Identifying Ideological and Political Education Elements and Their Implementation Pathways in Ancient Chinese Literature Courses for International Students

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Abstract. Against the backdrop of China's strategy for the international communication of Chinese culture and its effort to build a leading country in education, international Chinese language education bears the important mission of telling China's stories well and disseminating fine traditional Chinese culture. This study examines the Ancient Chinese Literature course for international students. Drawing on literature review and case analysis, it proposes two principles for selecting curriculum-based ideological and political education elements-respecting cultural differences and fostering resonance with shared values-classifies these elements into four categories (commitment to family and nation, moral cultivation, human relations and affection, and social care), and develops an integrated implementation pathway combining case-based teaching, group discussion, cultural experience, literary appreciation, and modern technology. Based on a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with 14 intermediate- to advanced-level international students, the results indicate notable effects on cultural understanding and value identification; 71.43% of the students reported that the learning content prompted them to reflect on their own cultures. The study provides an operational framework for integrating value education into Ancient Chinese Literature courses for international students.

Keywords: Ancient Chinese Literature, Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education, International Students, Telling China's Stories Well

1 Introduction

Against the backdrop of the international communication of Chinese culture and the effort to build China into a leading country in education, international Chinese language education carries the important mission of telling China's stories well and disseminating fine traditional Chinese culture. As the number of international students studying in China continues to grow and the "Study in China" brand advances, how to provide value guidance through disciplinary courses has become a key issue in the high-quality development of international Chinese language education. Existing studies have largely used general-education courses such as Overview of China and Chinese as a Foreign Language as their main vehicles, or have focused on macro-level system construction;

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M. B. Badzis et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2026 2nd International Conference on Education Research and Training Technologies (ERTT 2026)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 1042,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-628-4_12

systematic research specifically addressing Ancient Chinese Literature courses remains limited. Research outside China on inter-cultural communicative competence [1], the teaching of traditional cultural knowledge, cultural representation and learner identification, and the Production-Oriented Approach [2] provides methodological references for identifying curriculum-based ideological and political education elements in ancient literature courses.

Teaching ancient Chinese literature to international students presents three major challenges. First, linguistic unfamiliarity: loan characters, differences between ancient and modern word meanings, and polysemy in Classical Chinese create substantial reading barriers. Second, distance from literary imagery: implicit expressions such as the chrysanthemum symbolizing moral purity or flowing water suggesting the passage of time are difficult to grasp directly. Third, insufficient cultural background: the same work, such as the Biography of Su Wu, may readily evoke empathy among Chinese students but remain culturally distant to international students.

Under the national strategy of "telling China's stories well," ancient Chinese literature carries rich spiritual and cultural resources, yet translating these resources across cultures is far from straightforward. This study therefore focuses on four interrelated issues. First, it seeks to identify and screen curriculum-based ideological and political education elements systematically, moving beyond the fragmented listing common in previous studies and establishing selection principles and a typological framework for international students. Second, it explores workable pathways for integrating these elements into teaching through the coordination of cases, discussion, activities, and technology. Third, it develops an effective evaluation framework that combines quantitative and qualitative assessment. Fourth, it examines how value resonance can be stimulated and transformed in cross-cultural contexts, helping international students progress from "understanding" to "identification" and ultimately to "communication and dissemination".

The study is theoretically grounded in constructivism, experiential learning, and high- and low-context theory. Constructivism emphasizes learners' active construction of knowledge in authentic contexts. Experiential learning conceptualizes learning as a cycle of "concrete experience—reflective observation—abstract conceptualization—active experimentation," with direct experience being especially important in cultural learning. High- and low-context theory characterizes Chinese culture as high-context, with meaning often embedded in context and relationships, whereas many international students come from low-context cultures that favor more explicit expression; this difference constitutes a key point of departure for instructional design. Methodologically, the study employs the Questionnaire on International Students' Understanding of Imagery and Value Identification in Ancient Chinese Literature together with semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire contains five sections: background information, cultural understanding, value identification, teaching methods, and open-ended questions. For the interviews, three to four students were selected through stratified sampling according to Chinese proficiency, and interview data were collected in parallel with the questionnaire data. On this basis, the paper is organized into four progressively connected parts: element identification, implementation pathways, effectiveness evaluation, and conclusion.

As the object of this study, ancient Chinese literature embodies the spiritual aspirations and aesthetic ideals accumulated by the Chinese nation over several millennia and constitutes one of the most distinctive cultural vehicles for telling China's stories well. Compared with Overview of China courses, which mainly address contemporary national conditions, ancient literature combines linguistic difficulty with cultural depth. This makes value guidance for international students more challenging, while also providing a stronger test of the cross-cultural transformation capacity of curriculum-based ideological and political education. Treating Ancient Chinese Literature as a specific object of study therefore responds both to the practical need to "enhance the reach and influence of Chinese civilization" and to a gap in existing research on literature courses.

2 Identification of Ideological and Political Education Elements

2.1 Selection Principles

Curriculum-based ideological and political education for international students should first avoid presupposing values and should select less culturally sensitive content in order to reduce the risk of cultural conflict. Three approaches are especially useful. First, teachers should avoid hastily judging right and wrong according to their own standards and should explain the historical context before offering evaluation. Second, they should prioritize less sensitive content, such as poems on labor and love from the Book of Songs, rather than materials that directly invite religious comparison. Third, they should adopt a cross-cultural comparative perspective.

The key is to identify human emotions that transcend cultural boundaries. Joy and sorrow, love and separation, loneliness and longing form an emotional foundation shared across civilizations. The moon, for example, can evoke homesickness in many cultures, so teachers need not overexplain its distinctive Chinese connotations before emotional resonance can emerge.

2.2 Types of Elements

The curriculum-based ideological and political education elements can be grouped into four interrelated and progressively developing categories. The first is commitment to family and nation. The second category is moral cultivation, focusing on integrity, self-strengthening, and related themes expressed in sayings such as "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire" and "a promise is worth a thousand pieces of gold." The third category concerns human relations and affection. The fourth category is social care.

3 Implementation Pathways

The four implementation dimensions (namely, teaching methods, teaching activities, modern technology, and instructional design) do not operate in isolation; rather, they

support one another around a learning chain of "understanding—resonance—internalization—output". Case-based teaching and group discussion mainly advance understanding and resonance, whereas cultural-experience activities and instructional design consolidate internalization and output.

3.1 Teaching Methods

Case-based teaching uses representative, authentic, and thought-provoking cases to guide students in constructing knowledge through analysis and discussion. Case selection should meet three requirements. First, cases should combine literary merit with value-education relevance. Second, cases should match international students' Chinese proficiency and therefore be designed at differentiated levels. Third, they should retain value tensions that can genuinely be discussed; effective cases should not lead to only one predetermined conclusion but should contain value conflicts that permit comparison.

The group-discussion method is organized around topics designed for cross-cultural dialogue, guiding students from passive reception toward active construction of meaning. Topic design should follow two principles. First, topics should allow genuine cross-cultural dialogue by addressing shared human themes such as homesickness, friendship, life, and death. Second, they should have contemporary relevance and may be connected to social issues; for example, Du Fu's line "If only there were thousands of spacious houses" can be compared with contemporary housing problems.

3.2 Teaching Activities

Cultural-experience activities transform scenes from classical literature into perceptible and participatory practices and can include cross-linguistic recitation and chanting. Students are first guided to recite in Chinese in order to experience rhythm and emotion, with support from traditional instruments such as the guqin and pipa or from musical settings such as "Three Variations on Yang Pass" and "May We All Be Blessed with Longevity".

Shared literary-appreciation activities organize dialogue between Chinese and foreign literature around themes such as "homesickness" and "loyalty," creating a two-way process of exchange and mutual learning [3]. Teachers can extract universal themes from ancient Chinese literature. Such activities require bilingual materials prepared before class, guidance for value comparison during class, and practical extension after class.

3.3 Integration of Modern Technology

The integration of modern technology aims to overcome linguistic barriers and constraints of time and space. First, AIGC can transform imagery from ancient poetry and prose into visual scenes and dynamic contexts. Technology integration should follow a "human-led, machine-assisted" principle: AIGC generates scenarios, documentaries re-

construct historical settings, and online platforms extend discussion, but all technological means ultimately serve deeper understanding and should avoid one-way information delivery.

3.4 Instructional Design

Using the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), a thematic unit on commitment to family and nation can be designed backward from three intended learning outcomes: students should be able to explain the basic meaning of at least two patriotic poems, compare differences in expressions of commitment to family and nation between ancient and modern contexts, and produce a short video titled "My Story of Chinese Literature" for an audience in their home country.

4 Effectiveness Evaluation

4.1 Indicators and Methods

Evaluation focuses on two dimensions: cultural understanding and value identification. Cultural understanding is divided into three levels. The basic-knowledge level assesses knowledge of authors, works, and literary history; the deep-understanding level assesses literary imagery and cultural connotations, such as the symbolism of breaking off a willow branch to represent farewell; and the application-and-transfer level assesses students' ability to cite poetry to explain principles in new contexts [2]. Value identification is divided into cognitive identification, affective identification, and behavioral tendency, corresponding with research findings that language comprehension can promote cultural identity [4]. Methodologically, the study combines a five-point Likert scale, a cultural knowledge test, and semi-structured in-depth interviews [1].

4.2 Evaluation Results

The study involved 14 students from Vietnam, Thailand, Mongolia, and Tajikistan with intermediate to advanced Chinese proficiency. Their cultural understanding improved markedly, with the strongest performance at the basic-knowledge level. However, for more abstract dimensions such as "life aspirations and wisdom for conducting oneself" and "harmony between humanity and nature," 28.57% of students still selected the response "average," indicating that deeper cultural concepts require further reinforcement. Value identification was strong: among responses to the statement that the values embodied in ancient literature "remain meaningful today," 71.43% selected "strongly agree." Because international students' identification with Chinese culture is influenced by multiple factors, including language proficiency and cultural immersion [5], these findings further suggest that differentiated instruction and affective support should be developed in parallel.

Students frequently expressed emotional resonance through images such as "the moon evoking homesickness." One Mongolian student remarked, "When I see the

moon at night, I think of home," closely paralleling the Chinese literary tradition of using the moon to convey longing. Students also showed a positive willingness to share and disseminate what they had learned: 57.14% strongly agreed that they would introduce the course content to family and friends, 64.29% were willing to continue sharing it in the future, and 71.43% reported that the learning content prompted them to reflect on their own cultures.

Among the teaching methods evaluated, "explanation of historical background and character analysis" received the strongest approval, with 71.43% selecting "strongly agree," whereas cultural-experience activities received relatively lower evaluations, with 57.14% selecting "average".

The relatively low evaluation of cultural-experience activities deserves further reflection: it shows that "liveliness" is not equivalent to "learning gain." When activities lack a clearly defined value question, international students may participate in the activity without establishing a meaningful connection to their own cultures. The direction for improvement is therefore not to increase the frequency of activities, but to establish a comparable value question for each experience so that "seeing differences" can genuinely become "understanding differences".

4.3 Recommendations for Improvement

Based on the above results, four recommendations are proposed. First, abstract philosophical ideas such as "harmony between humanity and nature" should be explained through everyday life. Examples drawn from the twenty-four solar terms, traditional Chinese medicine [6], and the use of blank space in Chinese landscape painting can help students understand "harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature" through familiar experiences. Second, the implementation of cultural-experience activities should be improved rather than simply made more frequent. Role immersion can be incorporated into recitation, while concrete cultural tasks such as writing a family letter can be embedded in festival activities so that experience becomes meaningful and grounded. Third, cross-cultural comparison should become a routine instructional practice, with comparative questions included as a fixed component of each thematic unit. Fourth, the assessment system should examine the "degree of internalization" in greater detail by adding reflective assignments such as "My Story with Ancient Chinese Literature."

5 Conclusion

This study proposes selection principles and a four-category framework for identifying curriculum-based ideological and political education elements for international students and constructs a four-in-one implementation pathway comprising "methods—activities—technology—design." The empirical results indicate that the course was effective in generating emotional engagement and value identification: 71.43% of students reported that the learning content prompted reflection on their own cultures, and cross-cultural comparison effectively promoted mutual learning among civilizations.

Students generally approved of "explanation of historical background and character analysis" while also expressing expectations for more interaction and cultural experience.

The study makes three main contributions. First, it provides a systematic framework for curriculum-based ideological and political education in Ancient Chinese Literature courses for international students that is both implementable and assessable. Second, it demonstrates the key role of cross-cultural comparison in stimulating value resonance. Third, it offers a model for transforming and communicating "China's stories" to audiences from different cultural backgrounds. The study is distinctive in three respects. First, it shifts the focus of curriculum-based ideological and political education from general courses such as Overview of China to the specialized field of Ancient Chinese Literature, highlighting the distinctive educational value of literature courses. Second, it proposes the selection principle of "respecting differences-fostering resonance," replacing undifferentiated, one-size-fits-all listings of value elements. Third, it operationalizes affective and attitudinal objectives through rubrics, moving value education from being "difficult to measure" toward being "measurable and assessable." The study is limited by its small sample size, lack of longitudinal tracking, insufficient depth of technology use, and the need for more developed cross-cultural comparison. Future research can test the framework with larger and more diverse samples and introduce theories such as reception aesthetics to deepen cultural interpretation from the perspective of the "Other." Methodologically, this study embeds quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative interviews within the same evaluation design and uses rubrics to make affective and attitudinal objectives measurable, thereby offering a replicable evaluation model for comparable cross-cultural curriculum-based ideological and political education courses. In practical terms, the "methods—activities—technology-design" framework can be transferred directly to other modules of fine traditional Chinese culture, such as calligraphy, traditional opera, and philosophy; by replacing the core texts and value themes, new instructional plans can be generated.

Subsequent research may expand the range of countries represented and the overall sample size, introduce longitudinal tracking, and use learning analytics to characterize the dynamic evolution of value identification, and further examine the moderating effect of cultural distance on value identification.

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