

# Curriculum-based Ideological Elements in Media and Communication English and the Teaching Practice

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## Abstract

English courses in vocational colleges in China usually last one and a half years. For the first school year, students enhance English skills by continuing to study English for General Purpose (EGP). In the second school year, English for occupational courses are provided to students depending on their disciplines. Media English (MCE) is an English course for Specific Purpose (ESP), offered to second-year students at tertiary level. MCE mainly deals with English knowledge and skills for students majoring in media and probably seeking for a job in the area of media industry. The paper examines the relations between ideological elements and MCE, exploring how the ideological and political elements can be best reflected and delivered in the teaching practice. The paper may become a pilot practice to other ESP courses regarding how to incorporate ideological and political elements into language teaching.

## Keywords

Media and Communication English; Ideological Elements; Morality; Learning Autonomy; Good Virtues.

## 1. Introduction

The phrase “media and communication English” itself has two connotations. In a narrow sense, it refers to the English language used in news or films transmitted through various media vehicles, such as radios, internet, newspapers, televisions or other social media. However, media and communication English in this paper refers to an ESP course in a broader sense, which covers a wide range of hot topics about the development, characteristics, professional rules, and impact of media or media industries including newspapers, magazines, advertising, printing, radio, film, television, animation and game, media technology, media convergence, media literacy, and so forth.

Offered by institutions of higher education, MCE is intended as a required course to be taken by students majoring in traditional media disciplines such as communication, news, fine arts, filming screenwriting and production, media laws and ethics, as well as emerging media disciplines such as electronic sports, online and emerging media, animation and gaming, culture creative industry.

Students taking the course are those who have got a whole year of English learning experience in college. With an acquisition of basic knowledge and skills of English language, students are trained to perform scenario simulation tasks to improve their practical use of English in the future workplace. Therefore, in the context of classroom and workplace, there is huge potential of ideological and political elements which are embedded with MCE but yet to be discovered and delivered in the teaching practice.

## 2. Concept Descriptions

### 2.1. Ideology

For centuries, the term ideology has been widely discussed among great thinkers, scientists, educators and philosophers. Ideology is our knowledge about the world, and it is based on facts and science.

Originally, Destutt de Tracy saw a positive conception of ideology as the science of ideas. It was needed in order that social and intellectual progress could be made, existing beliefs rationally evaluated, and irrational or superstitious beliefs eliminated from human affairs. [Curdt-Christiansen, X & Weninger, 2015]

Ideology is also a set of anthropological beliefs and practices characteristic of a particular group, community or nation. Cristian [2018] argues that it is not possible to speak of education without values, nor is it possible to speak of culture without ideology. Ideology is an immeasurable concept composed of personal values, beliefs and certain ways of thinking that provide an explanation of the world in which we live. In this sense, ideology is an element of culture, bearing particular value orientations, serving certain social systems and uniting people to strive for a common cause, such as the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. To make the dream come true, the Communist Party of China issued guidelines for practicing core socialist values in 2013.

Socialist core values are the connotations of ideology under discussion in the paper. China's Core socialist values comprise a set of moral principles summarized by central authorities as prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendliness." [Chinadaily, 2017] It displays the inheritance of good virtues, the principle of ideal society and the desire to build a country with modernization.

### 2.2. Education Guidelines and Curriculum Objectives

In 2020, Guidelines of Curriculum-based ideological and political education were proposed by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China to be implemented nationally. [Guidelines, 2020]. It points out that core socialist values should be incorporated into the curriculum and classrooms and made a way of thinking for students. Institutions and their personnel are encouraged to go hand in hand to strengthen self-discipline and enhance their sense of responsibility and their ability to promote core socialist values, that is, promoting curriculum-based ideology education in an explicit or implicit way. With the rise of comprehensive economic strength, China hopes to express its views and share stories of its development on the international stage. MCE course, especially the program offered in a Media College, assumes an inalienable duty and mission in the communication between China and the outside world.

As an ESP course, MCE aims to train students with basic English skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating) required by media and communication industry. In the meantime, under the background of media explosion and technology convergence, the course plays an indispensable role in enhancing students' intercultural communication awareness, critical thinking ability, media literacy and social responsibility by integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum. Furthermore, put in various job scenarios, students are encouraged to acquire professional English skills through information sharing, team working, and problem-solving training.

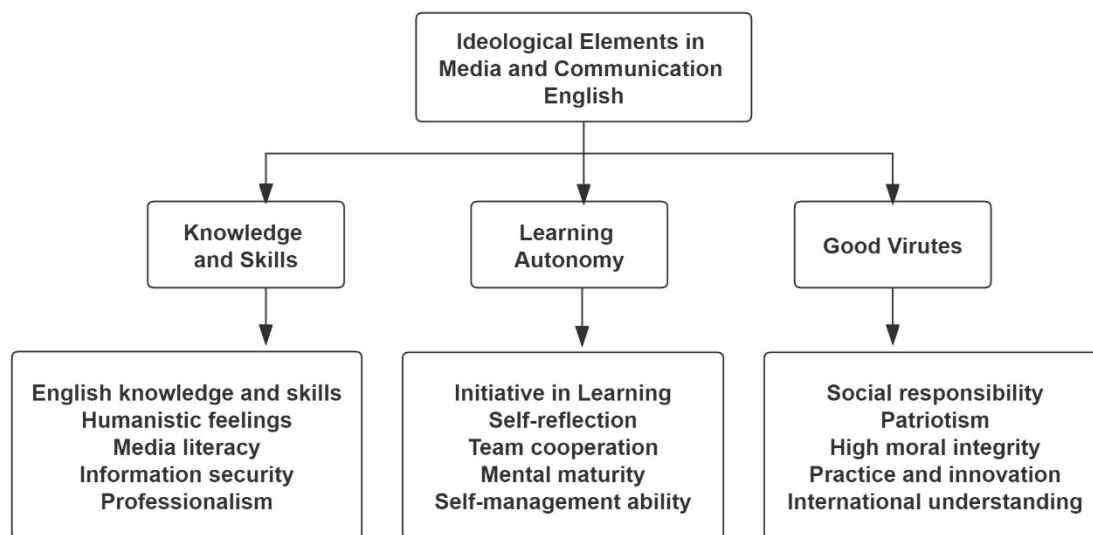
It is also clearly stated in "Syllabus of English courses for vocational colleges" that students in vocational colleges are required to make accomplishments in four respects, namely, English communication skills in the workplace, multicultural awareness, language thinking abilities, and learning autonomy. [Higher Education Press, 2021] To be specific, the four aspects of

accomplishments refer to language skills, value orientation, mental maturity, and lifetime learning respectively.

Teaching objectives of MCE course are set on the basis of the syllabus. The teaching objectives and syllabus are in accordance with the essence stated in Guidelines. It is clearly stated in the three documents that teachers of MCE are obliged to take the responsibility to explore the curriculum-based ideological and political education elements and incorporate the elements into the teaching practice by designing diverse class activities.

### 3. Curriculum-based Ideological Elements in MCE

As is stated in Guidelines, cultivating talents with morality and virtues is the top priority of all classes and courses. Hence, schools should attach importance to the exploration of curriculum-based ideological and political teaching mode which efficiently equip students with professional knowledge and skill, high learning autonomy and above all, good virtues and strong social responsibilities. Students educated in this way are expected to build their comprehensive qualities before making great contributions to the development of society. As far as MCE is concerned, the curriculum-based education elements are displayed in [Figure 1](#).



**Figure 1.** Ideological Elements in Media and Communication English

As is demonstrated in Figure 1, the primary task of MCE is to impart English knowledge and skills for future use at specific positions in the workplace during internship or after graduation. In addition to performance goals of getting top marks in exams, mastery goals are the first concern. Mastery goals provide a strong intrinsic motivation for learning. The main concern is to learn the material as well as possible because students find it interesting and they believe it will be useful to them in the society, that is, its social values and social utility [Dompnier, et al, 2015]. With a good mastery of ESP, they can have a sense of achievement and create a positive image of themselves.

However, unlike robots or machines that also carry knowledge and skills in silicon chips, humans have emotions and hence it is essential to embrace humanistic feelings in their outlook of life and fulfilling job responsibilities with positive value orientation. Therefore, besides English knowledge and skills, there is a need for students to master media-related knowledge. For example, the core concept of media literacy is intelligent engagement, as both a user and a creator, with media and technology. A media-literate person can decode, evaluate, analyze, and

produce both print and electronic media. Also, a systematic knowledge of vocational standard and codes are essential to be a qualified worker.

Learning autonomy originated from humanism, which holds that humans are born with benevolence. To maximize their self-value, they are eager to learn and to develop their potential. Learner autonomy not only means a person's initiative in taking learning activities. According to Behaviorism, it should also be further developed in working with others and interacting with others. In doing so, a person can improve their knowledge and skills, enrich their experience, make reflections and achieve mental maturity. Most importantly, it is more likely that they will ultimately build strong self-efficacy and confidence through repeated self-reflection. [Benson 2001, Najeeb 2013]

MCE course captures high responsibility in the orientation of students' values and virtues. There is no right or wrong with media facilities or technology itself, but with the person employing them. Combined, media and language produce huge impact on the society. On one hand, media speaks for justice and for truth; on the other hand, they act as the spokesman of China, local or national, representing the image of a nation. Secondly, media plays important role in the exchange of culture and civilization between nations. Therefore, to seek peace rather than dispute is an indisputable mission of media.

#### 4. The Teaching Practice

To fulfill the mission of curriculum-based ideology and political education, it is a must to work out a profound and comprehensive teaching schema, by composing specific curriculum-based teaching syllabus, integrating language teaching with ideological and political elements, adopting appropriate teaching methodology and making assessment of the practice. Take one of the units of MCE as an example, a complete procedure of class design is displayed in table 1 to elaborate on the teaching practice.

The topic of this unit is about the communication technology development, consisting of six teaching steps. In the first step (warm-up), after watching a video about the evolution of communication history, students are supposed to scribe down vocabulary concerning communication technology milestones, such as cave drawing in ancient times, block printing of the first book in existence today, invention of telegraph and telephone in modern times, web-connected communication in present age. While reporting these topic-related words, students will get a deep understanding of the words literal meaning and their historical significance. For example, the first print book was dated to AD 868 thanks to the block printing technology in Tang Dynasty in ancient China. Block printing has been listed as Chinese intangible cultural relics in 2006 and world intangible cultural relics in 2009. It has promoted the exchange of cultures for over one thousand years and made great contribution to world civilization. Likewise, China again takes the lead in the current communication technology 5G. By catching the key words, students will feel proud of national cultural inheritance as well as technology innovation of present era.

In step two (reading and narrating), students are put in a scenario of exhibition venue, reading a written passage about the exhibition of communication technology development. They will be asked to choose one section and get familiar with the main idea: the notable milestone of communication technology development and its significance. Mind-mapping may be adopted to help students memorize the details and then a member of each group will act as docent to explain one section of exhibition. Through the tasked-based methodology, students will complete six learning activities, including planning, preparing, applying, checking, presenting and reflecting. During the process of reading and reporting, they also enhance language skills and problem-solving abilities as well.

**Table 1.** Teaching Design of Media and Communication English

Topic: Communication Technology Development				
Steps	Teaching Content	Teaching Activities	Learning Activities	Ideological Elements
1 Warm-up	Vocabulary about communication technology.	Playing a video “The Evolution of Communication”.	Listening to video, and reporting key vocabularies.	Telling about China’s contribution in the communication history (block printing) and its leading role (in 5G development) today;  Understanding the great impact of communication technology on individuals and discussing about how to make use of communication technology to our advantage;  Cultivating teamwork spirit, conscientiousness and truth-seeking awareness in the workplace.
2 Reading & Narrating	Communication technology history and the landmark events.	Assigning the reading task “Exhibition of Communication Technology Development” and asking students to get prepared for the presentation as a docent.	Doing fast reading, working in a group, preparing for the lines as a docent at the exhibition to explain one section of exhibits.	
3 Listening and Speaking	Finding out efficient marketing tools for exhibition of the Printing Museum.	Playing an audio about the feedback meeting of the online exhibition. Asking students to pay special attention to the marketing media technology and their strengths.	Understanding the main idea of the meeting, taking down the notes and acting out the roles: secretary, manager, and three engineers responsible for marketing of the online exhibition.	
4 Writing	A memo about the feedback meeting.	Explaining the format and the elements of a memo.	Writing a memo about the feedback meeting.	
5 Translation	Communication technology development in China.	Helping students review the vocabulary and sentence structures and assign the translation task.	Doing the translation individually and comparing their version within the group.	
6 Posting	Self-reflection	Asking students to post their comments on an online course platform.	Posting self-reflections and making comments.	

Unit projects from step 3 to step 5, are activities mainly designed for students themselves to explore the use of media English on different occasions: communication technology feedback meeting, memo writing and translation about China’s moments in the media industry. College students are immersed in various social media and well-informed about the media characteristics. However, it is another case when it comes to differentiating the benefits and drawbacks of media tools. In step 3, choosing a proper marketing media for the online exhibition is a good opportunity to challenge their ability of analysis in a practical and realistic situation. While listening and speaking tasks, students learn to make a good judgement on the basis of statistics rather than personal interest. The memo writing tasks help students improve accuracy and prudence in written words. The translation task reminds students that interpretation of language is very important in delivering message. To express ideas clearly and

accurately, a translator must stay true to the fact, keep loyal to its meaning and express it in an authentic way. With all the learning activities, students will gradually and unconsciously build stronger sense of conscientiousness and responsibilities in the process of language acquisition and team cooperation.

Finally comes the last step for students to make reflections on the class. In the posting step, students are required to share what they have learned from this unit on an online platform. It is an open but thought-provoking question, leading students to consider carefully the role of communication technology in their life and future career, evaluate their performance in learning this unit and encourage them to take initiative in study and work after self-reflection.

## 5. Conclusion

Ideology elements in media and communication English course include language knowledge and skills, media knowledge and professionalism, students high learning autonomy and good virtues. Curriculum-based ideological education guides the value orientation of every course in institutions of higher learning. This education guideline has been deeply-rooted in Chinese teaching philosophy since Confucius' time: a well-educated person should cultivate his moral character and conduct himself so that he will be capable of regulating a family, administering a country and bringing peace to a nation. In the new era, the education guideline is delivered with the same implication: To be a qualified graduate undertaking the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, one should be armed with socialist core values as well as professional knowledge and skills.

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