

Practical Exploration of “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy” In the Ideological Education in the Course *Advanced English*

Meiou ZHAO¹

¹(School of Foreign Languages/ University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, China)

ABSTRACT: “Strengthening education in China’s outstanding traditional culture” constitutes one of the core objectives and focal points of Curriculum-based Ideological Education Project in Chinese universities. Chinese classics, particularly Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist texts as well as classical poetry, serve as foundational pillars of China’s traditional cultural heritage. Integrating these classics or their English translations into college English teaching—termed “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy”—enables students to appreciate the linguistic, cultural, and philosophical richness of Chinese heritage, thereby fostering cross-cultural dialogue between Chinese and English cultures. This study examines the practical application of “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy” in the *Advanced English* course, a core course for English majors, aiming to provide actionable pathways for embedding traditional cultural education within English language teaching in Chinese universities.

KEYWORDS: *Advanced English, Chinese traditional culture, curriculum-based ideological education, “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy”*

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the CPC Central Committee (2019) issued Guidelines on Deepening the Reform and Innovation of Ideological Education in Schools in the New Era, emphasizing “to strengthen education in China’s outstanding traditional culture” as a critical component of Curriculum-based Ideological Education Project. Specifically, it advocates cultivating patriotism, promoting national and reformative spirits, and guiding students to internalize the philosophical essence of traditional Chinese values—such as benevolence, people-centered governance, integrity, justice, harmony, and universal unity—there by nurturing the cultural consciousness and national identity of college students in China.

This study posits that Chinese classics, particularly Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist texts alongside classical poetry, provide a vital foundation for integrating traditional culture into English teaching in Chinese colleges and universities. By incorporating comparative analyses of these classics and their English translations, this study proposes a specific teaching model—“Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy” in English courses, which allows students to explore the linguistic, cultural, and ideological dimensions of Chinese heritage within English-language classrooms. Using the course *Advanced English* one of the core courses for English majors in Chinese universities as a case study, this paper investigates practical methods, path and process for implementing “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy”, aiming to provide paths and methods as

a reference for the education of Chinese outstanding traditional culture in English teaching in Chinese universities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND STUDY SIGNIFICANCE

Existing studies on curriculum-based ideological education in the course *Advanced English* mainly focuses on the paths and strategies of curriculum-based ideological education in *Advanced English* (Jiang 2022), case study of the course design (Li & Qin 2021), and the cultivation of students critical thinking in this course (Ma 2020). Most of the studies probe into the concept of Content-Based Instruction (Fu & Ruan 2024) and Production-Oriented Approach (Mu 2024). As one of the target requirements and key contents of the construction of curriculum-based ideological education, the integration of Chinese outstanding traditional culture in the teaching of *Advanced English* course has also been explored by a number of scholars, mainly in terms of teaching methods and how to improve students' cultural self-confidence (Wu 2021; Li & Liu 2019). These studies are rich in content and vary in perspectives.

However, several limitations are evident in these studies. First, they emphasize culture at the expense of language, thereby disconnecting the two. The research disproportionately elevates the importance of culture and thought in the *Advanced English* teaching while neglecting the foundational aspect of language learning. In reality, ideological education and language learning are not mutually exclusive; rather, language serves as the basis for ideology, culture, and values. The challenge lies in exploring how to realize the beauty of culture and thought, as well as the correctness of values, through language learning in comprehensive English textbooks. Second, the exploration of values remains rather vague. Although culture is discussed, it is often approached in broad, conceptual terms without specific references to classical texts or an in-depth examination of the origins and meanings of certain Chinese cultural concepts. This lack of specificity can easily mislead students. In light of these issues, this paper focuses on the practice of "Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy" within the ideological education framework of the *Advanced English* course. It explores how English teachers in Chinese universities can utilize Chinese classics—particularly Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist canonical texts, as well as ancient Chinese poetry—alongside their English translations to analyze the language and concepts presented in English textbooks. This approach aims to foster mutual appreciation of Chinese and English poetic traditions and facilitate a dialogue between Eastern and Western thoughts and cultures.

The significance of this study is twofold. First, it bridges English teaching with the profound linguistic and literary-philosophical heritage of Chinese classics, not only at the linguistic level but also by integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture and values into the English classroom at the ideological level. This integration promotes cultural exchange and cultivates cultural confidence in teaching practices. Second, the approach of "Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy" not only incorporates excellent traditional Chinese culture into the education of English majors but also provides concrete answers to key questions in the course design: What specific aspects of excellent culture can be integrated? How can this integration be achieved? And how can these cultural elements be effectively imparted to students for their intellectual and moral enrichment? By addressing these questions, the study ensures that the transmission of Chinese culture in ideological education is systematic, targeted, and meaningful. In conclusion, exploring the practical application of "Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy" in the *Advanced English* course offers reference paths and methods for incorporating Chinese traditional culture into the English teaching of English majors in Chinese universities.

III. THE PATH AND PROCESS OF "INTEGRATING CHINESE CLASSICS INTO PEDAGOGY" IN THE IDEOLOGICAL EDUCATION OF *ADVANCED ENGLISH*

How to implement the mode of "Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy" in the ideological education of the course *Advanced English* can be broken down into the following issues and steps.

Screening the Content

The rationale for integrating Chinese classics into the ideological education component of *Advanced English* course hinges on the question of “what to introduce”—specifically, determining which linguistic, cultural, and ideological elements from these classics can be meaningfully incorporated into *Advanced English* pedagogy. This necessitates a meticulous analysis of each unit in *Advanced English* textbooks to identify salient language points and cultural themes, followed by the careful selection of corresponding wisdom from Chinese classical texts and a systematic curricular design. Several principles guide this content selection process.

First, the principle of multidimensional integration. Content should extend beyond superficial language features to encompass deeper cultural, philosophical, and political dimensions. By synthesizing these layers, educators can create a pedagogical framework that harmonizes language acquisition with cultural immersion, and knowledge dissemination with value cultivation. For instance, Lesson 2 in the textbook of *Advanced English I* (Zhang Hanxi, ed., 2017), titled “Hiroshima—the ‘Liveliest’ City in Japan,” explores postwar reconstruction through a British journalist’s lens, critiquing war’s brutality and advocating peace. The idiomatic phrase “rub shoulders with” (defined by Merriam-Webster as “to meet and talk with someone in a friendly way”) serves as a linguistic focal point. Teachers might juxtapose this with Chapter 80 of *Tao Te Ching*: “邻国相望，鸡犬之声相闻，民至老死不相往来” (“Neighboring states view one another from afar; / The sounds of roosters and dogs echo across borders. / Yet the people grow old and die without ever interacting”). At the linguistic level, the phrase “相往来” in this famous Taoist sentence can be translated by “rub shoulders with”. At the ideological and cultural level, by letting students translate this sentence, teachers can introduce the discussion of Taoist idea of war and the attitude of governance, and this sentence of *Tao Te Ching* echoes with the anti-war theme of this English text “Hiroshima—the ‘Liveliest’ City in Japan”.

Second, the principle of familiarity. Given the vast corpus of Chinese classics, priority should be given to widely recognized passages—particularly those students encountered during primary and secondary education, such as iconic *Tang* dynasty poetry. Integrating familiar excerpts of Chinese classics into English teaching can leverage pre-existing knowledge, foster emotional resonance, and enhance student engagement. Conversely, introducing obscure content risks alienating students, as unfamiliar material may fail to elicit meaningful intellectual or affective responses.

Third, the principle of appropriateness. The integration of Chinese classics into pedagogy should not be pursued merely for its own sake or to demonstrate the teacher's erudition. Instead, educators must prioritize the selection of contextually relevant, thematically aligned, and linguistically accurate excerpts. For instance, the first lesson in *Advanced English I* (Zhang Hanxi, ed., 2017), titled “Face to Face with Hurricane Camille,” recounts the survival narrative of individuals during Hurricane Camille’s 1969 landfall on the Mississippi coast. The text employs diverse synonyms for “hit” (e.g., lap, lash, pummel, whip, swipe) to depict the storm’s violent impact. To reinforce vocabulary retention, teachers can introduce *Su Shi*’s renowned *ci* poem 《念奴娇·赤壁怀古》 (Nian Nu Jiao: A Meditation on the Red Cliff), specifically the line “惊涛拍岸” (“swashing waves beat on the shore”). Students are tasked with translating the verb “拍” (beat/hit) using synonyms from the lesson (e.g., lap, lash, pummel, whip). This exercise can effectively contextualize vocabulary acquisition while fostering engagement with classical Chinese literature. However, the synonym swipe—defined as “to strike with a swinging motion”—proves linguistically incongruous in this context. A literal translation such as “swashing waves swipe at the shore” would distort both semantic accuracy and stylistic coherence. This example underscores the necessity of strategic selection when integrating classical texts. Pedagogical relevance must guide content curation; forced or mismatched inclusions risk undermining educational objectives. Without alignment to thematic and linguistic learning goals, the integration of Chinese classics becomes a performative gesture rather than a meaningful pedagogical practice.

Fourth, the principle of brevity. After all, what we are discussing is the *Advanced English* course, which is a classroom for English majors in Chinese colleges and universities. The foundation of this course is still English teaching rather than Chinese teaching. Therefore, teachers need to grasp the degree of “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy” and pay attention to the time spent on introducing Chinese culture. Devoting

the entire class to analyzing and translating Chinese classics would deviate from the core of English teaching and the nature of an English course.

Clarifying the Methods

Following the selection of teaching content, the methods of integration becomes paramount in implementing the “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy” initiative within the *Advanced English* curriculum. A multi-tiered approach is essential, addressing both linguistic and ideological-cultural dimensions.

For one thing, the linguistic integration: translation-centric pedagogy. The linguistic dimension emphasizes the design of translation-based exercises. This involves investigating whether key vocabulary from *Advanced English* textbooks corresponds semantically or thematically to terms found in classical Chinese poetry, philosophical texts, or other canonical works. Teachers may utilize existing English translations of Chinese classics to facilitate comparative lexical analysis, enabling students to appreciate the aesthetic and intellectual depth of these texts while reinforcing language acquisition. Pedagogical strategies could include student-led translation activities to enhance engagement or teacher-guided comparisons of pre-existing English renditions of classical works.

For another, the ideological-cultural integration: dialectical comparative analysis. The ideological-cultural dimension prioritizes critical engagement through cross-cultural dialogue. By incorporating Chinese poetry, idioms, and Confucian or Taoist texts into English lessons, teachers can foster comparative analysis of Chinese and Western cultural paradigms. This approach transcends mere linguistic proficiency, encouraging students to critically examine similarities and divergences in cultural values. For instance, Taoist principles of governance (e.g., wuwei 无为) or Confucian ideals of collectivism and communal harmony (datong 大同) may be juxtaposed with Western philosophical concepts. Such comparative frameworks not only illuminate cultural distinctiveness but also cultivate students’ capacity for dialectical thinking and intercultural empathy.

In the specific steps of the path to “Integrate Chinese Classics into Pedagogy”, the three-step process of “compare-analyse-synthesize” can be adopted. **Compare:** Present English linguistic or cultural concepts from course materials alongside English-translated excerpts from Chinese classics. **Analyze:** Guide students in identifying parallels and contrasts between Chinese and Western cultural values through collaborative discussions. **Synthesize:** Encourage critical reflection on how these concepts intersect or diverge, fostering holistic understanding. For example, when teaching Western individualism, teachers might introduce Confucian tenets such as “君子和而不同”(The noble person seeks harmony without uniformity) from the Analects and the virtue of “仁”(benevolence). Through guided group analysis, students would explore both the contrasts (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism) and shared humanistic values (e.g., respect for social harmony) between these paradigms. This exercise not only sharpens critical thinking but also nurtures cultural literacy and ethical pluralism.

Reflecting on the Effect

The Curriculum-Based Ideological Education Project is neither a superficial imposition of abstract concepts nor a disjointed amalgamation of ideas. Its appropriateness and effectiveness must be critically examined through the lens of student experiences and outcomes. In the context of *Advanced English* course teaching, for instance, key questions arise: Does the pedagogical initiative of “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy” accurately convey Chinese linguistic, cultural, and ideological principles? Is this integration implemented cohesively and logically within the curriculum? Does it meaningfully engage students and stimulate their intellectual curiosity? Are learners encountering challenges in comprehension or critical analysis?

These questions underscore the necessity of evaluating the efficacy of “Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy”. To assess its impact, empirical feedback can be gathered via student surveys, classroom observations, and structured interviews. Such data will elucidate whether the pedagogical approach resonates with students’ learning needs and cognitive processes. Insights derived from this evaluation can then inform

iterative refinements to the instructional design, ensuring the methodology aligns with both educational objectives and student-centered learning principles.

IV. CONCLUSION

“Strengthening education in China’s outstanding traditional culture” is one of the core objectives and focal points of the Curriculum-based Ideological Education Project in Chinese universities. It holds significant importance in guiding the practice of "Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy" within the ideological education of the *Advanced English* course, a core component of English majors' curricula in Chinese universities. This paper delves into the application of "Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy" mode in the ideological education of the *Advanced English* course. It proposes that, through the systematic screening of content, clarification of instructional methods, and reflection on the effectiveness of implementation, Chinese classics can be organically integrated into the *Advanced English* curriculum. This approach provides a framework and model for English majors' education in Chinese universities, offering insights into how to strengthen the education of China’s excellent traditional culture. By integrating Chinese classics into the English courses, this model fosters a deeper connection between language learning and cultural heritage.

“Integrating Chinese Classics into Pedagogy” in the teaching of English majors in Chinese universities not only facilitates the mutual appreciation of Chinese and English languages but also promotes in-depth dialogue between Eastern and Western cultures. This teaching model enables English majors to enhance their language proficiency while subconsciously absorbing the values of traditional Chinese culture. It strengthens their cultural self-confidence and cross-cultural communication skills, offering a viable solution for cultivating a new generation of foreign language professionals with both a sense of nationalism and a global perspective. In the future, this model requires continuous exploration in optimizing teaching content, innovating teaching methods, and improving evaluation systems. Such efforts will elevate the teaching of English majors in Chinese universities and advance the construction of Curriculum-based Ideological Education to a higher level.

REFERENCES

- [1] CPC Central Committee, Guidelines on deepening the reform and innovation of ideological education in schools in the new era, (2019-8-14). Accessed 2025-2-23. https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2019/content_5425326.htm
- [2] D. Jiang, Research on the path of ideological education in *Advanced English* Course under the blended teaching model, *Journal of Jilin Institute of Engineering and Technology*, 38(3), 2022, 74-76.
- [3] M. Li, & S. Qin, *Advanced English* unit teaching design based on the concept of Ideological Education—Taking unit 4 as an example, *Educational Observation*, 11(26), 2022, 38-43.
- [4] Y. Ma, Cultivating English majors' critical thinking skills, *Educational Review*, (10), 2018, 115-120.
- [5] Z. Fu & J. Ruan, Research on the integration of ideological education in core English major courses under the CBI theme-based model, *Foreign Languages and Translation*, 31(2), 2024, 82-88.
- [6] K. Mu, Research on the construction of ideological education in *Advanced English* Courses under POA theory, *Overseas English*, (16) 2024, 91-93.
- [7] Y. Wu, From humanistic quality to cultural confidence: integrating ideological education into *Advanced English* courses, *Journal of Suzhou Education Institute*, 24(6), 2021, 55-58.
- [8] H. Li & Y. Liu, Incorporating the achievements of excellent traditional culture integrated into English teaching, *Contemporary Educational Theory and Practice*, 11(6), 2019, 50-53.
- [9] H. Zhang, ed. *Advanced English 1* (3rd ed., Reprint) (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2017).