

Original Paper

Ideological and Political Education in English Teaching: Multimodal Discourse Construction of Positive Values

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Abstract

This paper explores the innovative approaches to deeply integrating ideological and political education into the teaching of translation theory. It takes the Skopos Theory of the German Functional School as the carrier of teaching content and constructs a multimodal teaching model centered on the multiliteracy pedagogy. The research design includes four cyclic stages: “real-scenario practice, explicit guidance, critical framing, and transformative practice”. Through comparative analysis of translation examples, theoretical study, and critical discussion, it guides students to deeply understand the social functions and cultural missions of translation. In teaching, students are required to complete academic English PPT presentations in groups, analyzing the external translation strategies of Chinese political documents and cultural concepts from the perspective of Skopos Theory, thereby organically unifying the learning of professional knowledge with the process of value internalization. This model not only cultivates students’ ability in theoretical application and academic expression but also strengthens their cultural awareness, translator ethics, and sense of responsibility to tell Chinese stories in a way that the world can understand. It provides an effective practical solution for professional courses to fulfill the goal of moral education and talent cultivation.

Keywords

English Teaching, Ideological and Political Education, Multimodal Discourse, Multiliteracy Pedagogy

1. Introduction

The state strongly advocates ideological and political education, explicitly requiring the deep integration of ideological and political education into the teaching of various courses to achieve full-staff, whole-process, and all-round education. This strategic measure aims to implement the fundamental task of “moral education and talent cultivation” and cultivate new generations capable of shouldering the responsibility of national rejuvenation. Against this backdrop, university teachers are faced with an urgent and important mission: how to effectively “embed” ideological and political elements in professional classrooms, avoid rigid indoctrination, and achieve the educational effect of “nourishing things silently”. However, in practical implementation, this requirement, especially in English teaching, encounters significant challenges. English courses have long been regarded as tools for language learning and carriers of Western culture, and their teaching content and thinking paradigms often conflict with China’s local values. If a simple and direct “labeled” approach is adopted to embed ideological and political elements, it will not only easily trigger students’ psychological resistance but also may deviate from the original intention of ideological and political education, which emphasizes inspiration and internalization. To solve this dilemma, it is necessary to innovate educational concepts and methods, and explore a path for integrating ideological and political education that aligns with the characteristics of the discipline and is consistent with students’ cognitive patterns.

Currently, we are in a “multimodal” communication era composed of images, videos, and sounds, where contemporary students are accustomed to receiving and understanding information through diverse symbols. This enlightens us that the transmission of values can also go beyond single-language texts and be realized through the collaborative construction of multimodal discourses. Therefore, this study focuses on the core method of “multimodal discourse construction” and explores its unique advantages in carrying and conveying positive values in English classrooms. The research holds that teachers should no longer be simple “transmitters” of ideological and political content, but rather “designers” of meaning. By systematically integrating various semiotic resources such as language, images, colors, layouts, sounds, and gestures, and carefully designing teaching materials and classroom activities, ideological and political elements—including core socialist values, fine traditional Chinese culture, and patriotism—can be embedded in the process of meaning generation. This enables students to naturally perceive, reflect on, and identify with the positive values conveyed through an immersive multimodal experience, while improving their comprehensive language application abilities, ultimately achieving the three-dimensional unity of knowledge impartment, ability cultivation, and value guidance.

2. Theoretical Foundation

“Multiliteracies” was proposed by the New London Group in 1994. This concept is not confined to the acts of reading and writing within the traditional domain of literacy; instead, it encompasses multidimensional language competencies including listening, speaking, reading, and writing within the framework of foreign language learning. Thus, it cannot be narrowly construed as aural reading and paper-based writing.

Multiliteracies pedagogy comprises four core elements: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice. Specifically, Situated Practice emphasizes the creation of authentic contexts for language learning, guiding students to engage in language application scenarios immersively, construct new knowledge based on their existing knowledge systems, and expand the boundaries of their thinking. Overt Instruction focuses on teachers providing clear explanations and guidance to help students achieve meaning construction through Situated Practice. Critical Framing aims to stimulate students’ critical thinking, promoting analysis from a functional level to a critical level, and extending from the surface level of language to the meanings, values, and ideologies embedded in the deep structure, thereby enabling in-depth analysis and reflection. Transformed Practice requires students to transfer and apply internalized knowledge to new contexts, realizing the flexible application and transformation of knowledge.

Zhang Delu and Liu Rui (2014) demonstrated the application value of this training framework by having students work in groups for cooperative learning, make oral presentations, and analyzing the learning process of students’ multi-modal discourse design and multi-literacy skills in teaching. Feng Dezheng (2015) designed teaching principles incorporating moral education elements based on the multiliteracies theory, enabling students to understand, identify with, and practice positive values, and explored how to implement humanistic moral education using multimodal resources in English teaching. Li Yanfei and Feng Dezheng (2017) constructed a PPT courseware design framework with multiliteracies pedagogy as the core guiding principle, aiming to provide effective and targeted theoretical support and methodological guidance for college linguistics and academic English teachers to optimize PPT courseware design and improve teaching quality. Lei (2018) developed a design learning process analysis framework based on existing design learning theories. Guided by this framework, she adopted methods of classroom observation, journal tracking, and individual interviews to study students’ design learning processes both in and out of the advanced writing proposal course, and explored the relationship between “design learning” and the development of students’ multiliteracies. Hu (2021) constructed a multiliteracies teaching plan suitable for humanistic moral education based on the multiliteracies pedagogy as the theoretical foundation, and took the unit theme of the comprehensive textbook "Emerging Adulthood" as an example to explore its practicality.

3. Instructional Design for Integrating Ideological and Political Education into Translation Theory Classes

To achieve the organic integration of ideological and political education into English major courses, this study takes the Skopos Theory of the German Functional School as the carrier of teaching content and constructs a comprehensive teaching model that incorporates ideological and political education. Following the four-step cyclic framework of the “multiliteracy” pedagogy, this model enables students to not only master professional theoretical knowledge but also deeply reflect on the social functions, cultural missions, and ethical responsibilities of translation through well-designed teaching activities, ultimately achieving the organic unity of value shaping and ability cultivation.

3.1 *Situated Practice*

The core activity designed for this stage is the comparative analysis of “the same text with different purposes”. Teachers select original texts with rich cultural connotations and Chinese characteristics, such as political concepts like “common prosperity” and “a community with a shared future for mankind”, philosophical concepts like “harmony between man and nature” and “harmony without uniformity”, or policy expressions like “targeted poverty alleviation” and “rural revitalization”. For each text, 2-3 versions oriented to different purposes are provided and presented one by one on PPT. For example, teachers offer three versions of “共同富裕”: the first adopts a literal translation “common prosperity”, focusing on formal correspondence; the second uses an explanatory translation “prosperity for all”, emphasizing the conveyance of the concept; the third applies dynamic equivalence “shared prosperity”, prioritizing audience acceptance.

Students work in groups to analyze the target readers, applicable scenarios, and communicative purposes of each translated version, and reflect on questions such as: Who might be the target readers of the first version? In what scenarios is it used? What effect is it intended to achieve? What purposes do the second and third versions serve respectively? Through this comparative analysis, students can intuitively understand the essence of Skopos Theory—there is no single “correct answer” to translation, and the choice of translation strategy depends on the translation purpose. This awareness breaks students’ previous rigid understanding of the concept of “faithfulness” in translation, laying an experiential foundation for their subsequent study of Skopos Theory.

Building on this foundation, teachers guide students to think further: Why are multiple translation versions needed for the same concept? What kind of needs in China’s current international communication does this reflect? Combined with the abundant translation examples on PPT and through discussions, students can gradually realize that we need to adopt different translation strategies based on different audiences, scenarios, and communication purposes—only in this way can we effectively convey China’s voice and enhance the effectiveness of international communication. This segment helps students recognize that translation is not only a linguistic activity but also a purposeful, context-constrained social and cultural activity, and it also provides internal motivation for students’ subsequent theoretical learning.

3.2 Overt Instruction

On the basis of students' initial understanding of Skopos Theory, the Explicit Guidance stage systematically introduces the core theoretical framework and analytical tools of Skopos Theory. This helps students elevate their understanding from preliminary experiential cognition to theoretical cognition, and master the necessary academic research methods. First, teachers explain in detail the three core principles of Skopos Theory: the Skopos Rule, the Coherence Rule, and the Fidelity Rule. They focus on elaborating the core view that "the translation purpose determines the entire translation process", and use abundant cases to illustrate how to analyze translation requirements, define the function of the target text, and select translation strategies. In particular, it is necessary to emphasize how Skopos Theory transcends the traditional equivalence theory, helping students understand the essence of translation from the perspective of functionalism.

Second, teachers guide students to study classic literature on Skopos Theory, select key chapters from it, and direct their attention to the historical context and social needs behind the theory's emergence. In particular, students are asked to reflect: Why did Skopos Theory emerge in Germany in the 1970s? What connection did it have with Germany's needs for international cultural exchange at that time? This historical and evolutionary approach to reading helps cultivate students' ability to link theory with practice. Subsequently, in-depth case analysis is conducted. Multiple cases of Chinese-themed texts translated into foreign languages are selected, such as the multilingual versions of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China, various English translations of "Chinese Dream", and the translation of Chinese cultural keywords. Guided by these cases, students are instructed to use the Skopos Theory framework to analyze the underlying purposes, target readers, and communicative functions of these translation practices. For example, they analyze why "一带一路" is translated as "Belt and Road Initiative" rather than "One Belt One Road", and explore the in-depth considerations behind this choice.

Finally, teachers provide multimodal academic expression training and demonstrate how to use visual tools to present Skopos Theory analysis—such as creating correspondence diagrams between translation purposes and strategies, text function classification tables, and audience analysis framework diagrams. At the same time, students' linguistic competence in academic expression is trained, laying a solid foundation for their subsequent PPT presentations. Through the systematic learning in this stage, students not only master the core concepts and analytical methods of Skopos Theory but, more importantly, begin to understand the practical application value of the theory, especially its significant guiding significance for China's current international communication practices.

3.3 Critical Framing

The critical framing section aims to guide students to conduct a critical examination of Skopos Theory and establish correct translation values. First, by exploring the ethical boundaries of Skopos Theory and its applicability in the Chinese context, it guides students to reflect on the criteria for making trade-offs when translation purposes conflict with the author's intent, as well as how to prevent Skopos Theory from becoming a theoretical excuse for cultural misinterpretation. Through analyzing cases of

differentiated translations of Chinese discourse by Chinese and Western media, it helps students recognize that translation should balance audience acceptance and cultural authenticity—while respecting the laws of communication, it is more important to safeguard the integrity and authenticity of national discourse.

Second, through a comparative analysis of Chinese and Western translation concepts, the “purpose-first” principle of Skopos Theory is examined alongside the “ethics-prioritized” concept in traditional Chinese translation theory to explore the underlying differences in cultural philosophy. It guides students to reflect on how to define the fundamental purpose of translation in the international communication of Chinese culture, and how to effectively convey the core essence of Chinese discourse through creative transformation while avoiding the predicaments of cultural hegemony or self-Orientalization.

Finally, by organizing students to conduct thematic discussions on the translation mission of “telling Chinese stories well”, it guides them to establish a translation ethics that both respects the laws of cross-cultural communication and upholds cultural subjectivity. These discussions not only deepen the understanding of Skopos Theory, but also cultivate students’ ability of value judgment and cultural confidence in complex contexts, enabling them to recognize that the construction of translation theory with Chinese characteristics needs to be based on local practice, integrate the essence of both China and foreign countries, and ultimately form an academic perspective that neither blindly follows the West nor loses cultural subjectivity.

3.4 Transformed Practice

The transformative practice section requires students to convert the knowledge, skills, and values acquired in the previous stage into specific academic achievements. Each group shall create and present an English academic PPT report titled “Telling Chinese Stories Well in a Way the World Understands: A Study on Translation Strategies from the Perspective of Skopos Theory”. The report needs to systematically apply the Skopos Theory framework, analyze the external translation strategies of Chinese political documents or cultural concepts, and present the corresponding relationship between translation purposes and strategy choices through multimodal methods.

In the implementation process, students are required to complete a series of tasks including case selection, theoretical analysis, strategy evaluation, and proposal design. They need to use visualization tools such as comparison tables, decision flowcharts, and cultural image transmission diagrams to demonstrate the service purposes and practical effects of different translation strategies, and put forward translation improvement proposals from the perspective of Skopos Theory, which reflects their ability to apply theoretical knowledge and innovative thinking.

Finally, through in-class presentations and defenses, students not only demonstrate their academic research capabilities and multimodal expression skills, but also internalize correct translation values in practice. This creative output process urges students to transform professional knowledge into the ability to solve practical problems, strengthens their sense of responsibility as cultural exchange envoys,

and achieves the organic unity of knowledge acquisition, competence development and value shaping.

4. Conclusion

This study adopts the four-step cyclic framework of the multiliteracies pedagogy, covering situated practice, explicit instruction, critical framing, and transformative practice, and is committed to realizing the in-depth integration of Skopos Theory teaching and ideological and political education in translation courses. By guiding students from the analysis of specific translation examples and theoretical study to the completion of a comprehensive PPT report, the framework realizes the full-process integration of value guidance into professional knowledge teaching, and effectively cultivates students' ability to apply theories, awareness of cultural discrimination, and sense of mission in cross-cultural communication. Its innovation lies in transforming ideological and political goals into operable teaching practices, and prompting students to naturally internalize translator ethics and cultural confidence through critical discussions and creative outputs, thus providing a reference-worthy practical plan for foreign language majors to implement the goal of moral education and talent cultivation.

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