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Integration of curriculum ideology and politics in higher education: a case study of English linguistics in China

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Amidst efforts to fulfill the Chinese government's education guide for morality building and character cultivating, curriculum ideology and politics have emerged as key aspects in higher education pedagogy. English linguistics, a staple for junior English majors and often perceived as theoretical and challenging, represents an opportunity to align with national education directives. This study explores the integration of ideological and political education within the English major's curriculum, specifically within an English linguistics course. This paper details an empirical case study conducted in a local Jiangxi university in China, where an "ideological education + linguistics" teaching model was carefully crafted and implemented in the introductory linguistics session. Methodologies included classroom observation, post-lesson questionnaire and interview, revealing enhancements in student engagement, understanding of linguistic concepts, and scientific and logical reasoning. Additionally, noteworthy improvements in teaching methodologies were reported. The findings affirm the model's feasibility and effectiveness in reinforcing the curriculum ideology and politics in major disciplines, suggesting a beneficial tripartite impact on national educational goals, student learning, and teaching innovation. Research significance indicates that by applying their experiences, front-line teachers can act as researchers, enhancing the implementation of educational research; besides theoretical studies, micro case studies are essential to validate and complement educational research, thus contributing to the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework.

KEYWORDS

English linguistics, curriculum ideology and politics, higher education, empirical case study, teaching innovation

1 Introduction

The principle of "fostering character and civic virtue, prioritizing moral education" is a cornerstone of China's educational philosophy. With the 2016 National Ideological and Political Work Conference of Colleges and Universities endorsing "curriculum ideological and political education," a new paradigm shift has been ushered into education, profoundly affecting teaching modalities. Institutions of higher learning, as incubators of future talents, not only need to maintain excellence in traditional academic instruction but also must integrate ideological and political dimensions into curricular content to align with national educational objectives. The foreign language curriculum, a key component of higher education and considered "a natural battlefield for curriculum ideological and political education" (Guo

and Luo, 2021), is thus under the spotlight for its pedagogical approach in English courses.

In the current foreign language courses in universities, some scholars have proposed that English major education should adhere to the concept of “based on general education, standing on professionalism, and returning to individuality”; while also should deal with the relationship between global perspective and national consciousness well (Wen et al., 2020). They emphasize the need to enhance students’ problem-solving capabilities, elevate their cognitive skills (Hu, 2022), and shape well-rounded international experts proficient in their field of study (Wu, 2019). Given that external societal forces drive policy evolution in foreign language education (Shohamy, 2006), initiatives such as “building a community with a shared future for mankind” and the “Belt and Road” have put forward new language proficiency requirements for Chinese foreign language talents, also presenting a challenge to the English education ethos in the past period of time. As Chinese foreign language education has begun to realize the necessity of the cultivation of cross-culture quality and ability since 21st century, cross-culture mode has transmitted from fragmented education to curriculum education, but such planning and action still fall behind in touching the deep, dynamic, systematic trans-cultural mode. This requires to form a new culture position based on the integration of love for local culture and appreciation for target country culture by starting from language (Shen, 2019). Therefore, it is a tendency to seize the opportunity of foreign language education reform under the policy to face the challenge and fill the inadequacy in all levels.

English linguistics, as an integral part of language education, exhibits both instrumental and humanistic characteristics. Its instrumentality emerges through systematic instruction on the essence, structure, function, and application aspects of language, which equips students with the skills to decode language rules, analyze linguistic phenomena, and formulate a theoretical base for subsequent teaching and research endeavors. The humanistic dimension is manifest in the way the course shapes students’ awareness of language usage, identity, and the interplay between language and society. These facets collectively refine their academic literacy, critical thinking abilities, national and global outlook. However, English linguistics is also fraught with complex theories and terms, demands innovative and engaging teaching strategies to facilitate comprehension, which is achievable through curriculum ideological and political education.

Ideological and political values are embedded within the various branches of linguistics. For example: Phonology illustrates the principle of understanding the deeper essence through surface phenomena; morphology and syntax underscore the values of rigor and precision; semantics explores the dialectical connection between language and the subjective-objective reality; pragmatics promotes flexibility, politeness and conversational decorum; sociolinguistics juxtaposes linguistic variation at the micro-level against language policy at the macro-level, and so on. Besides, linking linguistic competencies to individual growth, cultural legacy, and the nation’s soft power could help nurturing patriotic individuals adept in linguistic studies and proficient in English. Therefore, the course pays attention to the integration and guidance mentioned above, through the overall ideological and political elements of linguistics course in Table 1, thereby broadening cognitive horizons of students.

TABLE 1 Overall ideological and political elements of linguistics course.

| Major knowledge aspect | Ideological and political elements |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Language with society and state | Fostering national sentiment and identity |
| Language with human and culture | Encouraging humanism and cultural confidence |
| Language with cognition and thinking | Cultivating scientific spirit and logical thinking |
| Language with life and future | Emphasizing application value and life value |

2 Literature review

A review of literature indicates international contributions, like Shaaban (2005) has delved into the infusion of moral education into ESL and EFL classrooms. Educational research globally recognizes the integration of ideological and political elements, which can be seen from moral education, cultural identity, social responsibility, and professional development as follows. (1) On moral education, transformational leadership within moral education helps students maintain integrity through role modeling and moral reinforcement (Effendi and Sahertian, 2022). Meanwhile, environmental moral education is pivotal in raising awareness for societal and ecological sustainability (Begum et al., 2021). (2) In addition, cultural identity is essential in modern education, which extends beyond knowledge transfer to the formation of students’ identities, emphasizing the importance of reinforcing cultural connections and national values in the learning process (Millei, 2021). This shaping of identity is integrated from an early age and is instrumental in the development of moral teaching strategies (Asif et al., 2020). (3) Besides, social responsibility in education encourages students to address global issues through the inclusion of courses focusing on environmental and civic values, transitioning the educational aim from simple knowledge delivery to a broader personal and societal development (Begum et al., 2021). (4) Moreover, the continuous enhancement of professional competencies and ethical standards for teachers is crucial, as it is intimately connected with the overall quality of education (Li and Hu, 2023). Institutions of higher learning should prioritize the cultivation of educators’ emotional intelligence, ethical values, and capacities for moral judgment (Quinlan, 2018; Friedland and Jain, 2022). Consequently, the integration of moral education, cultural identity, social responsibility, and professional development plays a pivotal role in the evolution of education systems. This necessitates the integration of ideological and political elements into both teaching and learning. These research findings reveal new perspectives on the incorporation of political education within major courses, compelling a reevaluation and enhancement of our pedagogical strategies.

In China, an exhaustive search on CNKI with the keywords “English Curriculum Ideological and Political Education” yields over 6,900 academic papers (until January 31, 2024), highlighting its emergence as an interest in the field of scholarly inquiry. Domestically, researchers have explored the subject from several vantage points including its significance, conceptual depth, and pragmatic application in English courses (Wu, 2019; Guo and Luo, 2021; Wang and Shi, 2021; Wen, 2021a,b; Zhao, 2021; Hu, 2022). As for specific disciplines

in English courses, research has been focused on theoretical and practice explorations, such as Comprehensive English (Zhang and Mao, 2021), Business English (Liu, 2019), English Teaching (Zhang, 2022), and Vocational English (Yang, 2020), in which practical explorations are mainly about the overall framework of one semester's curriculum, without case studies toward specific unit or content, not to mention theoretical ones which are more abstract. In terms of linguistics-related courses like English Linguistics (Wen, 2021a,b; Zhang, 2021), General Linguistics (Liang, 2019), the situation is similar. Therefore, the macroscopic view far exceeds microscopic in this field, especially with a scarcity of micro-level case studies that reveal practical implementation in the examination of linguistics curriculum. Addressing this gap, this paper positions the teaching of English Linguistics at a local university in Jiangxi, China, within the scope of curriculum ideology and politics, to explore the harmonization of national objectives with educational content. It differentiates from the studies above in showing the execution of national policy within one limited class period, also to shed light on teaching case studies research in the future. The research questions of this study are: (1) Is the implementation of curriculum ideology and politics in English linguistics course feasible and effective? (2) What should the teachers do to realize the effect?

3 Research design

The research was conducted in the fall of 2022. At the time of writing, the author, who is also as a teacher and researcher, is able to conduct research at a local university in Jiangxi, China. For the sake of clarity in this context, the teacher role is emphasized, as it encompasses the author's multiple identities. As case study is a well approach in qualitative research and commonly applied in education study, it was utilized with the illustration and examination of the teaching process on a linguistics content. During the teaching, English was used as the medium of instruction, and lectures were delivered based on a prepared verbatim draft. The draft played an important role and served as the basis for the following real classroom discourse, though there were some adjustment in the actual lesson. A total of 185 third-year English majors from six classes participated, all of whom are the author's students with similar learning competence and are representative of average level students. The textbook used was "Practical Course in English Linguistics, Second Edition" edited by Chen Xinren and published by Suzhou University Press. It adopts a learner-centered approach, emphasizing practicality and interactive exercises. The beginning unit, pivotal in engaging student interest, was chosen to conduct the case study, with the first lesson introducing the definition of language, world languages, and their genealogical classification. Through thematic activities in this lesson, the teacher combined multiple methods such as Competitive Quiz Method, Discussion Method, Inquiry Method to finish the teaching task. The ideological aim was to foster students' pride in their linguistic abilities and curiosity to explore the natural endowment of language, as well as raise their awareness of linguistic identity.

Next, the case study will delve into the instructional process of the curriculum ideological and political education. It uses the 90-min lesson titled "What is Language" as a model, structured into three segments: a leading-in (10 min), the acquisition of new knowledge (75 min), and a concluding summary (5 min). The time allocation for new knowledge can be seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Allocation of time for new knowledge.

| Content | Time |
|---|--------|
| Definition of language | 20 min |
| Genealogical classification of language | 25 min |
| Origin of language | 15 min |
| Values of linguistics | 15 min |

4 Teaching processes

4.1 Leading-in (10 min)

4.1.1 Introduction

"Good morning, everyone! Today marks the beginning of our journey into the fascinating realm of linguistics. This discipline is dedicated to the study of language—a tool that we all use every day. Have you ever pondered the true essence of language? Language enables us to review history, envision future, and understand ourselves. It's clear that language plays an important role in our lives. By delving into linguistics, we embark on a quest to deepen our self-knowledge."

Purpose: To immediately capture the students' attention by posing a thought-provoking question about language and providing an insightful response, thus setting the stage for the new course in linguistics.

4.1.2 Engaging questions and storytelling

"I invite you to envision language as a metaphor. What images come to mind? A bridge? A key? Perhaps a black box, or a tower? Let us explore these metaphors together and extract their underlying meanings." After discussing each metaphor, turn to the famous story of the Babel Tower, encourage students to contemplate the morals and implications it has about the significance of language in human civilization.

Purpose: To stimulate the students' curiosity about the nature and functions of language, using vivid metaphors and a storied example to provoke thoughtful reflection and anticipation for the subsequent part.

4.1.3 Leading to linguistics

"The story of the Babel Tower does not just speak to our past—it also guides us toward understanding language's role in our present and future. In essence, studying linguistics is just like 'rebuilding the Babel Tower'—we strive not only to learn about diverse languages but also to unravel the profound mystery of 'LANGUAGE' itself." Provide an introductory glimpse into the key branches of linguistics as a primer for the lessons ahead.

Purpose: To help students transition from a tangible understanding of language to an appreciation of the theoretical and analytical approaches of linguistics, thereby underscoring its significance and breadth of study.

4.2 Presentation of new knowledge (75 min)

4.2.1 Definition of language (20 min)

"Reflecting on what we understand language to be—based upon your insightful answers and our previous discussions—let us formalize

our comprehension. Language, as we define it, is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication. Now, we shall explain the five critical key words of this definition: ‘human-specific,’ ‘arbitrary,’ ‘vocal,’ ‘symbol,’ and ‘system.’”

“For instance, consider the efforts of the notable biologist, Jane Goodall, who endeavored to teach gorillas human-like language but ultimately failed, which illustrated that language is indeed a human-specific ability. Moreover, to clarify the inherent arbitrariness and symbolic character of language, let us think of Shakespeare’s timeless expression: ‘A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.’ These examples illuminate the intricate nature of language and its characteristics.”

Purpose: To lead students to delve into the core of language, enable them to appreciate the precision of linguistics and to foster a sense of gratitude for this extraordinary natural endowment unique to humanity.

4.2.2 Genealogical classification of language (25 min)

“Now, we begin by exploring the concept of linguistic diversity through a clip of ‘Hello’ song with multiple languages. I invite you to listen and identify as many languages as you can. How many can you identify? Five? Six? Yes six, excellent! According to our textbook, there are approximately 6,800 spoken languages and 2,200 written ones globally. Reflecting on our earlier discussion about the ‘vocal’ nature of language, can anyone tell why there are more spoken than written languages? Oh, it’s because that each language must be vocal, but not necessarily has the written form. This observation can lead us to thinking of the ‘Pareto Principle’ in linguistics and the unequal distribution of language use, with some languages being more dominant or widespread than others. Please consider the underlying reasons for this disparity. As English majors from China, it’s essential to recognize that English holds the title for the most widely distributed language, while Chinese boasts the largest number of native speakers. We must strive for our bilingual proficiency in both languages to excel in global exchanges and promote our rich cultural heritage.”

“To better understand language families, let us think of the human family tree. Through a map in our courseware, we’ll go through the names and distributions of the world’s top ten language families: ... (detailed explanation). Special focus will be on the Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan language families, with short video clips demonstrating each family’s linguistic features. Listen carefully. Now within the Sino-Tibetan family, let us see the status of Chinese and its brothers and sisters, speak out the principal Chinese dialects, and find out the mother tongue of you in this map.”

“Reviewing the story of the Babel Tower once more, we’ll ponder the pros and cons of linguistic diversity. Following group discussions, let us summarize your thoughts and reflect together. You see, it is our language that build our world, so each language is a unique world view and treasure of human culture. It may indeed make some barrier to communication among people, but there are many ways to get across it, such as using certain common language, right? So as long as we respect each other and improve our personal multilingual ability, it is not a problem. That is, to seek common ground while reserving differences, and maintain harmonious coexistence in diversity.

Purpose: To promote the understanding of the language ecosystem and the importance of protecting linguistic diversity; to bolster students’ rational appreciation of Chinese and its members,

thus deepening their sense of national identity; and to foster appreciation for inclusivity, thus enhancing their linguistic ideologies.

4.2.3 Origin of language (15 min)

“Now, let us embark on a journey into the past, to a time where language was in its infancy in mystery. When we reflect on the reverence that ancient peoples had for language, we may find some information about theories of language origin. What reasons might they have had for this deep sense of ‘language worship’? Please take a moment to ponder this. Now, let us examine a series of intriguing hypotheses presented in your textbook. From the ‘Bow-wow Theory’ suggesting language emerged from imitations of animal sounds, to the ‘Pooh-Pooh Theory’ which revolves around instinctive utterances caused by pain or emotion, and the ‘Ding-Dong Theory’ which proposes a divine resonance between objects and sounds. We also find the ‘Labor Theory’ attributable to repetitive cooperative work sounds, the ‘Ta-Ta Theory’ rooted in the manual gestures and sounds, and the ‘Ritual Speech Coevolution Theory’ implying a link between language development and ceremonial activities. I want you to consider: Which do you find most plausible, and why? It seems many of you lean toward the ‘Labor Theory,’ and I approve of your choice. It rests on a firmer scientific foundation, as argued by Engels, a great thinker, who takes into account the physiological, psychological, and social facets of language evolution. This transition from a surface-level to a more analytical comprehension is a crucial step in deepening your knowledge.”

“As a homework task, find out myths and legends about the origin of language in both Chinese and Western cultures. I challenge you to contrast the story of the Babel Tower from the Bible and the legend of Cang Jie, the reputed inventor of Chinese characters. Such a comparison will expand your intellectual horizons.”

Purpose: To foster critical and scientific evaluations in students, while establish a historical materialism perspective of language in them. The task is also to cultivate students’ ability to conduct research and have creative thinking processes.

4.2.4 Value of linguistics (15 min)

“Transitioning from our previous discussions, let us turn to understanding the essence of our subject: linguistics. Defined as the science of studying human language, linguistics is a vast field that interrelates with the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. With a rich history, this multidimensional discipline has evolved from traditional to modern frameworks, with its influence to many other fields with its theories and methods, and is continuously breaking new ground. Then about its values, let us explore it from studying the theories of language to its use across different social contexts, especially the practical applications of linguistics. How does it contribute to communication, translation, and language teaching? ... (discussion). By analyzing your answers, we realize that modern linguistics is not just about studying languages in isolation, but can help us to uncover the patterns of human languages, enhancing our cross-cultural sensitivity and refining our logical abilities.”

“Lastly, let us look ahead. What careers could one pursue with a linguistics degree? As we see, here are many linguistics-related jobs, like foreign language teachers, dictionary compilers, and even natural language processing engineer, if you take more specific education. I want to encourage you to embrace the discipline and prepare for the diverse opportunities that await you in the field of linguistic study.”

Purpose: To underline the foundational attributes of linguistics as a discipline, to relate the future prospects of the field to students, and to build their confidence and interest in mastering the subject.

4.3 Concluding summary (5 min)

“Alright, class, let us summarize what we have covered today. Just now, we have learned the definition of language, the language families, the origin hypothesis of language and the value of linguistics, in which you have showed your genius and creative thinking. As this is our first lesson, I want you all to create a knowledge map that outlines the key points we discussed today, which would be helpful for your to form a good habit to review and reinforce the main concepts. Besides, it’s important to remember that previewing new material helps us mentally prepare for the next lesson and makes connections between what we already know and what we are about to learn. So, please read the rest content of Unit 1 after the class. Additionally, I want you guys to think of questions related to linguistics and the course as a whole, since potential linguists are those good at raising questions. Your questions will be shared and discussed in the next class, so please make sure your questions are clear, and it would be better to demonstrate your critical thinking skills. That’s all, see you!”

Purpose: To train students’ ability to review and summarize, cultivate their learning habit by assigning the mind map task, and pave the way for the new lesson.

5 Teaching methods

After reflecting on both pre-class preparation and post-class activities and drawing upon the cumulative teaching experience of the entire course, the teacher had identified four effective teaching methods which are as follows. It is noted that the last blended teaching method is not shown in this case study, but in the semester following the first unit, it was launched by the teacher as a tentative approach in some units with an effect, and therefore is placed here. These are mainly based on the personal experience, while also some of them are suggestive for other teachers.

5.1 Competitive quiz method

To liven up the classroom atmosphere, integrating competitive quizzes into the curriculum proves beneficial. Take, for instance, the topic of language diversity: students might be challenged to identify as many languages as possible by listening to a multilingual “Hello” song; they could also be quizzed on the official languages of the United Nations, or languages with the largest distribution and the highest number of speakers worldwide. Competitive quizzes offer immediate engagement and assess students’ breadth of knowledge. It’s important to acknowledge correct answers with praise to foster a sense of achievement.

5.2 Discussion method

The discussion method is essential for cultivating students’ ability to think and articulate their thoughts independently. For example, when exploring the topic of the linguistic family, including the

evolution and extinction of languages, students might engage in debates about the significance of language diversity. Teachers can highlight standout contributions from various perspectives and ultimately direct the conversation toward the relevance of linguistics in preserving human culture and interpreting modes of human thought. This stimulates enthusiasm and maintains a balanced lesson rhythm while preventing teacher dominance.

5.3 Inquiry method

To enhance active intellectual engagement, the inquiry method is an effective tool in elucidating specific knowledge points. For instance, concerning the origins of language, students could be asked to evaluate which hypothesis is most scientifically valid and to provide reasons after learning about various theories presented in the textbook. Most students would tend to gravitate toward the “labor theory;” some even integrating insights from their previous ideological and political courses. Minimal prompting by the teacher can significantly deepen students’ understanding of labor’s influence on language development. This approach thus reinforces students’ critical thinking and innovative capacities while seamlessly merging principles of Marxism with linguistics, aligning well with our goals for ideological education.

5.4 Blended teaching method

The “online + offline” blended teaching mode is highly conducive to fostering a more versatile learning environment. Prior to class sessions, teachers may employ online platforms like WeChat and SuperStarLearn to share succinct video summaries of key points for students to pre-study. These recorded videos facilitate prepared participation. In the classroom, the focus shifts to clarifying complex topics, addressing students’ common questions, and strengthening understanding through well-designed activities. These steps also allow for evaluating self-study effectiveness and pinpointing learning gaps. Furthermore, online platforms serve as a means for post-class assessments, collecting feedback, and extending the educational engagement beyond the traditional space and time constraints, thereby enhancing overall teaching efficacy.

6 Evaluation of teaching effectiveness

Following the initial lesson, the author promptly distributed a questionnaire to all six classes she instructed, aiming at evaluating the effectiveness of curriculum ideology and politics. One hundred eighty-five valid questionnaires were obtained, and selected students accepted concise interviews (see below). Except the first item on personal information, the questionnaire was composed of three distinct parts, with a total of 12 questions: (1) Understanding of curriculum ideology and politics, (2) Assessment of the teacher, and (3) The sentiment toward the integration of the English linguistics course with curriculum ideology and politics. The final question solicited subjective suggestions.

In the beginning part, students roughly split equal between “unknowing” and “knowing” regarding ideological and political education within foreign language courses. When asked about their understanding, the majority indicated that they see it as either “a

unifying framework for all educational elements and a comprehensive educational concept” (26%) or as “foreign language courses carry ideological and political education, and ideological and political education is integrated into foreign language courses” (63%). Concerning the need for college teachers to infuse foreign language courses with ideological and political education, a significant 83% regarded it as essential. This reflects that the concept of curriculum ideology and politics is not foreign to college students; however, its concrete application and tangible impact require reinforcement.

In the second part, regarding the assessment for the teacher, 72% of the students reported that the course contained “a great many” or “a relatively large number” of linguistic elements related to curriculum politics, as taught by the teacher. Furthermore, 83% felt the course was “well integrated” or “relatively integrated” with China’s national conditions as presented by the instructor. A notable 84% believed that it substantially or relatively aids in shaping correct ideological, moral, and aesthetic perspectives and is beneficial in nurturing patriotism, political identification, and cultural self-confidence (87%). Additionally, 87% agreed that it contributes to enhancing their language skills, analytical abilities, and cultural literacy. This data suggests that the teacher’s efforts in imparting curriculum ideological and political education are effectively realized.

Finally, regarding the sentiment toward integration, a resounding 77% of students expressed “strong liking” or “moderate liking” for the integration of ideological and political education into the linguistics curriculum. Notably, students have proposed their views on the mode of integration, especially “the symbiosis of professional ethos and knowledge” and “attention to current social issues” were the foremost preferences, at 88 and 86%, respectively. This proves the need for linguistics curriculum ideology and politics to focus on these domains specifically. The last item of the questionnaire gained numerous subjective suggestions, such as “enhancing interactivity,” “promoting discussions,” and “implementing competitive quizzes” in pedagogical approaches, alongside “incorporating real-life teaching,” “integrating current events,” and “discussing buzzwords” within the content scope.

Subsequent to the questionnaire session, interviews reflected the students’ passion for linguistics. For instance, some remarked that “linguistics extends beyond abstract concepts, connecting closely with real life”; “the language surveys and dialect studies introduced and conducted by the teacher have been enlightening and relevant to our career plans”; and “linguistics enhances our overall cultural literacy.” These responses underscore a growing anticipation for upcoming linguistics courses, which, in turn, propels teacher enthusiasm. The aforementioned findings connote that both educational and scholarly objectives are being met in a mutually beneficial manner.

In sum, students welcome the embedding of ideological and political elements into the linguistics curriculum, yet they also delineate specific expectations for educators. Teachers are encouraged to teach content resourcefully, mobilize students’ initiative, and customized the classroom content to better align with students’ psychological and professional needs.

7 Discussion

Curriculum ideology and politics merges as a solution of pedagogy challenge. There were many studies doing the theory

research toward it, but few of them investigated the practicality. Comparing this research evaluation results and previous related works, it can be found that this study align with those in the teaching effectiveness (Shaaban, 2005; Millei, 2021; Zhang and Mao, 2021) and proposed teaching methods (Wen, 2021a,b; Zhang, 2021). However, this study provides more detailed account of implementation of teaching steps, and reveals that students may have limited understanding about the notion of curriculum ideology and politics though they generally welcome it, and they have also higher expectations of teachers. These are worth pondering by teachers and researchers.

After the analysis above, here are the answers to the two research questions. First, this case study has demonstrated that such integration of curriculum ideology and politics in English linguistics course is not only feasible, but also yields positive impacts. The integration was realized effectively within the allocated time for new knowledge, and the ideological and political aims were fulfilled through various topics and methods, the effect of which can be felt by the teacher and seen from the students’ evaluation. Second, to achieve effective teaching, it is necessary to proactively identify and intertwine ideological and political elements with the curriculum content, while also organically utilize other methods, such as Competitive Quiz Method, Discussion Method, Inquiry Method, Blended Teaching Method listed above. This approach demands a commitment to a learner-centered pedagogy that creates opportunities for students’ reflection, discussion and feedback. Paramount, however, is the teacher’s role in setting an exemplary standard—beyond mere content delivery—to foster in students’ recognition of the value of linguistics. In this process, the teacher could trigger students’ critical and creative thinking, thereby enhancing their ideological and political consciousness. As the German educationalist Johann Friedrich Herbart stated, morality is generally regarded as the ultimate pursuit of humanity, and therefore also the ultimate pursuit of education (Herbart, 1806/2015). Hence, moral development, an integral aspect of character education, could be fortified through ideological and political instruction within English courses.

8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study explores the fusion of ideological and political education within the first session of an English linguistics course, illustrated by the author’s personal teaching experiences. The significance lies in its alignment with the Chinese national policy and directive for English teachers in higher education in the contemporary epoch, also serving as an instructive model for foreign language pedagogy globally. It provides a detailed reference as a case study that deepens the previous teaching research of the same topic from a micro-level. However, there is more to be done. Future research should delve into the systematic exploration of methods to effectively embed ideological and political education within the English linguistics curriculum. Long-term outcomes, including student engagement, moral reasoning, and critical thinking skills, should be monitored and assessed. Comparative studies between different institutions, culturally diverse settings, and varied disciplinary contexts should also be launched to offer a richer landscape from which to derive best practices in teaching. Finally, for future teaching practice, the curriculum ideological and political education is bound

to extend with greater depth and breadth, requiring the teachers to enhance their understanding and abilities. Universities and education departments should strive together, so as to fully refine the teaching quality and maximize the goal of students' overall development.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by the Ethics Committee of School of Foreign Languages, Yichun University. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

ZM: Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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