

# Thoughts on Curriculum Ideological and Political Education in EESP: Taking Medical English Course as an Example

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The education of curriculum ideology and politics is vigorously implemented in China. It manifests in the teaching process across three dimensions: textbooks, educators, and learners. During lesson preparation, instructors may neglect the subtle ideological and political nuances present in original English textbooks, which can result in students misinterpreting the content. Additionally, time constraints hinder teachers from effectively clarifying these implicit factors. Furthermore, students who rely solely on the textbook are likely to accept the information at face value, missing the opportunity to clarify any misconceptions through interactive learning. Ultimately, the textbook is the key and foundation for the implementation of the curriculum ideology and politics in education. This paper takes medical English course as an example to demonstrate it.

*Keywords:* curriculum ideology and politics, education, English education for specific purposes (EESP), medical English course

## Introduction

“Curriculum Ideology and Politics” is an educational teaching philosophy that all courses in the school have the dual functions of imparting knowledge cultivation ability and ideological and political education, and carry the role of cultivating students’ world view, outlook on life, and values. Chang Junyue (2023) argued that English education for specific purposes (EESP) should teach the knowledge and ideology content carried by the language, in addition to teaching the language, so as to organically integrate ideological and political content into language.

A study by Gao Hongli (2021) explored the necessity and feasibility of the implementation of curriculum ideological and political education in college English course. She provided several effective ways to implementing curriculum ideological and political education in college English education, and one of them was to dig up the ideological and political education elements implied in the curriculum. What’s more, Zhang Yanbin and Chen Zhixiong (2022) pointed out that not only liberal-arts curriculum but science curriculum should emphasize the education of curriculum ideology and politics. They found that it was a practical method to implement curriculum ideological and political education in science by initiatively combining the objective laws of faith formation and moral development with professional education.

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The unheeded factors in original English textbooks influence students' knowledge absorption and value building. Keep the medical knowledge in native language, and reject the false curriculum ideological and political value that is not conforming to justice and equity, and the right world view, outlook on life, and values. The analysis of and solution to the potential situations are conducive to improving the ideological and political status quo of students at all levels, enhancing their value cognition, and highlighting the educational effect.

This thesis aims to analyze the unheeded curriculum ideological and political factors in the original English medical textbooks with some examples, namely in *Medical Terminology* and *The Language of Medicine*, and tries to provide a solution.

### **The Unheeded Factors in Medical English Course**

In 2016, the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges was held in Beijing. General Secretary Xi Jinping (2016) proposed the fundamental requirement of “persisting in moral education and cultivating people as the central link, running ideological and political work through the whole process of education and teaching, thus realizing the whole process and all-round education”. Up to the present, the ideological and political work has been carried out in all colleges and universities in China for seven years, discovered some unheeded factors, and tried best to clean them up.

However, some people claim that there are no potential curriculum ideological and political factors or influence in original English natural science textbooks, such as medical textbooks. They think medical textbooks only teach medical science which is irrelevant to curriculum ideology and politics, so the original English textbooks can improve the students' medical knowledge and do not do harm to their ideology, let alone the effect on political stand. Some universities in China use the original English textbooks as school books neglecting the unheeded curriculum ideological and political factors.

However, the truth is that the original English medical textbooks are filled with vast amount of medical knowledge with some unheeded curriculum ideological and political factors, for instance, in the original English medical textbooks, *Medical Terminology* and *The Language of Medicine*. The reason for choosing these two books, *Medical Terminology* and *The Language of Medicine*, is that they have been published namely in nine and 12 editions so far, indicating that they have great influence and have received a lot of recognition. There are namely 21 and 22 chapters, and these two books have almost one or two thousand pages, and the potential or unheeded curriculum ideological and political factors hide in one or two chapters, which is not easy to be observed, let alone to be discovered.

#### **The Unheeded Factors in Medical English Textbooks**

**Example 1: *Medical Terminology*.** Chapter Eight “Drugs” in the original English textbook, *Medical Terminology*, introduces the definition of drugs, types of drugs, effects of drugs, drug names and information, and herbal medicines, and so on. In the section of “Herbal Medicines” of this chapter, there is a paragraph stating the current situation of herbal medicines in the west.

Some issues have arisen with the increased use of herbal medicines and nutritional supplements, including problems about their purity, safety, concentration, and efficacy. Another issue is drug interactions. Healthcare providers should ask about the use of herbal remedies when taking a patient's drug history, and patients should report any herbal medicines they take when under treatment. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not test or verify herbal medicines, and there are no requirements to report adverse effects. There are, however,

restrictions on the health claims that can be made by the manufacturers of herbal medicines. The U.S. government has established the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) to support and coordinate research in this field (Cohen & DePetris, 2017, p. 282).

The paragraph conveys the meanings in four levels. First, herbal medicines have the problem of purity, safety, concentration, and efficacy. Second, herbal medicines have the problem of interaction. Third, the FDA does not make regulation for herbal medicine that implies that the FDA does not take herbal medicines as drugs. Fourth, since the FDA does not administrate herbal medicine, the U.S. government sets the ODS to do the administration, that is, the U.S. government classifies herbal medicines as some substance between drugs and food. This paragraph points out the danger of herbal medicines, and shows the current situation of herbal medicines in the west: Herbal medicines are not accepted as medicines by the western authoritative medical institution.

However, herbal medicine is an important part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and some other countries and regions, such as Europe, Egypt. In the history of China, TCM and herbal medicine have protected and rescued Chinese people for thousands of years. The role and function of herbal medicine is self-evident. However, in the paragraph above in Chapter Eight, the author only lists the danger and limits of herbal medicines instead of presenting the advantages and efficacy. In fact, it is known that any drug has its dangers and limits, and the key is usage and dose. But that is not mentioned in this chapter, a specific chapter for drugs, at all.

Then, the paragraph shows the current situation of herbal medicines in the west, “the FDA does not test or verify herbal medicines, and there are no requirements to report adverse effects”. It implies that because of the dangers and limits of herbal medicines, the FDA does not set regulation or law about herbal medicines, or does not make administration on herbal medicines. That is, the FDA does not take herbal medicines as real medicines. So it gives people/students an impression or misconception that the FDA is right, its decision-making is objective, and the FDA is a just institution.

Moreover, the last sentence supplements that the U.S. government has established the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) to support and coordinate research in the field of herbal medicine. It conveys two meanings: First, herbal medicines are not medicines, but some substance between medicine and food, because the authority institution FDA takes an indifferent attitude to herbal medicines, and the U.S. government sets the ODS to administrate herbal medicines. Second, the U.S. government is a responsible government who solves the problem of herbal medicines in a very smart way since the FDA does not take the responsibility to administrate herbal medicines in the west. However, herbal medicines are drugs, not only for Chinese people but also for many other countries’ people, such as Korea and Japan. In fact, a lot of people in China even think herbal medicines have better efficacy in treating some diseases, such as some chronic diseases, because they are more natural and mild, especially for children and the elderly.

Therefore, on the surface it seems that the paragraph in Chapter Eight “Drugs” only presents the negative facts of herbal medicines and its current situation in the west, and does not show more information or the author’s attitude to herbal medicines. Nevertheless, the truth is that due to that the statement of herbal medicines lacks of objective comparison and a comprehensive assessment, it probably influences the readers or students’ cognition of herbal medicines, if they only take the attitude toward herbal medicines hidden in the medical knowledge of drugs. Such statement of herbal medicines is “from the foot to judge of Hercules”, but it does not work here for herbal medicines.

**Example 2: *The Language of Medicine*.** The similar situation can also be found in another original medical English book *The Language of Medicine*, which was edited by Davi-Ellen Chabner and published in 2016. This

book gives a detailed and scientific introduction to medical knowledge from the aspects of terminology, physiology, pathology, etc. However, there are still some unheeded curriculum ideological and political factors to be discovered in this book. Here is an example from Chapter 22 “Psychiatry”. This chapter introduces psychiatric clinical symptoms, psychiatric disorders, therapeutic modalities, related medical terms, case analysis, and so on. In the section of “Therapeutic Modalities” of this chapter, there is a paragraph stating one of the major therapeutic techniques that are used to treat psychiatric disorders, psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis: This long-term and intense form of psychotherapy seeks to influence behavior and resolve internal conflicts by allowing patients to bring their unconscious emotions to the surface. Through techniques such as free association (the patient speaks his or her thoughts one after another without censorship), transference (the patient relates to the therapist as to a person who figured prominently in early childhood, such as a parent or sibling), and dream interpretation, the patient is able to bring unconscious emotional conflicts to awareness and thus can overcome these problems (Chabner, 2016, p. 1538).

The paragraph conveys the meaning in two levels. First, psychoanalysis can solve the psychological problems of patients from the inside, and patients need to accept long-term treatment, that is, to establish a long-term doctor-patient relationship with doctors. Second, psychoanalysis consists of three techniques, including free association, transference, as well as dream interpretation. All three treatments require deep communication between the doctors and the patients. This paragraph states that psychoanalysis requires a long-term, in-depth relationship between the doctors and the patients. Hence, this kind of therapy is likely to have a big hidden trouble because of such objective need, that is, ethics in psychoanalysis.

From the definition of psychoanalysis given in this paragraph, it can be seen that psychoanalysis requires the doctors to treat the patients by understanding and intervening in their underlying consciousness which may be closely related to the patients’ personal privacy. In consequence, there is a special need for doctors to clarify and observe the boundaries between psychoanalysis and ethics in the course of treatment. However, the breach of boundaries stemming from doctors’ interaction with patients has become commonplace (Foulkes, 2010). In this case, doctors may use the information of the patients to do harm to them or the society. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the ethics of psychoanalysis in the textbook in order to attract students’ attention to this issue.

Then, the author, Chabner, lists three specific techniques to further illustrate how doctors treat patients by guiding them to express their inner thoughts. All three types of psychoanalysis encourage patients to express their experiences and thoughts as a means of healing. Among them, analytic procedure of transference is especially required to be more than technical knowledge and reaches, touches, and personally engages the doctor (Scarfone, 2017). However, although the introduction of this content deepens students’ knowledge and understanding of psychoanalysis, it lacks guidance for students on how to deal with ethical issues in psychoanalysis. What’s noteworthy is that it shows the psychoanalysis without introducing the ethics.

Since doctors play the role of listening and guiding when patients receive psychoanalytic treatment, it is likely that other interpersonal relationships with interests or emotions exist or develop between doctors and patients in addition to the therapeutic relationship. The establishment of such multiple relationships can lead to serious consequences. On the one hand, for doctors, it may violate not only the professional ethics but even the law. On the other hand, for patients, their personal information may be leaked or used, and it may probably threaten their personal physical safety and mental health (Jiang, Huang, & Zhang, 2024). What’s more, patients also internalize the doctors’ analytic and personal moral values while undergoing psychoanalytic treatment. It

can be seen that doctors have such a great influence on patients in psychoanalysis (Levin, 2018). Therefore, it is important to emphasize to the readers that the boundary between psychoanalysis and ethics should be maintained.

Scarfone (2017, p. 394) has said “That psychoanalysis is deep down a practice founded on ethics may seem obvious, even trivial, and, for that reason, to be seriously underestimated”. In Chapter 22 of this book, the author does not mention the content of medical ethics after introducing all parts of therapeutic modalities. Although the author may not be able to describe medical ethics in detail due to limited space, it is necessary to briefly introduce the concept of medical ethics needed attention in psychoanalysis at least, so that students have a chance to notice ethics of psychoanalysis, so as to remind students to pay attention to this issue in possible psychoanalytic practice in future.

### **The Unheeded Factors in Medical English Teaching and Learning**

Since there are some unheeded factors existing in the original textbooks in English version, there must be some corresponding conditions in the process of medical English teaching as using those textbooks. The potential factors exist in teachers, teaching process, and students.

**For teachers.** As has been mentioned in this article, some people do not think there are potential curriculum ideological and political factors in natural science textbooks, including medical textbooks. So if the teacher holds such an opinion, he/she will not discover the potential factors in those textbooks, and convey the misconception during the process of teaching. Besides, usually the potential curriculum ideological and political factors are in a small part of the textbook, so it is not easy to be discovered. If the teacher can not read or analyze the textbook very closely with the curriculum ideological and political view, the potential factors will be overlooked, and the bad influence will spread to the students.

“Curriculum ideology and politics” is also a way of thinking, and teachers should carry out ideological and political education for students intentionally, organically, and effectively in the teaching process. It is reflected in the top-level design of teaching, which should put people’s ideological and political cultivation as the goal of curriculum teaching in the first place, and combine it with professional development education (Gu, 2023).

**In the teaching process.** On the other hand, even though the teacher discovered the potential curriculum ideological and political factors in original medical English textbooks, there are some potential factors in teaching process still.

If the teacher discovered the potential curriculum ideological and political factor in original medical English textbooks, of course he/she will point out the potential factors and give more information and explanation to demonstrate the advantages and functions of herbal medicines, which will not only stop the spread of the misconception, but also set an example to make China’s voice heard. However, a class only has 40 minutes, and defending in a class accounts only 10 minutes at most. Such a short time of defending, 10 minutes versus a long tome of existence of a book, which takes one to two terms to teach and learn, has little effect. Furthermore, the 10 minutes one runs fast. In a long run, as the class is over, what is left is the everlasting presswork, the textbook.

**For students.** As for students, they are divided into two types. The first type is those who have the class and listen to the teacher’s lesson. The other type of students is those who do not have the class, and only possess the textbook.

For the first type of students, they have the chance to listen to the teacher’s lesson, so they can understand the misconception, the indifference of the FDA, and the arrogance of the west, and build a correct value on herbal medicines. But as has been mentioned in this article, the 10 minutes time of defending versus a whole book is

like a drop in the bucket. In a long run, what is left is the textbook. For the second type of students, they have no chance to listen to the teacher's lesson, so it is really hard for them to discover the misconception, indifference, and arrogance of the west, and they would be easily to be influenced by the original medical English textbooks.

### **The Root of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education in Medical English Course**

According to the analysis in Part 3 and Part 4 in this thesis, it is easy to find that the root of potential curriculum ideological and political factors in medical English education is taking the original English textbooks as our textbooks that are the carriers of knowledge and the media to connect teachers and students. So, if we want to eliminate the potential curriculum ideological and political factors in medical English education, the best way is not to use the original English textbooks.

However, the original English textbooks are written and edited by the native specialists in the field, which means authority in medicine and native in language. If we wiped them out thoroughly, it will affect the knowledge absorption and language acquisition. Therefore, it is required to combine the characteristics of carrier courses with ideological and political education scientifically and artfully (Zhang & Chen, 2022). On the one hand, we should pick out the potential curriculum ideological and political factors in original English textbooks and reject them. And on the other hand, we should try to keep the real medical knowledge in native language. As a result, the optimal solution is to adopt the part of real medical knowledge and revise the part of the potential curriculum ideological and political factors in original English textbooks. That is, the revision of the original English textbooks, or a blending of real medical knowledge in native language and the curriculum ideology and politics conforming to China's value. In this way, medical English education can realize the unity of natural science theorems and philosophy and social science laws at the philosophical level (Zhang & Chen, 2022). In this way, students can improve cultural self-confidence so as to facilitate their overall growth as well as to realize the fundamental goal of "enhancing morality and fostering talents".

### **Conclusion**

The potential or unheeded curriculum ideological and political factors do exist in natural science education when original English textbooks are used as school books. In this case, such potential curriculum ideological and political factors will cause corresponding conditions in the process of teaching. And the potential factors may imply in three aspects, namely in teachers, teaching, and students. For teachers, it is not easy for them to actively discover those potential factors in original English textbooks. Therefore, they may convey the misunderstandings to students. Besides, although teachers have found the potential curriculum ideological and political factors hidden in the textbooks, it is also difficult to clarify all the potential factors clearly in limited class time. What's more, for students who could not listen to the teachers' lessons, but only have the original English textbooks, they are easily to accept the misconceptions conveyed in the book. The root of the potential factors is the textbook. To improve the situation, the best way is to discard the dross and select the essential. Hence the blending of medical knowledge and the curriculum ideological and political value conforming to China's value is the solution. This study is limited by the absence of enough texts to support the finding, and more types of texts are needed to comprehensively demonstrate it.

Curriculum ideological and political education, as an essential concept and principle guiding the education of all types of students in Chinese universities, has become a hot area of research in academic circles. The implementation of "curriculum ideology and politics" serves as an inherent necessity for all kinds of schools to

carry out the fundamental task of values education. This approach contributes to enhancing the current ideological and political status of students at all levels, improving the value system of contemporary students, as well as emphasizing the effect of educating people.

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