

Practice Research on the IPCAW Teaching Model in College English from the Perspective of 'the Unity of Knowledge and Action'

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of globalization and new liberal arts construction, traditional college English teaching faces the dilemma of overemphasizing language skills while neglecting value cultivation. Achieving the "unity of knowledge and action" has become a key issue in curriculum ideological and political reform. This study constructs the IPCAW teaching model based on the philosophy of Wang Yangming's "unity of knowledge and action" and Tao Xingzhi's "integration of teaching, learning, and doing," combined with constructivist learning theory and the three-dimensional curriculum objectives theory of ideological and political education. This model forms a spiral closed loop of "knowledge internalization-practice externalization-wisdom generation." Through teaching activities such as cross-cultural issue inquiry, multimodal situational perception, and project-driven practice, a teaching experiment with non-English major students verifies that the model significantly enhances students' critical thinking abilities, ideological and political identity, and value recognition. The study demonstrates that the IPCAW model effectively addresses the fragmentation between language teaching and ideological education, providing a feasible path for effective value cultivation in foreign language education.

KEYWORDS

Unity of Knowledge and Action; IPCAW teaching model; spiral closed loop; practice education

1 Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, cross-cultural communication competence has become a crucial indicator of individual comprehensive quality. As a global lingua franca, English holds a prominent position in education. College English courses not only aim to cultivate language skills but also shoulder the responsibility of shaping students' correct values and enhancing their core literacy. Against this backdrop, integrating knowledge transmission with value cultivation through the "unity of knowledge and action" has become an urgent task in college English teaching.

The concept of "the unity of knowledge and action," a core proposition in ancient Chinese philosophy, emphasizes the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical action, where practical experience deepens theoretical understanding. In the context of globalization, this philosophy offers profound implications for curriculum ideological and political teaching in college English. On one hand, it requires teaching to focus not only on language skills but also on cultivating students' ideological and moral qualities, enabling them to maintain cultural confidence and convey positive values in cross-cultural exchanges. On the other hand, it prompts reflection on the limitations of traditional teaching models and calls for exploring more contemporary teaching approaches. However, traditional teaching models often separate "knowledge" from "action," prioritizing knowledge instillation while neglecting practical application and value cultivation. The phenomenon of "overemphasizing language skills and undervaluing value shaping" is particularly prominent in college English teaching, leading to students lacking cultural literacy and critical thinking despite mastering language skills, which hinders their depth and breadth in cross-cultural communication. Additionally, traditional models have obvious limitations in cultivating cultural dissemination and critical thinking abilities, failing to meet the requirements for comprehensive talent development in the new era.

2 Literature Review

In recent years, scholars at home and abroad have conducted extensive research on value education approaches in foreign language teaching. CiteSpace analysis shows that domestic studies mainly focus on teaching models such as task-based teaching, production-oriented approach (POA), and "learning before teaching." Wen Qiufang's (2015) POA advocates the concept of "integration of learning and application," emphasizing that language learning should directly serve communicative needs and improve language and critical thinking abilities through "drive-facilitation-evaluation" phases, providing a methodological foundation for integrating ideological and political goals into language teaching. Sun Youzhong's (2018) content-based instruction (CBI) highlights using disciplinary knowledge as a carrier to cultivate humanistic literacy, identifying cultural comparison as a key path for value shaping. Liu Jianda's (2020) task-driven approach guides value judgment through discussions on social issues (e. g., environmental protection, poverty alleviation). These models emphasize student-centered learning and practical application to varying degrees.

Foreign studies, such as constructivism and action learning theory, provide theoretical support for value education in foreign language teaching. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle theory proposes a four-stage model of "concrete experience-reflective observation-abstract conceptualization-active practice," emphasizing the cognitive process from concrete to abstract and back to concrete, offering insights for implementing the "unity of knowledge and action" in foreign language teaching. Lave & Wenger's (1991) situational learning theory highlights knowledge construction within practice communities, providing a basis for project-driven practices. Byram's (1997) intercultural competence model introduces the concept of "critical cultural awareness," aligning with the "critical thinking" goals in language teaching.

However, these studies lack systematic design and operational approaches for value internalization mechanisms, often focusing on teaching models themselves and showing limitations in integrating ideological and political education. Task design primarily focuses on language output, with insufficient attention to the "knowledge-to-action" transformation, and practical applications often suffer from mechanical integration of language training and ideological goals, failing to fully meet the needs of college English curriculum ideological and political teaching.

Against this background, this study aims to construct the IPCAW teaching model based on the "unity of knowledge and action" to innovate college English curriculum ideological and political teaching. IPCAW—comprising Inquiry, Perception, Cognition, Action, and Wisdom—forms a closed loop from knowledge internalization to practice externalization and wisdom generation, seeking to integrate language skills and value cultivation and address the fragmentation between language teaching and ideological education.

3 Theoretical Foundation and Connotation Analysis of the IPCAW Teaching Model

3.1 Theoretical Foundations

3.1.1 The Enlightenment of 'the Unity of Knowledge and Action' Educational Thought on Language Education: The Contemporary Transformation of Wang Yangming's Philosophy

As a core proposition of ancient Chinese philosophy, the "unity of knowledge and action" emphasizes the integration of knowledge and action. Wang Yangming, the synthesizer of this ideology, proposed the theory of "simultaneity of knowledge and action," which profoundly enlightens modern education, particularly language education. Wang argued that knowledge and action are complementary, with knowledge as the premise of action and action as the embodiment and deepening of knowledge. In contemporary education, this requires not only imparting knowledge but also guiding students to translate knowledge into practice, achieving organic unity between the two (Qian Xun, 2019).

Wang Yangming's philosophy provides theoretical support for the IPCAW model. He believed that the cognitive process is a continuous iterative and spiral upward journey, which aligns with the spiral progressive feature of the IPCAW model. In IPCAW, students progress from the "Inquiry" stage through "Perception" and "Cognition" to "Action" and finally reach "Wisdom," forming a cyclic and spiral cognitive process that reflects Wang's idea of cognitive iteration (Wu Zhen, 2021). In college English curriculum ideological and political teaching, Wang's theory offers a new perspective: traditional language teaching focuses on skill training while neglecting value cultivation and moral practice, whereas the IPCAW model integrates language learning with ideological education through teaching activities and practice, guiding students to internalize knowledge into values and externalize them into actions, thus enhancing both language skills and moral character.

Tao Xingzhi's philosophy of "integration of teaching, learning, and doing," emphasizing that "action is the starting point of knowledge" and true knowledge can only be acquired through practice (Li Rumi & Wang Jian, 2020; Zhao Xianglin, 2017), aligns with the "Action" stage of IPCAW. In this stage, students transform knowledge into practice through project-driven activities, deepening their understanding, which embodies the idea that "action is the beginning of knowledge" and realizes the "unity of knowledge and action." Combining Tao's "action as the origin of knowledge" with Wang's philosophy highlights the high compatibility between the IPCAW model and the "unity of knowledge and action" concept.

3.1.2 Constructivist Learning Theory: Knowledge Construction in Context

Constructivist learning theory emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals within specific contexts, providing a theoretical basis for the IPCAW model. The "Perception" stage of IPCAW, which emphasizes multimodal input and situational awareness, embodies the contextual construction in constructivism. Students actively perceive and construct knowledge through multimedia resources and real-scenario simulations, laying a foundation for subsequent cognitive reconstruction and practical application.

The mapping between Kolb's experiential learning theory and IPCAW is evident: the "Action" stage corresponds to Kolb's "active practice," while the "Cognition" stage involves "reflective observation" and "abstract conceptualization."

Through reflective practice, students abstract and reconstruct knowledge, forming new cognitive systems, which embodies the concept of experiential learning and achieves the integration of knowledge and action in IPCAW.

3.1.3 The Three-Dimensional Goals Theory of Curriculum Ideological and Political Education: Knowledge-Ability-Values

The three-dimensional goals theory of curriculum ideological and political education emphasizes the organic unity of knowledge transmission, ability cultivation, and value shaping, providing clear objectives for the IPCAW model. The “Inquiry” and “Perception” stages focus on knowledge transmission; “Cognition” emphasizes ability cultivation through collaborative inquiry and cognitive reconstruction to enhance critical and innovative thinking; “Action” and “Wisdom” prioritize value shaping, guiding students to internalize knowledge into values and externalize them into actions. This process reflects the requirements of the three-dimensional goals theory and realizes the unity of knowledge and action in IPCAW.

3.2 Core Philosophy of the IPCAW Teaching Model

From a modern educational perspective, the dialectical relationship between “knowledge” and “action” is increasingly prominent: knowledge serves as the foundation for action, while action tests and innovates knowledge. In the IPCAW model, this relationship is fully manifested: students accumulate knowledge through Inquiry, Perception, and Cognition to prepare for practice, and through project-driven applications and critical thinking in Action and Wisdom, they validate and refine knowledge, achieving organic integration.

The five core elements of IPCAW—Inquiry, Perception, Cognition, Action, and Wisdom—form a closed loop from knowledge internalization to practice externalization and wisdom generation, reflecting the basic laws of human cognitive development:

“Inquiry” represents students’ proactive exploration of the unknown, serving as the starting point of cognition and the basis for knowledge internalization. “Perception” involves understanding knowledge through multimodal input and situational awareness, emphasizing active information processing and forming preliminary cognitive frameworks. “Cognition” deepens understanding through collaborative inquiry and cognitive reconstruction, focusing on critical thinking and knowledge application. “Action” translates knowledge into practice through project-driven activities, emphasizing practical application and knowledge externalization. “Wisdom” achieves profound understanding and value formation through critical thinking and reflection, integrating knowledge into values and behavioral norms.

The cognitive transition from Inquiry to Wisdom not only embodies the laws of human cognition but also reflects IPCAW’s core philosophy: integrating knowledge and action to generate wisdom.

3.3 Characteristics of the Five-Stage Model of IPCAW

The five-stage model of IPCAW features a **“spiral progressive nature”**, where each stage (Inquiry to Wisdom) represents a critical link in cognitive development, forming a cyclic and upward spiral. Through continuous inquiry, perception, cognition, practice, and reflection, students deepen their understanding of knowledge and enhance their capabilities. Additionally, IPCAW emphasizes **“knowledge-action linkage”**, where knowledge and action are interdependent at each stage: multimodal input in Perception forms cognitive frameworks; collaborative inquiry in Cognition deepens understanding; project-driven practices in Action externalize knowledge; and critical reflection in Wisdom internalizes knowledge into wisdom. This process creates a complete input-output loop, achieving the unity of knowledge and action. When defining stage-specific teaching goals and interactive relationships, three principles are emphasized: clarity of objectives to ensure tangible progress, seamless stage transitions, and flexibility to adapt to student needs. For example, Inquiry aims to stimulate curiosity, Perception focuses on contextual knowledge construction, Cognition cultivates critical thinking, Action emphasizes practice, and Wisdom integrates values—with each stage supporting the next in a coherent framework.

4 Construction of the IPCAW Teaching Model

4.1 Design Concept

The IPCAW teaching model is constructed based on the “unity of knowledge and action,” centered on a “five-stage spiral model” that forms a complete teaching cycle through progressive learning and practice. This design aligns with cognitive laws and modern educational requirements for integrating knowledge and action.

The five stages of the spiral model—Inquiry, Perception, Cognition, Action, and Wisdom—each undertake distinct

tasks but interrelate to form a holistic framework. From Inquiry (problem-driven curiosity) to Wisdom (value internalization), students comprehensively develop their knowledge, abilities, and literacy.

4.2 Teaching Framework Design

Table 1 Framework of the IPCAW Teaching Model

Stage	Teaching Objectives	Evaluation Methods	Typical Teaching Activities
Inquiry	Problem-driven curiosity arousal	Mind map scoring	Cross-cultural issue inquiry
Perception	Knowledge expansion and emotional resonance	Emotional attitude scale, argument quality rubric	Multimodal text close reading
Cognition	Critical thinking and value judgment	Critical writing	Collaborative debate, mind map construction
Action	Practice externalization and behavior change	Behavior observation records	Community service, personal habit improvement
Wisdom	Knowledge internalization and metacognitive enhancement	Learning portfolio, reflective journals, in-depth interviews	Value sublimation discussions

This framework defines clear objectives, activities, and evaluation methods for each stage. Through activities like cross-cultural inquiry, multimodal reading, critical writing, and community service, students deepen their understanding at multiple levels. Evaluation methods such as mind map scoring and behavior observation ensure comprehensive and objective assessment.

4.3 Teaching Process Design

Stage 1: Inquiry

- Pre-class: Teachers release question chains to guide students to explore social issues and assign self-directed tasks. Students pre-learn through materials and videos to form initial insights.

- In-class: Teachers compile student questions into a “question wall” and guide focus on core issues to lay the foundation for deep learning.

Stage 2: Perception

- Teachers use multimodal inputs (videos, audio, texts) and 情境创设 (virtual simulation, role-playing) to provide rich sensory materials, stimulating interest and emotional resonance to support cognitive activities.

Stage 3: Cognition

- Students engage in collaborative learning (group debates, mind map building) to deepen understanding through discussions and teacher scaffolding. Teachers address language difficulties and cultural differences to facilitate knowledge mastery and critical thinking.

Stage 4: Action

- Students design practical projects (e. g., community service, campus environmental protection) to translate knowledge into action, supported by online platforms (e.g., Xuexitong) and AI tools to enhance learning efficiency. This stage cultivates practical ability and social responsibility.

Stage 5: Wisdom

- Students summarize knowledge migration and practice experiences through reflective journals, while teachers integrate ideological and political elements (e. g., socialist core values, cultural confidence) for sublimation. In-depth interviews and peer feedback promote continuous development and value internalization.

4.4 Teaching Evaluation System

IPCAW adopts a multi-dimensional evaluation system, including:

- Stage-specific evaluation: Assessing learning outcomes at each stage (e. g., language proficiency tests, task performance).

- Process evaluation: Tracking participation, collaboration, and innovation through classroom observation, online platform data, self-evaluation, and peer review.

- Project evaluation: Assessing project outcomes, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities via intra-group and inter-group evaluation.

Online learning platforms record behavioral data to support data-driven evaluation, enabling teachers to adjust strategies and students to reflect on learning effectively.

5 Teaching Experiment Design and Data Analysis

5.1 Experimental Design

- Participants: 100 non-English major students (2023 cohort) at Hubei University of Economics, randomly divided into experimental (N=50) and control (N=50) groups with comparable demographics and English proficiency.
- Duration: Two semesters (September 2023 – June 2024), ensuring sufficient time for intervention and evaluation.
- Material adaptation: The *New Horizon College English* textbook was redeveloped to integrate ideological and political elements (e.g., socialist core values, cultural identity).
- Methods: Mixed research combining quantitative (tests, surveys) and qualitative (reflective journals, interviews) data to assess the model's effectiveness.

5.2 Data Analysis

5.2.1 Language Proficiency Test

- Tool: CET-4 mock test (710 points total, including listening, reading, writing, and translation).
- Results: No significant difference between groups ($t=1.23$, $p=0.22$), indicating comparable language proficiency enhancement.

Table 2 Results in Language Proficiency Test

Class	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Max Score	Min Score
Experimental	532.6	45.8	625	450
Control	528.4	47.2	610	445

5.2.2 Ideological and Political Identity Scale

- Tool: Self-developed College Students' Socialist Core Values Identity Scale (100 points, three dimensions: national identity, social identity, cultural identity).
- Results: Experimental group scored significantly higher ($t=4.56$, $p<0.001$), with higher mean scores and lower variability, indicating stronger and more consistent ideological and political identity.

Table 3 Ideological and Political Identity Scale Test Results

Class	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Max Score	Min Score
Experimental	85.6	7.4	95	70
Control	78.2	9.1	90	60

5.2.3 Critical Thinking Test

- Tool: Modified California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (75 points, seven dimensions).
- Results: Experimental group showed significantly higher scores ($t=3.98$, $p<0.001$), with a 22.7% mean score increase, indicating stronger critical thinking abilities.

Table 4 Results of Critical Thinking Test

Class	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Max Score	Min Score
Experimental	58.2	6.3	68	45
Control	47.5	7.8	58	35

5.2.4 Thematic Analysis of Student Reflective Journals (Nvivo12)

- Data: 500 reflective journals from the experimental group over 10 weeks.
- Key themes: "Practice application" (30%), "knowledge internalization" (25%), "value identification" (20%), "self-reflection" (15%), and "team collaboration" (10%), highlighting students' emphasis on practice and holistic growth.

Table 5 Frequency Distribution of Themes in Student Reflection Logs

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Practice application	1500	30%
Knowledge internalization	1250	25%
Value identification	1000	20%
Self-reflection	750	15%
Team collaboration	500	10%

6 Discussion and Implications

6.1 Research Findings and implications

The experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in critical thinking, self-directed learning, and problem-solving abilities, as evidenced by quantitative test scores and qualitative interview data. Furthermore, a significant positive correlation ($C=0.68$, $p<0.01$) between practice participation (Action) and reflection depth (Wisdom) validates the model's "knowledge-action-wisdom" logic. However, no significant difference in language skills suggests balanced focus on language and values, with potential for optimized language training in future designs.

As suggested by the research results, teachers should shift from "knowledge transmitters" to "value guides," prioritizing student agency, collaborative learning, and ideological and political literacy. In addition, it is essential to develop a dual-dimensional rubric integrating "language skills" and "ideological and political literacy" to comprehensively assess student development.

6.2 Limitations and Future Directions

Since the single-institution sample in this research tend to limit the generalizability of the results, future studies should expand to diverse populations and disciplines. Besides, the short-term data lacks follow-up on lasting impacts; thus, longitudinal research is needed to validate long-term effects. Meanwhile, with the prevalent application of artificial intelligence, it turns out to be critical to explore AI-enhanced personalized learning to optimize IPCAW's adaptability and efficiency in the digital era.

7 Conclusion

This study proposes the IPCAW teaching model by integrating the "unity of knowledge and action" with college English curriculum ideological and political education. Through theoretical construction and empirical verification, IPCAW effectively addresses the fragmentation between language teaching and value cultivation, providing a Chinese-style paradigm for foreign language education. By emphasizing student-centered practice and spiral cognitive development, the model not only enhances language proficiency but also cultivates cultural confidence and global competence.

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