each spatial connection, accounting for 80% of the carrier of information and knowledge, which shows the significant position of language in the connection between disciplines [6]. Foreign languages have the advantage of being able to connect with most disciplines. In particular, they can interact with major humanities and social sciences disciplines, thus, breaking discipline barriers and integrating them into each other have become the general trend of foreign language education in the future. The training goal has changed from focusing solely on language ability to the training of applied talents with both language and professional knowledge, fully serving the national opening-up strategy and the construction needs of the “Belt and Road”. “Influence” refers to the “going global” of foreign language education, which is the third element in the ideological and political connotation of foreign language curriculum and the strategic height that foreign language education should reach on the basis of the first two elements. Language is the carrier of human civilization in the world and has a strong ideological influence. Thus, developing foreign language education has become the consensus of the world. Foreign language education is the key to promoting “Chinese culture”, “Chinese wisdom” and “Chinese programs” to go global. And foreign language

education can tell Chinese stories well to the world by: on the one hand, cultivating domestic compound and innovative foreign language talents; on the other hand, recruiting foreign students to learn excellent traditional Chinese ideology and culture.

2.2. The Goal: Moral Education, Comprehensive Training and Cultural Exchange

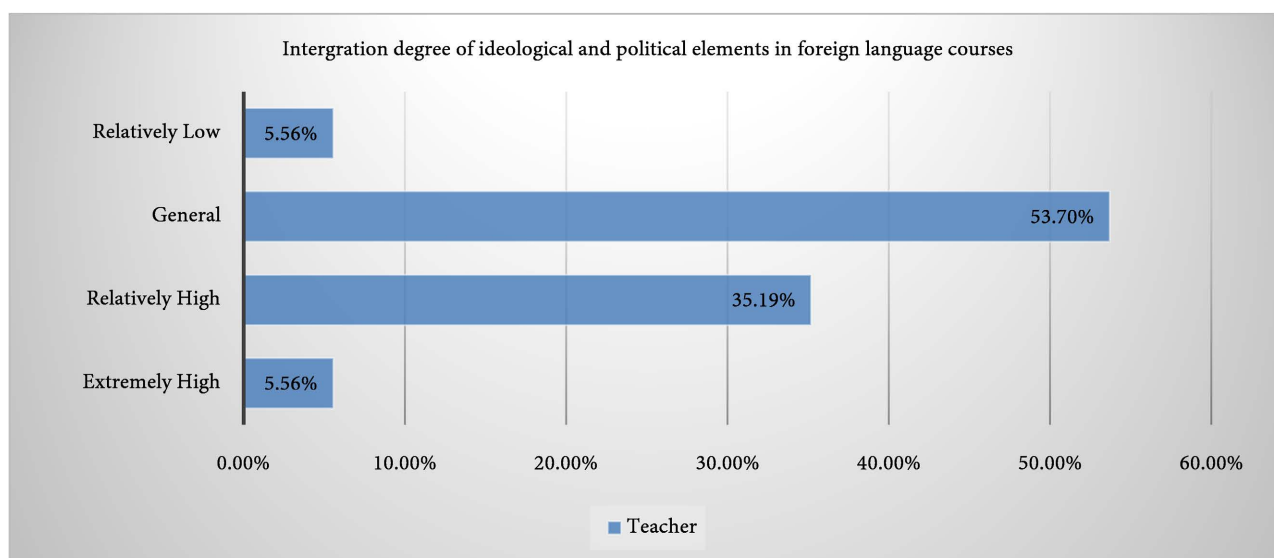
“What kind of students to cultivate”, “how to cultivate” and “for whom to cultivate” are issues that should be attached importance to today’s disciplines education. We should not only focus on the teaching of professional knowledge, but also on the cultivation of ideology and morality. “Moral education” is the fundamental task of education and also the underlying goal of ideological and political education in foreign language courses. The core of curriculum politics lies in “educating”. So, on the premise of establishing firm faith, teachers should build awareness of educating people and constantly improve their ability to educate. From the classroom content, teachers can extract value paradigms such as patriotism, humanistic care and cultural self-confidence and guide students to establish correct world outlook, outlook on life and values, so as to achieve ideological and political education’s purpose of educating people morally. Specifically, the ideological and political goals of foreign languages courses lie in three aspects. First, the fundamental goal of moral education should be clarified, and the new era pattern of the development of foreign language education should be constructed with the focus on educating moral talents. It’s necessary to excavate the ideological and political resources related to “truth, goodness and beauty” in the course content, deeply explore the useful moral elements, and organically combine them with relevant cutting-edge knowledge of foreign language major, so ideological and political education can play its role of moral education. Secondly, the goal is to promote the cross integration of foreign language and other disciplines and change the current situation of single foreign language teaching. The construction of cross disciplines such as “foreign language + major” and “foreign language + foreign language” can be strengthened to meet the needs of students’ development and promote their all-round development of knowledge, literacy and ability, so as to cultivate compound foreign language innovative talents who can integrate their own major and similar majors. Thirdly, foreign language education should give full play to its disciplinary advantages. So, the cultivation of students’ international vision and cross-cultural ability need to be laid emphasis to make students a cultural communication bridge that can tell Chinese stories and spread Chinese culture to the world. Thus, it can cultivate excellent foreign-related talents for China to strengthen the exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries, promote the external dissemination of Chinese culture and Chinese thought, and then effectively promote the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

3. The Present Situation and Existing Problems

In order to effectively understand the current situation and existing problems of ideological and political education of foreign language courses, the author conducted a questionnaire survey on teachers and students in some well-known normal colleges, comprehensive colleges and foreign language colleges in China. Questionnaires were distributed through the Sojump, and 210 valid questionnaires were recovered. There are 25 questions in this questionnaire, including 24 objective questions and 1 fill-in-the-blank question. To ensure the representativeness of data collection, the research method of combining quantitative and qualitative analysis of this questionnaire covers a considerable proportion of teachers and students of English majors and small language majors from freshman to seniors. And to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was conducted anonymously. The specific implementation steps of this questionnaire include the following three parts: the statistics of the number of options for each question, the cross-analysis from different perspectives and the integrated analysis of open questions. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, this part explores the current situation and existing problems of ideological and political education of foreign language courses from the following three aspects.

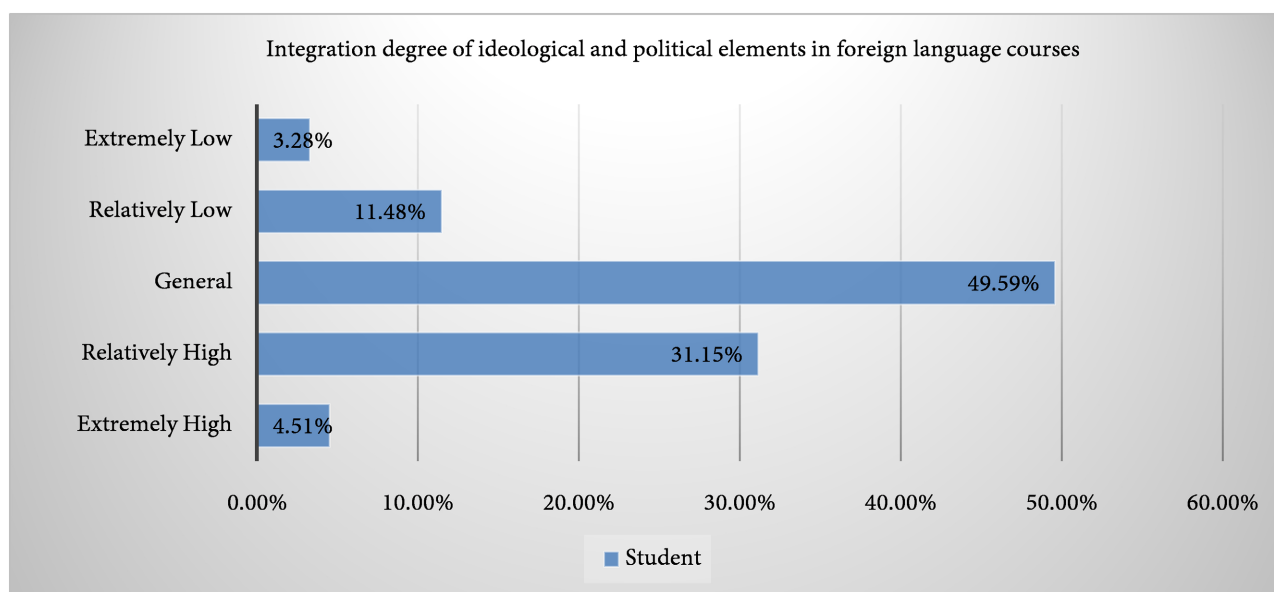
3.1. Single Talent Training Mode and Imperfect Top-Level Designment Course Module

At present, the ideological and political construction of the foreign language curriculum is in the exploration stage and has not yet formed a complete system, which still needs practice planning. Firstly, due to the tight schedule of foreign language classes in most schools and the tight teaching time and heavy tasks of teachers, it is difficult to achieve an effective balance between professional knowledge and ideological and political education in a limited time. Therefore, most teachers choose to give priority to professional knowledge teaching, so the integration proportion of ideological and political education is highly random. As shown in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3**, 53.70% and 5.56% of foreign language teachers think that the integration degree of ideological and political elements in foreign language courses is general and relatively low, and 49.59%, 11.48% and 3.28% of students think that the integration degree is general, relatively low and very low respectively. This indicates that the integration degree of ideological and political elements in foreign language majors is generally low. In addition, the curriculum of foreign language majors does not match the goal of talent cultivation in the new era for the talent cultivation mode is single and the language ability of students is emphasized while the cultivation of comprehensive quality is neglected, which has increased the difficulty of solving the problem that “at present, the cultivation of foreign language talents is faced with excellent knowledge but insufficient diversity, excellent specialty but insufficient integration, and excellent internationalization but insufficient localization”. Secondly, ideological and



Data source: Questionnaire survey

Figure 2. Integration degree of ideological and political elements in foreign language courses (the version of teacher).



Data source: Questionnaire survey

Figure 3. Integration degree of ideological and political elements in foreign language courses (the version of student).

political education of foreign language courses cannot be simply equated with the foreign language plus ideological and political courses, so how to correctly deal with the relationship between them and better promote the ideological and political construction of foreign language curriculum remain to be solved. Due to the traditional teacher-centered teaching method of instillation and the lack of a perfect curriculum evaluation system, it is difficult to stimulate students' interest in learning, and ideological and political content cannot play a role authentically. Thirdly, the optimized development and construction of teaching materials need to be further promoted. Teaching material is the main script and im-

portant tool of talent training and also one of the important components of the “new infrastructure” system of higher education, which is of great significance to the overall classroom teaching. Currently, most foreign language teaching materials are mainly imported from abroad, so the phenomenon of “colonization” is serious; while the development of domestic teaching materials is still in the exploratory period, the ideological and political teaching materials of foreign language courses lack corresponding case resources.

Figure 2 and **Figure 3** also show that the number of teachers and students who think that the integration degree of ideological and political elements of the current foreign language courses is relatively high and general accounts for the largest proportion, and the number of others accounts for a small proportion. This indicates that the ideological and political elements of current foreign language courses have a certain foundation, but need to be developed more effectively.

3.2. Difficulty in the Organic Integration Ideological and Political Content and the Teaching Methods' Urgent Need of Reform

How to dig out ideological and political elements from foreign language curriculum content and how to organically integrate them are the teaching problems of most foreign language teachers presently. First of all, in addition to objective factors such as teaching time constraints, teachers' personal quality is also an important part of the ideological and political construction of foreign language courses. To the lack of teaching experience related to curriculum politics and foreign language specialty covering a wide range of subjects, it is difficult for teachers to grasp the excavation and organic integration of ideological and political elements. As can be seen in **Figure 4**, 24.07% of teachers do not know how to integrate them, and 38.89% of teachers have difficulty digging out the ideological and political elements of the curriculum. Secondly, there is a lack of innovation in classroom teaching methods. Through the survey, it is found that: nowadays, the foreign language classroom is still dominated by the traditional teaching methods. The discourse structure and turn control are teacher-centered, and the classroom form is given priority with “the teacher speaks, and students listen”. Therefore, there are few opportunities for interaction and students have a low sense of participation in the classroom and lack enthusiasm. As a result, it's difficult to form efficient classroom interaction between teachers and students, the quality of classroom effect is reduced. At the same time, the arrangement of teaching hours also restricts teachers from handing over the classroom initiative to students, making this problem difficult to be solved. Besides, the practice of improving students' ideological and political education of foreign language related courses in their spare time need to be explored.

Figure 4 shows that foreign language teachers' curriculum politics experience plays an important role in the construction process. In addition to the objective factors of teaching time, these teachers who think it's difficult to dig ideological and political elements of foreign language courses and those who do not know how to do it account for a large proportion.

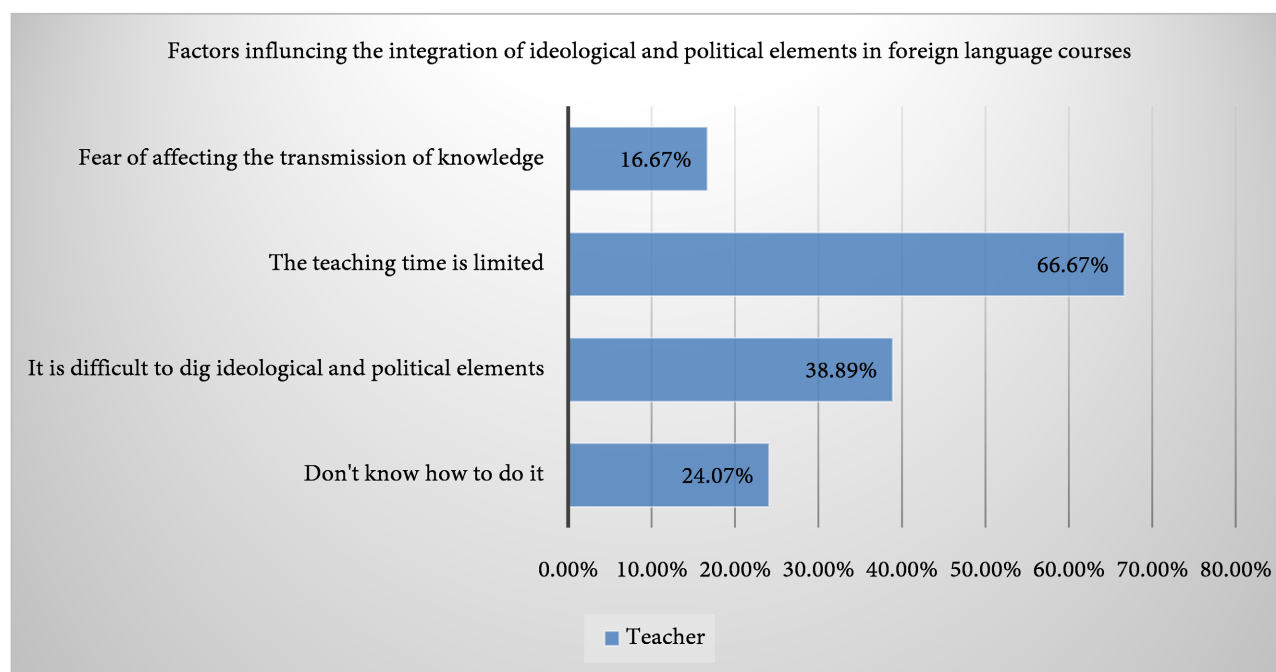


Figure 4. Factors influencing the integration of ideological and political elements in foreign language courses (the version of teacher).

3.3. Teachers' Lack of Corresponding Demonstration Guidance and Teaching Resources 'Urgent Need of Construction

First, teachers' personal quality and teaching level play a key role in the realization of the ideological and political construction of foreign language courses, but the fact is that they lack relevant learning and training. As shown in **Figure 5** and **Figure 6**, 79.63% of the teachers think that because of the characteristics and nature of the curriculum itself, it's difficult to combine language education with ideological and political education. And 61.57% of the students think it's due to teachers' lack of relevant teaching experience and skills. It is precisely because of the lack of ideological and political content training and "demonstration course" learning for teachers of specialized courses, foreign language professional course teachers have difficulty in truly integrating ideological and political content with professional course content in a short period of time, which is also a great challenge to teachers' relevant knowledge reserve, course content arrangement design, and teaching ability. (See **Figure 5** and **Figure 6** below). Second, the construction of teaching resources needs to be strengthened. Now the society is in the information age when information technology has made rapid development and the "Internet plus" has become the trend of the times. Accordingly, foreign language education should also seize the opportunity to revolutionize the teaching mode through innovative technology. However, until now, the integration of modern technology and foreign language teaching resources is still on a shallow surface, and there is a certain degree of deficiency, which is also one of the reasons that the traditional classroom model is difficult to reform.

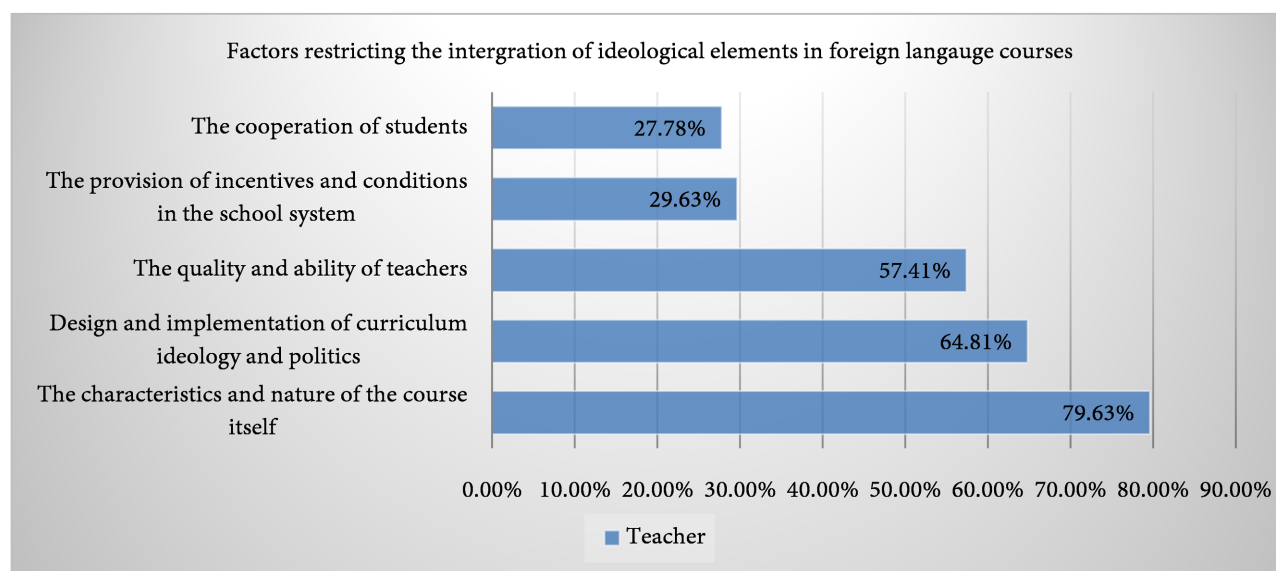


Figure 5. Factors restricting the integration degree of ideological and political elements in foreign language courses (the version of teacher).

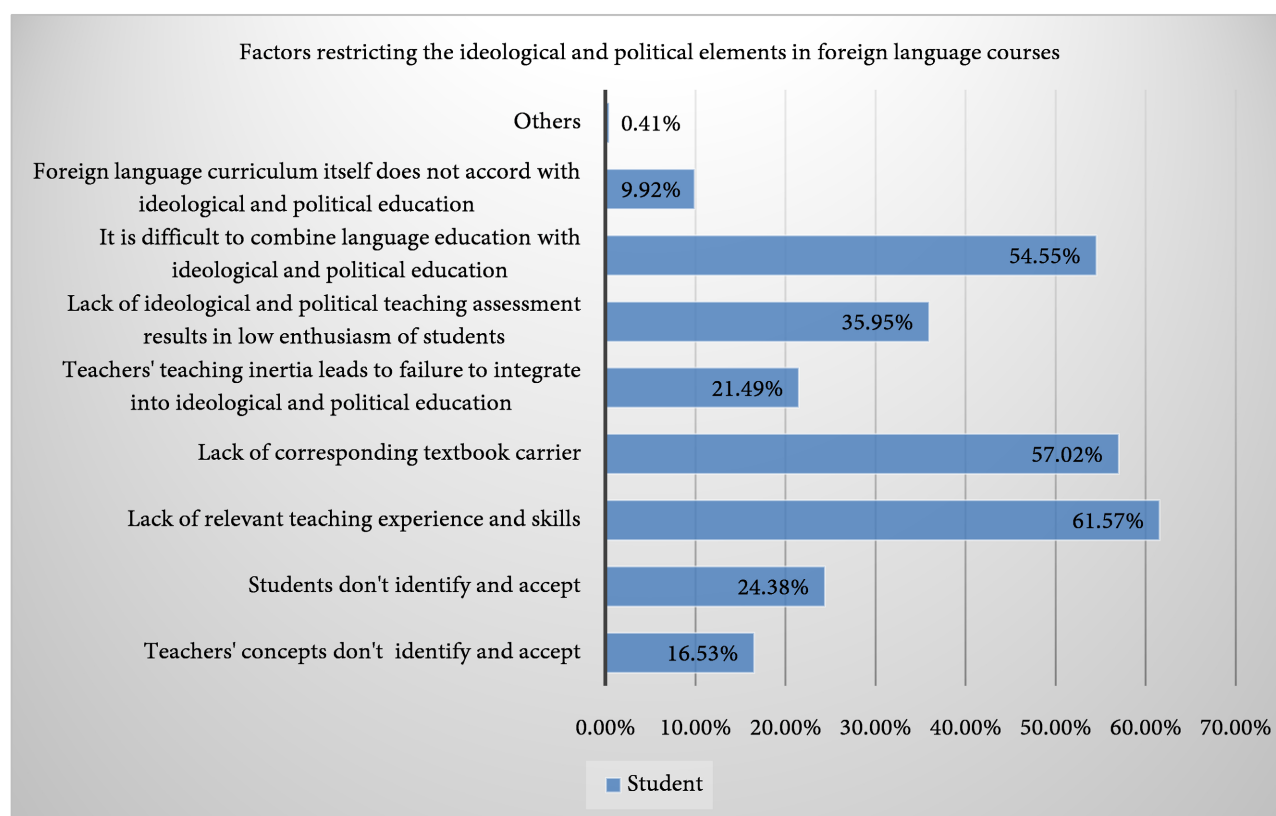


Figure 6. Factors restricting the integration degree of ideological and political elements in foreign language courses (the version of student).

As shown in **Figure 5** and **Figure 6**, most teachers and students consider that the constraints of ideological and political education in foreign language courses lie in teaching resources, teacher literacy and curriculum design.

4. The Innovative Path and Strategy

Based on the content of the second part, this part proposes innovative ways and corresponding strategies to improve the ideological and political courses of foreign language majors in colleges and universities under the background of new liberal arts.

4.1. Correct Understanding of It and the Promotion of Innovative Top-Level Design

First, we should fully understand the universality and particularity of foreign teaching theories and Chinese teaching theories and conduct an in-depth investigation and investigation on the actual situation in a foreign language classroom. And then, we carry out seminars and academic forums to explore the reform of foreign language teaching theories and actively adopt the feasible opinions and suggestions of teachers to summarize the experience and explore practical solutions. Meanwhile, it's necessary to optimize the curriculum module design of various languages. Combined with our own school-running characteristics, from the perspective of cultivating talents in China's new era and facing the needs of students, we can innovate the training mode of foreign language talents and carry out the reform experiment of professional courses such as "foreign language + major" and "foreign language + foreign language". Second, make it clear that foreign language professional courses and curriculum politics are organically unified, not separated. On the basis of existing knowledge, we should promote the linkage between the construction management of curriculum politics and curriculum reform management, coordinate the functional departments of colleges and universities and their secondary colleges, forming a situation of common development. In the meantime, the reform and exploration of the curriculum content and evaluation system should be promoted by following the opinions and suggestions of front-line teachers with a focus on the needs of students. Thirdly, the optimized development of foreign language teaching materials should give priority to moral education, and strengthen cultural confidence, stick to the bottom line to cultivate Chinese foreign language talents with broad international vision in the new era. Secondly, make sure that the text content is closely related to the students' ideology trend and skillfully integrated into the value-oriented and goal-oriented; thirdly, the content framework should be combined with the characteristics of different foreign language courses to conduct correct world outlook and methodology guidance.

4.2. The Environmental Construction of It and the Innovation of Teaching Methods

Taking the essence of Marxism "seeking truth from facts" as the breakthrough point and facing students as the guide, teaching methods can be innovated. Curriculum politics is not a mere formality. On the contrary, it is to urge teachers to re-examine their own curriculum and return to the original intention of teaching

and educating to a certain extent. And it is also an opportunity for teachers to deeply reflect on the orientation, content and effect of the curriculum itself. The exploration of ideological and political elements should be combed from the development needs of the country and society. For example, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the party attaches great importance to learning party history. Thus, relevant teaching contents can be integrated into the foreign language texts of party history. Through class activities such as translation exercises, students can improve their understanding of party history, cultivate their patriotism and strengthen their ideals and beliefs while exercising their foreign language ability. Furthermore, students' moral feelings should be paid attention to, and the spirit of universal values can be extracted from "socialist core values" and integrated into teaching. By doing so, not only Chinese stories can be told, but also foreign stories with the same enlightening significance can be told to promote the integration of "significant foreign languages" and "great thought". Teaching methods and teaching objectives are closely linked, but the traditional classroom teaching method of indoctrination is not ineffective. In view of this problem, the way of "negative words" temptation to reform can be adopted [7]. "Negative words", namely "reverse thinking", are contrary to "positive words" where teachers mainly indoctrinate students with knowledge. It regards students as the main body of the class, gives students the opportunity to fully express their opinions to enhance classroom participation and improve the teaching effect. In foreign language teaching, teachers should regard students as the main body, change the focus of classroom teaching from single language knowledge explanation to thinking guidance, encourage students to use their language knowledge to practice listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, and then teachers do correction, interspersed with critical thinking contents such as the comparison of Chinese and Western cultures. In this way, students' language ability can be fully exercised, and their humanistic quality and cross-cultural thinking can also be cultivated. Based on constructivism theory and people-oriented spirit, we can promote the innovation of teaching methods and break the traditional classroom teaching mode to build a classroom dominated by students' participation. By increasing questions to guide students to think deeply, and establishing a perfect student evaluation system and student feedback system, efficient interaction between teachers and students can be realized. And free discussion groups and cooperative learning among students are encouraged to increase students' sense of classroom experience and harvest. While designing the course content, teachers should also focus on the teaching methods for a good teaching method can get twice the result with half the effort. In the age of information education, digital natives refer to young people who grew up in the digital age and have frequent access to computers, the Internet, game consoles, and later mobile phones, social media and tablet computers [8]. The fact that contemporary college students are the representative group of network aborigines and the information-based teaching of integrating modern information technology into foreign language classroom teaching should

be the focus of foreign language teachers. Students are the main body of the classroom, so the classroom is student-oriented and constantly meets the needs of students. And the in-depth analysis of the thinking mode, learning mode and behavior mode of a college student is essential for the construction of a good classroom environment. Thus, it requires teachers to constantly practice and learn to deeply understand the characteristics of college students. And combined with the special environment of Internet +, they can combine the network and teaching closely, effectively integrating into the advanced modern teaching methods, so as to enrich the learning content to stimulate students' interest in learning, combining teaching with fun. In addition, curriculums politics is not only in the first class, but needs to interact and integrate with the second class to encourage students to spontaneously use their after-school time to actively participate in activities. For instance, students are encouraged to take part in activities such as "Red Reading Group" "Red Recitation" and other activities to enrich their spiritual world through reading, and encouraged to participate in practical activities such as college students' innovation and research activities to cultivate their scientific thinking and innovative consciousness and effectively and continuously improve their comprehensive foreign language quality.

4.3. The Cultivation of Teachers' Awareness of Integration of Teaching and Research, and the Construction of Ideological and Political Resource Database of Foreign Language

Most university teachers have dual roles of educators and researchers, but the construction of curriculum structure and curriculum design are standardized in most cases, in which teachers mainly undertake the implementation work [9]. The teaching ability of college teachers is the key influencing factor of the classroom effect. Therefore, how to cultivate teachers' main role in curriculums politics and teachers' ability to teach and educate is an urgent problem to be solved at present. It can be solved by holding special seminars to send foreign teachers to colleges with excellent foreign language courses on ideology and politics for study and observation. In addition to making sure the role which university teachers should play in the course education, we also need to cultivate teachers' political quality and practical ability of teaching theory to increase their understanding of Xi Jinping's theory of socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a new era. Only in this way can we further play the invisible role of ideological and political education in foreign language courses and do a good job in curriculum politics. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of ideological and political related resources library of foreign languages. For example, a database of foreign language "curriculum politics" system can be built, and it can be divided into three resource modules of "Chinese culture", "China story" and "Chinese diplomacy", and each module is equipped with four language categories of English, Japanese, Russian and French. And the specific contents include foreign literature on Chinese politics, history, diplomacy, ideology, culture, as well as foreign language texts and video materials from authoritative domestic

newspapers and periodicals. Teachers can use the text materials in the teaching process, and students can also study independently after class, which can not only skillfully integrate Chinese elements into the classroom, but also meet the needs of different types of foreign language professional courses. It can be seen that the combined application of new information technology plays an important role in promoting the effect of ideological and political teaching of foreign language courses.

5. Conclusions

The high-quality development of foreign language higher education has become one of the important components of the development of new liberal arts in the new era. The 14th five-year plan puts forward the new requirements of promoting people's all-round development and improving the dividend of population quality in Chapter 13 "improving national quality and promoting people's all-round development", and then clearly puts forward the need to promote the high-quality construction of higher education in Chapter 43 "building a high-quality education system". Thus, there are new development opportunities for the construction of new liberal arts. On April 1, 2021, Director Wu Yan listed four new constructions, including curriculum politics and new liberal arts as four important works of the Higher Education Department in 2021, which is of great practical significance for the ideological and political construction of foreign language courses under the background of new liberal arts. This paper discusses the innovative path of ideological and political education in foreign language courses. Firstly, it defines the connotation and objectives of ideological and political education in foreign language courses, then explores the current situation of it through questionnaires, analyzes the existing problems, and finally puts forward corresponding solutions to the existing problems, so as to provide a reference for the ideological and political construction of foreign language courses.

At present, "curriculum politics" is still in the early stage of exploration and has not formed a complete and mature concrete system. Although the research has been discussed in detail, there is still a limitation in this research. For example, due to the limitation of time and conditions, the number of survey samples is limited. In the future, the scope and number of samples can be expanded to further enhance the objectivity of the paper.

6. Significance

The thesis is beneficial to the development of the ideological and political education field and the improvement of ideological and political research in foreign language courses. At the same time, it helps to further dig out existing problems, and make corresponding solutions to integrate the ideological and political education and foreign language courses under the background of the new liberal arts so as to cultivate more all-round talents for the developments of China.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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