

# Constructing an Ideological and Political Element Map for College English: Integrating Tangshan's Local Cultural Resources into *New Horizon College English*

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**Abstract:** In response to China's national strategy of "Curriculum Ideology and Politics" (CIP), which integrates moral and political education into all disciplines, this study addresses the challenge of effectively implementing CIP in college English courses. Moving beyond generic approaches, this practice-oriented research project developed and piloted a localized CIP model for the widely used *New Horizon College English* (Fourth Edition) textbook. The core innovation lies in constructing a three-dimensional "textbook-culture-ideology" element map that systematically links specific unit themes with the unique cultural resources of Tangshan City, such as its industrial heritage, the "Spirit of Earthquake Resilience," and intangible cultural heritage like Shadow Puppetry. Employing a methodology of content analysis, case study, and action research, the project identified synergies between textbook content and local culture, designed corresponding teaching activities, and implemented them in freshman English classes. Findings indicate that this localized approach enhanced student engagement, fostered cultural confidence, and facilitated the natural integration of ideological-political elements into language learning. The study concludes that the "textbook-culture-ideology" mapping model offers a practical, replicable framework for enriching college English teaching with meaningful local context, thereby achieving CIP goals more authentically. It provides valuable insights for pedagogical innovation in similar contexts.

**Keywords:** Curriculum ideology and politics; College English; Local culture; Tangshan; Pedagogical integration; Teaching model

**Online publication:** November 12, 2025

## 1. Introduction

The integration of ideological and political education into the curriculum, known as "Curriculum Ideology and Politics" (CIP), has become a central tenet of higher education reform in China. The Ministry of Education's <sup>[1]</sup> *Guidelines for the Construction of Ideology and Politics in Higher Education Courses* explicitly calls for

integrating values education into all subjects, aiming to foster well-rounded developers of socialism with moral integrity, professional competence, and social responsibility. For foreign language education, this presents both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity lies in transforming language classes into platforms for cultivating cultural confidence, national identity, and global perspectives. The challenge, however, is to avoid superficial or forced politicization of language content, which could hinder language acquisition and student engagement.

Traditionally, CIP in college English has often drawn upon national-level narratives and generic Chinese cultural elements. While valuable, this approach can sometimes lack immediacy and resonance for students whose daily lives are embedded in specific local contexts. This project posits that leveraging local cultural resources can provide a more relatable and authentic pathway for CIP implementation. Tangshan, a major industrial city in Hebei Province with a rich history marked by resilience, industrial prowess, and vibrant cultural traditions, serves as an ideal case study.

This paper presents the outcomes of a teaching reform project centered on constructing a CIP element map for New Horizon College English. The project's primary objective was to systematically identify, map, and integrate Tangshan's local cultural resources into the textbook's unit themes, creating a structured framework—the “textbook-culture-ideology” map—to guide teachers. The research questions were: How can a systematic map be constructed to link the thematic content of New Horizon College English with the specific cultural and ideological elements of Tangshan? What are the practical outcomes and perceived effectiveness of implementing this map in college English classrooms? What implications does this localized model hold for CIP practice in foreign language education elsewhere?

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. The development of curriculum ideology and politics in China**

Curriculum ideology and politics takes “fostering virtue through education” as its fundamental philosophical basis. This concept is inherited from China's traditional educational thought and has been gradually systematized in contemporary educational practice <sup>[2]</sup>. Although ideological and political education has always been an important component of China's education system, its standardized development has broken through the fragmented form of traditional ideological and political education, forming a more systematic and discipline-integrated educational approach.

In the field of foreign language studies, research on CIP has shown a diversified development trend: the academic community not only focuses on the development of teachers' CIP competence and explores their core role in the excavation of ideological and political elements and teaching transformation <sup>[3]</sup>; but also attaches importance to the practice of integrating Chinese culture into foreign language teaching, disseminating cultural connotations and enhancing students' cultural confidence through language instruction <sup>[4]</sup>; at the same time, it actively develops teaching models adapted to foreign language disciplines to promote the in-depth integration of ideological and political education with language teaching <sup>[5]</sup>. However, most of the existing research remains at the level of macro framework construction, with insufficient attention paid to micro-level implementation paths for specific textbooks, regional cultures, and segmented teaching scenarios, leaving room for further deepening.

### **2.2. Local culture as a pedagogical resource**

The use of local knowledge and culture in education is supported by theories of situated learning, which argue that learning is more effective when contextualized within learners' experiences <sup>[6]</sup>. In language teaching, incorporating local culture can enhance relevance and motivation <sup>[7]</sup>. However, the application of localized

cultural content specifically for CIP purposes in English Language Teaching (ELT) remains an under-explored area. Most existing practices tend to prioritize national culture, creating a gap for research that explores the potential of sub-national, regional identities.

### **2.3. Gaps in existing research**

A review of existing literature in the field of CIP reveals an obvious gap in practical implementation. Some scholars have already conducted relevant explorations: for instance, certain studies focus on the development of general CIP cases, constructing a standardized case design framework by extracting CIP themes common across multiple disciplines, which provides references for the widespread practice of CIP; other studies dedicate themselves to exploring the integration path of broad Chinese culture with foreign language teaching, proposing integration strategies centered on the interpretation of cultural connotations and emphasizing the transmission of values through the comparison between Chinese and Western cultures<sup>[8]</sup>. However, the academic community has not yet produced key research outcomes—specifically, there is a lack of in-depth exploration into the systematic connection between national universal textbooks like New Horizon College English and local cultural resources in specific regions, and even more so, a lack of supporting practical CIP tools that can be directly applied in teaching. This results in a mismatch gap between the universality of general textbooks and the localized needs of education with regional characteristics.

This study precisely addresses this gap and aims to construct a micro-level, practice-oriented “textbook-culture-ideology” integration model. By systematically sorting out the inherent connections between the unit themes of New Horizon College English and local cultural elements, it establishes specific mechanisms for the organic linkage of the three components. This not only fills the adaptation gap between “general textbooks” and “local characteristics” in the practice of CIP but also provides an operable solution for the localized implementation of CIP in college foreign language teaching.

## **3. Methodology**

This comprehensive research project employed a multi-methodological approach to investigation, strategically integrating three distinct yet complementary research methods—systematic content analysis, extensive resource development, and participatory action research—all implemented within a pragmatic research framework. This carefully designed methodological combination was specifically chosen and implemented with the primary objective of effectively addressing and resolving a pressing, real-world instructional challenge that had been identified in contemporary educational practice. The research design not only incorporated quantitative content analysis techniques to examine existing materials but also involved the creation of new educational resources, while simultaneously engaging in cyclical action research processes to test, refine, and implement practical solutions in authentic classroom settings.

### **3.1. Content analysis and mapping**

The first phase involved a meticulous analysis of the designated units across Volumes 1–4 of New Horizon College English (Fourth Edition). The research team identified the core theme, key language points, and potential CIP angles for each unit. Concurrently, Tangshan’s cultural resources were cataloged into categories: historical figures (e.g., Li Dazhao), spiritual heritage (e.g., the “Five Spirits of Tangshan,” including the Spirit of Earthquake Resilience and the “Particularly Combat-ready” Spirit of Kailuan miners), industrial heritage (e.g., Kailuan National Mining Park), and intangible cultural heritage (e.g., Pingju Opera, Tangshan Shadow

Puppetry).

The crucial step was constructing the “textbook-culture-ideology” map. This three-dimensional framework served as a visual and conceptual guide (**Table 1**): Textbook dimension: Specific unit topics (e.g., Unit 1: “Fresh Start”); Culture dimension: A matching Tangshan cultural element (e.g., the city’s post-earthquake reconstruction); Ideology dimension: The corresponding CIP value (e.g., resilience, unity, optimism).

**Table 1.** Excerpt from the CIP element map

Textbook unit & theme	Tangshan cultural element	CIP theme
Unit 1: Fresh Start	Post-Earthquake Reconstruction (1976)	Resilience, unity, optimism
Unit 3: Heroes of Our Time	Li Dazhao’s Legacy; Earthquake Relief Heroes	Patriotism, sacrifice, social responsibility
Unit 4: Social Media Matters	Online Promotion of Tangshan Shadow Puppetry	Cultural confidence, digital literacy
Unit 6: Winning Is Not Everything	Spirit of Kailuan Miners; Local Athletes	Process over outcome, teamwork

### 3.2. Teaching case development and implementation

Based on the map, a series of teaching cases was developed. Each case included learning objectives, classroom activities (e.g., group discussions, project-based tasks), and multimedia resources. For instance, for Unit 4 “Social Media Matters,” students analyzed successful social media campaigns promoting Tangshan’s Shadow Puppetry, discussing in English the power and responsibilities of digital platforms in cultural preservation.

This research phase was carefully designed to follow a comprehensive action research cycle consisting of four key stages: systematic planning, strategic implementation, detailed observation, and critical reflection. The pilot implementation of this study was conducted during the first academic semester of 2025, involving a diverse group of approximately 240 first-year undergraduate students from various academic disciplines at Tangshan Normal University. These participants represented a wide range of majors across the university, ensuring a broad perspective and comprehensive data collection for the research project.

### 3.3. Data collection

To comprehensively assess the effectiveness of the project, multiple forms of data were systematically collected from various sources. The evaluation process incorporated three primary dimensions of evidence: First, teaching materials including detailed lesson plans that outlined instructional objectives and methodologies, visually engaging PowerPoint presentations used during classroom instruction, and carefully designed student worksheets that facilitated active learning. Second, student feedback was obtained through both spontaneous, informal oral comments shared during class interactions as well as more structured written reflections where students articulated their learning experiences and perceptions. Third, teacher reflections were documented through regularly scheduled collaborative team meetings where instructors exchanged classroom observations, discussed student progress, and collectively refined teaching approaches based on emerging patterns and needs. This multi-faceted data collection approach ensured a thorough and balanced evaluation of the project’s implementation and outcomes.

## 4. Findings and discussion

### 4.1. Enhanced student engagement and cultural awareness

The most immediate and striking observation from the classroom implementation was a significant increase

in student participation and engagement levels. When discussing topics closely tied to their regional identity, such as the devastating 1976 Tangshan earthquake that shaped their local history or the various industries that form the economic backbone of their hometown, students demonstrated significantly more enthusiasm and involvement compared to when dealing with abstract, generic, or geographically distant subject matter. These locally relevant themes consistently sparked more lively, passionate discussions where students actively exchanged personal experiences, family stories, and community knowledge.

Moreover, students exhibited substantially greater intrinsic motivation to conduct independent research and prepare English presentations about aspects of their local culture, traditions, and history. This heightened engagement clearly indicated a successful pedagogical blend of language acquisition with personal investment and cultural relevance. The observed outcomes strongly support established theories of situated learning, particularly the notion that context-embedded educational content significantly enhances learner motivation and knowledge retention <sup>[6]</sup>. This phenomenon was especially evident as students made meaningful connections between their English language learning and their personal lives, community heritage, and regional identity, creating a powerful synergy between academic objectives and personal relevance.

## **4.2. Naturalized integration of CIP values**

Educators consistently observed that the integration of CIP components appeared more seamless and authentic in practice, moving away from traditional pedagogical approaches that often feel forced. Rather than inserting isolated ethical teachings as standalone modules, fundamental principles such as perseverance and collaborative spirit organically surfaced during in-depth examinations of Tangshan's historical narrative and folk traditions. A particularly compelling illustration of this phenomenon occurred when students investigated the city's remarkable "Phoenix Rising" reconstruction period following the devastating 1976 earthquake. This real-world historical episode created a vivid, emotionally resonant framework for understanding the curriculum's central motifs, thereby rendering abstract concepts like resilience far more meaningful and memorable than hypothetical scenarios could achieve. Such natural integration successfully tackles one of the most persistent obstacles in CIP execution—the elimination of contrived, inauthentic learning experiences that fail to connect with students on a deeper level. The organic emergence of values through meaningful cultural exploration represents a significant advancement in pedagogical methodology, demonstrating how moral education can be effectively woven into historical and cultural studies without compromising academic rigor or seeming artificially tacked-on.

## **4.3. Practical utility for educators**

The CIP element mapping framework was widely commended by participating educators as an exceptionally practical and user-friendly instructional tool. Teachers reported that it dramatically decreased both the time investment and cognitive load necessary for developing lessons that effectively incorporated CIP principles, while simultaneously offering educators a well-defined foundation from which to initiate their activity planning. This systematic methodology not only facilitated greater consistency in how CIP components were implemented across diverse classroom settings but also preserved sufficient flexibility for instructors to exercise their professional creativity and adapt materials to their specific teaching contexts. Furthermore, the mapping template represents a scalable and transferable model that can be readily customized by other teaching professionals—whether they are using the identical textbook series or working with alternative curricular materials within different cultural contexts—making it a valuable resource for promoting standardized yet adaptable CIP integration in various educational environments.

#### 4.4. Challenges and refinements

A minor challenge was the varying degrees of prior knowledge students had about specific local cultural elements. This was addressed by incorporating short introductory videos or readings in Chinese before the English class. Furthermore, balancing language objectives with cultural and ideological goals required careful activity design to ensure that language practice remained the primary focus. Subsequent refinements to the teaching cases placed greater emphasis on language output tasks related to the cultural content.

### 5. Conclusion

This project successfully demonstrates that a localized approach to curriculum ideology and politics in college English is not only feasible but also highly effective. The construction of the “textbook-culture-ideology” element map for New Horizon College English provides a systematic and practical framework for teachers to integrate meaningful local context into their pedagogy. The key outcomes include: A concrete pedagogical tool (the CIP map) that facilitates effective lesson planning; enhanced student engagement through relatable and authentic content; and a more natural and authentic implementation of CIP values, moving beyond tokenistic add-ons. The main implication of this study is that CIP development can benefit from a “bottom-up” approach that valorizes local cultural resources. This model can be transferred to other regions in China and internationally, where educators can map local histories, cultures, and values onto standard curriculum materials. Future research could focus on conducting quantitative and qualitative studies to measure the long-term impact of this approach on students’ value formation and could explore the application of this model to other textbooks or disciplines.

### Funding

(1) 2025 Tangshan Normal University Education and Teaching Reform Research and Practice Project “Constructing an Ideological and Political Element Map for College English——Integrating Tangshan’s Local Cultural Resources into New Horizon College English (2025JGZD131)

(2) 2025 Hebei Province Foreign Language Teaching Reform Research and Practice Project for Regular Undergraduate Universities “A Study on the Tri-dimensional Collaborative Teaching Model (Reading-Writing-Culture-Ideology) for College English under the ‘Four New’ Initiative: An Empirical Exploration Based on Smart Platforms” (2025WYJG072)

### Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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