

# *A Case Study on the Belief and Practice of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education of Foreign Language Teachers in Colleges and Universities*

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**Abstract:** This study takes the curriculum ideological and political education carried out by two teachers who teach English as the second language in a municipal university as the research object. Through the method of case study, this paper analyzes the belief and teaching practice of curriculum ideological and political education of two teachers. The study finds that the two teachers' beliefs of curriculum ideological and political education have a direct impact on their teaching practice. In addition, it is found that students' attitude towards curriculum ideological and political education in foreign language courses is positive. The findings show that college foreign language teachers can effectively guide students' value while improving students' language ability. This study aims to provide practical experience and reference for the curriculum ideological and political education of foreign language courses in colleges and universities.

## **1. Introduction**

The value guidance of students is not only essential for talents cultivation, but also affects the long-term development of the country. The ideological and political education of foreign language curriculum must be an indispensable part. Because the ideology is rooted in the language, it is more necessary for foreign language teaching to guide the values of students. In this sense, values play a leading role in the cultivation of foreign language ability and talents cultivation [1]. Since Byram (1997) created a cross-cultural competence model centered on foreign language education [2], Chinese scholars began to explore foreign language teaching to cultivate students' cross-cultural competence [3-5], aiming to cultivate talents with international vision and sense of patriotic duty. In recent years, with the explicit proposal of the ideological and political education of foreign language curriculum, more foreign language teaching experts have explored how to carry out the ideological and political education of foreign language curriculum from the perspective of curriculum theory and teaching and learning theory. For example, Wen Qiufang (2021) designed the ideological and political education theoretical framework of the foreign language curriculum [6]. Xiao Qiong and Huang Guowen (2020) put forward how to implement ideological and political education in foreign language curriculum from three aspects: curriculum design, teaching evaluation and classroom practice [7].

Zhang Jingyuan and Wang Na (2020) put forward the connotation, principles and process of ideological and political education in foreign language curriculum [8]. Mei Qiang (2018) proposed the ideological and political teaching method of College English courses [9]. Cheng Jiaolin (2020) proposed the organic integration of ideological and political education in foreign language courses with language knowledge and skills through in-depth teaching [10]. Taking specific courses as examples, Cao Jin and Chen Xia (2019) put forward strategies of combining explicit teaching and implicit guidance in translation courses [11].

Teaching belief is a kind of teachers' personal unique belief and knowledge about the context of teaching situation and subject content [12]. Some scholars define "teaching belief" as "ideas and theories owned and fully believed in their own teaching, teachers' role, curriculum, students and learning in the process of teaching" [13-14]. Teaching beliefs are embodied in the teaching process, teaching contents and teaching methods. They affect teachers' teaching behavior and teaching effect as a whole [15-16]. At present, there are few researches on foreign language teachers' teaching beliefs and practice in ideological and political education.

In view of the above, this study takes the real curriculum ideological and political education in the foreign language classroom of a municipal university as the research object, reflecting the current situation of foreign language teachers' ideological and political teaching, in order to provide reference for the ideological and political education of foreign language courses.

## **2. Research Design**

### **2.1 Research Questions**

This study takes the curriculum ideological and political education carried out by two college English teachers as the observation object.

The main questions answered in this study are:

- (1) What are the two teachers' teaching beliefs in curriculum ideological and political education?
- (2) What are the two teachers' practices in curriculum ideological and political education?

### **2.2 Research Object**

This study observed the classroom teaching of two teachers (Helen, Rebecca, both are pseudonyms). Rebecca is a teacher from English department and Helen is a teacher from College English department. Their students are 21 English majors and 28 non-English majors, respectively. The reasons for choosing Helen and Rebecca are as follows: (1) Both are experienced teachers (more than 10 years in teaching English as a second language). In the past three years, they have been carrying out curriculum ideological and political education in their teaching. They have obtained excellent results in curriculum ideological and political teaching competitions; (2) Their beliefs in ideological and political teaching vary greatly; (3) Their students include English majors and non-English majors, thus can comprehensively investigate the curriculum ideological and political education of foreign language courses; (4) They all agreed to participate in this study and were happy to provide teaching materials, participate in interviews and allow researchers to conduct classroom observation.

### **2.3 Research Methods**

By qualitative case study method [17], the researchers conducted a one-semester follow-up classroom observation and survey.

## 2.4 Data Collection

By non-participatory observation, there were 10 observation records (5 times for each teacher). Through semi-structured interviews, two teachers were interviewed three times (before, during and after classroom observation), with an average time of 40 minutes (the interview language is Chinese). Students were also interviewed (the interview language is Chinese), with an average time of 30 minutes. In addition, teaching materials such as lesson plans, handouts, PPT and students' compositions were collected.

## 2.5 Data Analysis

Table 1: Coding examples

Category	Theme	Data example
curriculum ideological and political education beliefs	curriculum ideological and political teaching objectives	The title of this article is “Homesickness”. There is a Chinese famous saying “Everything has its root, and everyone has his hometown”. So, let’s discuss the significance of “remembering homesickness”.
	curriculum ideological and political teaching content	After reading this passage, we have a clear picture of how American welfare system works. Now, let’s read another passage about “China’s poverty alleviation”.
	teachers' teaching behavior	The future will rest with you. You will take the shoulder of taking Chinese culture globally.
curriculum ideological and political education practice	curriculum ideological and political teaching methods	We are going to have a mini-lecture about “Chinglish or China English”. Are they different?
	curriculum ideological and political teaching evaluation	Great. Your presentation showed you have a reflection on the mission to contribute to national rejuvenation. I am proud of you.
	students’ feedback	It is different from what I expect from language class. My teacher helped me learn more about the relationship between language and culture. In addition, I really want to do more to my community or society, which is meaningful in my study life.

First of all, the classroom observation records were converted into word text, and the interview data were transcribed into text, so that the teachers and students can check and confirm the authenticity of the content. Secondly, the researchers coded the classroom observation data and interview data according to the content analysis [18]. After collecting all the data, the researchers repeatedly read the data and verified various data [19]. For example, in the classroom observation, they found that Helen attached importance to cultivating students' learning qualities such as "integrity", "friendliness" and "studiousness". The researchers focused on Helen's views on personal value norms from the interview data and confirmed the researchers' interpretation by observing other classroom teaching cases. The teaching beliefs and practice of the two teachers emerged gradually. Finally, two categories and six themes were extracted. The first category "curriculum ideological and political education belief" includes two sub-themes: 1) curriculum ideological and political teaching objectives; 2) curriculum ideological and political teaching content; 3) teachers' teaching behavior.

The second category "curriculum ideological and political education practice" includes three themes: 1) curriculum ideological and political teaching methods; 2) curriculum ideological and political teaching evaluation; 3) students' feedback (Table 1).

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Curriculum Ideological and Political Education Beliefs

This section presents Helen and Rebecca's beliefs on curriculum ideological and political teaching from three aspects: curriculum ideological and political teaching objectives, curriculum ideological and political teaching content and teachers' teaching behavior.

##### 3.1.1 Curriculum Ideological and Political Teaching Objectives

Both teachers believe that "while cultivating students' foreign language ability, we should integrate core values into language teaching, help students strengthen their national identity, further enhance their cultural confidence while conducting cross-cultural communication." However, the two teachers have different beliefs on specific objectives (Table 2).

Table 2: Two teachers' teaching beliefs in curriculum ideological and political education

teacher	beliefs
Helen	The main objective of curriculum ideological and political teaching in foreign language courses should focus on guiding students to strengthen moral cultivation, and consciously practice the personal value norms in the core values.
Rebecca	The main objective of curriculum ideological and political teaching in foreign language courses should focus on cultivating students' ability to understand and interpret Chinese culture, to strengthen the sense of patriotic duty.

Helen believes that "the primary goal of ideological and political teaching is to improve students' personal qualities, especially patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendliness (the value criterion at the individual level of core values)". Helen pointed out in the interview:

*I personally feel that "learn to do things, be a man first". In the teaching of curriculum ideological and political education, the first thing should be to guide students to study hard and tap their own learning potential, so as to gradually improve their learning ability. (Helen)*

Rebecca agrees with the above objectives. However, she believes that this should be the universal value orientation of higher education, and the more critical role of curriculum ideological and political education should strengthen students' sense of patriotic duty.

*In my opinion, ideological and political education in foreign language courses has its particularity, because foreign ideology is rooted in foreign languages. It should help strengthen students' sense of national and cultural identity. (Rebecca)*

##### 3.1.2 Curriculum Ideological and Political Teaching Content

Both teachers believe that the content of ideological and political education in foreign language courses should be strictly selected, which can reflect socialist core values, patriotism, cultural confidence, etc. However, because the two teachers have different beliefs in curriculum ideological and political teaching, there are differences in the content of ideological and political teaching in their courses.

*Cultural confidence is a good entry point. Cross-cultural comparison can be carried out in almost every text. For example, "comparison of Chinese festivals and their counterparts in Western cultures"*

*can be integrated into the comparative analysis of the Chinese and other cultures, which will help students broaden their cross-cultural horizons.* (Helen)

In contrast, Rebecca emphasizes integrating the ideological and political elements with language teaching. According to the interview, Rebecca has participated in teaching competitions of curriculum ideological and political education many times.

*In teaching competition, I think it is important to make the audience resonate with a firm patriotism. Foreign language courses have natural advantages in this regard.* (Rebecca)

### 3.1.3 Teachers' Teaching Behaviors

Both teachers believe that teachers' teaching behaviors are very important to the effect of curriculum ideological and political education.

*I think it is difficult for a teacher to grasp the "amount" of curriculum ideological and political teaching. Action speaks louder than words. As a teacher, we should influence the students in terms of behavior.* (Helen)

In contrast, Rebecca will directly state her requirements and expectations for students. For example, after the cross-cultural case analysis, she called on students to promote Chinese culture to "go globally", saying affectionally, "as you have more opportunities to go abroad, you should take the shoulder of taking Chinese culture going globally." (Classroom observation 3)

To sum up, the two teachers have different beliefs in curriculum ideological and political teaching, which directly affects their curriculum ideological and political teaching practice. However, both teachers can organically integrate their own curriculum ideological and political teaching beliefs into teaching practice and form their own distinctive ways to achieve curriculum ideological and political objectives.

## 3.2 Curriculum Ideological and Political Teaching Practice

This section presents Helen and Rebecca's curriculum ideological and political teaching practice from three aspects: curriculum ideological and political teaching methods, curriculum ideological and political teaching evaluation and students' feedback.

### 3.2.1 Ideological and Political Teaching Methods

Neither of the two teachers has systematically studied the ideological and political teaching methods. They mainly carry out the ideological and political teaching of the course based on their personal practical knowledge. They have adopted a variety of teaching methods to integrate the ideological and political elements into the teaching activities of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, such as choosing a topic with ideological and political elements for discussion, translation exercise of famous Chinese poems, telling a typical Chinese story in English, 5-minute special mini-lecture of cross-cultural comparison, etc.

*My students mainly study science and engineering. After learning the article, I always integrate the examples of "scientific and technological innovation", such as "Tianhe core cabin", to encourage students to strive for the realization of the "Chinese dream".* (Helen)

In contrast, Rebecca often uses interactive discussion and 5-minute mini-lecture to integrate the ideological and political elements. For example, she asked the students to carry out a thematic discussion on the topic "China has won an all-round victory in the fight against poverty", and provided the report articles on the fight against poverty as self-study materials. During the discussion, the students learned the relevant words "poverty allowance", "relocation plan", and "poverty strict households". The discussion is filled with the words of "gratitude" for the existing happy life and the pride of "the whole country working together to overcome difficulties and make efforts to achieve the

goal". (Classroom observation 5)

*I think curriculum ideological and political education should not be limited by the types of courses. All listening, speaking, reading and writing materials are good carriers of curriculum ideological and political education, and can guide students' values, which mainly depends on the method of how to integrate ideological and political elements.* (Rebecca)

It can be seen from the above that in the process of curriculum ideological and political teaching, the two teachers are not mechanically separated from the language teaching content, but integrate language teaching with curriculum ideological and political education.

### 3.2.2 Curriculum Ideological and Political Teaching Evaluation

Both teachers believe that the evaluation of curriculum ideological and political teaching should break through the single evaluation dimension of language ability and broaden the evaluation dimensions of ideology, values and attitudes.

*Praising hard-working students is a kind of encouragement to other students. In curriculum ideological and political education, we should first promote students to become serious and responsible people".* (Helen)

In contrast, Rebecca's curriculum ideological and political teaching evaluation is mainly reflected in obeying rules. (Classroom observation 2, 3, 4)

### 3.2.3 Students' Feedback

It is found that the curriculum ideological and political teaching of the two teachers had a positive impact on students' value guidance. The interviewed students expressed satisfaction with the curriculum ideological and political teaching. They believe that it has strengthened their patriotism, cultural confidence and national identity. A student of Helen agreed with Helen's ideological and political teaching belief of "learn to do things, be a man first", and spoke highly of the ideological and political teaching of the course.

*I think integrating the guidance of patriotism, integrity and friendliness, into courses will have a subtle impact. Helen tries her best to cultivate us to have a correct learning attitude, be diligent and study hard. If we have an appropriate attitude towards learning, it will naturally lead to a positive attitude towards society.* (Helen's student)

Rebecca's students also think highly of her ideological and political teaching. One student commented:

*I think Rebecca's integration into the appropriate example makes us enhance our feelings of home and country. I felt touched by these stories. I really felt that I should be proud if I can make a little contribution to the national development one day.* (Rebecca's student)

## 4. Implication

This research observed the teaching practice of two foreign language teachers in curriculum ideological and political education. The study found that the two teachers were influenced by professional knowledge, personal practical knowledge, teaching experience, and teaching beliefs. Their teaching beliefs about "curriculum ideological and political education" were different, which directly affected the specific teaching practice.

Although it is a principle that curriculum ideological and political education is "the combination of knowledge education and value guidance", there are no strict regulations on the "quantity" of curriculum ideological and political education. The research found that it is difficult to excavate the ideological and political elements of the curriculum in a comprehensive and in-depth way only by one's own strength. Researchers suggest that a curriculum ideological and political teaching group be

formed within the major to jointly explore how to implement curriculum ideological and political education. At the same time, from the perspective of interdisciplinary cooperation, foreign language teachers should form a teaching and research community cooperated with ideological and political teachers to jointly discuss and formulate curriculum ideological and political teaching plans in line with the characteristics of foreign language disciplines, and facilitate foreign language teachers in curriculum ideological and political education.

This study aims to explore the current situation of curriculum ideological and political education in foreign language courses and convey the voice of front-line foreign language teachers, not to judge the advantages and disadvantages of teachers' curriculum ideological and political teaching practice. In the future, researchers will carry out the research on the effect of curriculum ideological and political teaching from the perspective of students, and expand the research scope of curriculum ideological and political education.

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