



Research on the Integration Strategies of "Curriculum Ideology and Politics" and Language Teaching in Japanese Majors: A Case Study of Values Guidance through Japanese Literary Works

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Abstract: The integration of "Curriculum Ideology and Politics" (CIP) into specialized courses represents a pivotal initiative in Chinese higher education. However, its implementation with foreign language programs, particularly those focusing on Japanese majors, faces challenges due to perceived tensions between political-ideological goals and the development of language proficiency and intercultural understanding. This qualitative case study addresses this gap by proposing a novel framework for seamlessly blending CIP with advanced language instruction, using the teaching of Japanese literature as a paradigmatic example. Moving beyond notions of overt indoctrination, the study argues for an approach grounded in the principles of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Critical Pedagogy. Through detailed textual analysis and reflective practice, the research demonstrates how literary texts can serve as a medium for exploring organic values, fostering critical thinking, and cross-cultural dialogue. It identifies and elucidates three core integration strategies: implicit thematic engagement, comparative cultural analysis, and critical discussion facilitation. The findings suggest that effective CIP integration is an advanced pedagogical art that enriches rather than diminishes the language learning experience. This study offers valuable insights and a transferable model for educators seeking to implement values education within foreign language teaching in a meaningful and academically rigorous manner.

Keywords: Curriculum Ideology and Politics; Japanese Language Teaching; Values Education; Literature Teaching; Qualitative Case Study

I. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Contemporary Chinese higher education is undergoing a profound paradigm shift, pivoting from a focus on "knowledge transmission" to "value shaping." "Fostering Virtue through Education", established as the foundational mission, aims to cultivate well-rounded talents with patriotic sentiment, global perspective, professional competence, and a sense of social responsibility. To implement this mission, the construction of a "Curriculum Ideology and Politics" (CIP) system has been elevated to a national strategic level. It requires the natural and organic integration of ideological and political education into the teaching and practice of all university courses, much like "salt dissolving in water." This is far from merely adding political content to specialized courses; it represents a profound innovation in educational philosophy, aiming to build a comprehensive "Three Wide Education" pattern involving all staff, the entire process, and all curricula. This transformation presents both unprecedented opportunities and unique challenges for humanities disciplines, particularly foreign language majors. Foreign language teaching is not only about training linguistic skills but also a critical arena for the formation of cross-cultural understanding and values. Consequently, it is endowed with a special and significant mandate within the CIP framework.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite a consensus on the importance of CIP, significant implementation difficulties and cognitive misconceptions persist in its practice within foreign language majors, particularly Japanese studies. The primary issue lies in the long-standing tradition of a binary opposition between "skills" and "humanities." Much curriculum design and pedagogical practice implicitly treat language as a value-neutral tool for communication, focusing instruction on skill-based training such as grammar, vocabulary, and functional expressions, while neglecting the deeper attribute of language as a carrier of culture and a reflection of worldview. This has resulted in a serious disconnect between "language skill" training and "humanistic quality" cultivation. For Japanese language majors, this challenge is particularly complex. Instructors face a core dilemma: how to naturally integrate values guidance and fulfill the duty of "Fostering Virtue through Education" while guiding students to appreciate a foreign culture and develop cross-cultural empathy. If mishandled, CIP can easily be reduced to a mechanical grafting of political content or moral preaching. This not only triggers student confusion and alienation, damaging their learning motivation, but also potentially deviates from the original purpose of foreign language education in promoting mutual learning among civilizations. Therefore, the key practical problem this research aims to address is: Within upper-level Japanese major courses such as Selected Readings of Japanese Literature, how can we design and implement teaching strategies that transcend superficial preaching, are rooted in the intrinsic depth of the texts, and can stimulate students' higher-order critical thinking, thereby achieving an implicit, academic, and guided integration of values.

1.3 Research Objectives and Significance

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This research aims to systematically respond to the challenges and provide a solution for CIP teaching in Japanese majors that combines theoretical depth with practical applicability. Specifically, this study has three objectives: First, to deeply analyze the main misconceptions and bottlenecks in the current implementation of CIP in Japanese majors and clarify their structural causes. Second, to construct a student-centered, deeply content-driven integration teaching model with critical dialogue as its pathway. This model will draw on the pedagogy of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and the empowerment goals of Critical Pedagogy, aiming to achieve the synchronous enhancement of language proficiency, literary appreciation, cultural reflection, and value discernment. Third, using classic Japanese literary works (e.g., by Natsume Soseki, Akutagawa Ryunosuke) as concrete cases and teaching sites, to elaborate, demonstrate, and reflect upon a series of operable teaching strategies, such as comparative reflection, ethical dilemma discussion, role-playing, and critical writing.

The significance of this study is twofold. Theoretically, it pushes the discussion on CIP from macro policy interpretation to micro, disciplinary-based pedagogical construction, enriching interdisciplinary research at the intersection of foreign language education theory and ideological and political education theory. It also offers a new perspective on the localized application of internationally mainstream pedagogies like CLIL within the specific educational context of China. Practically, it provides a clear, systematic, and readily adaptable roadmap and toolbox for foreign language educators, powerfully demonstrating that CIP is not a dilution or interruption of specialized teaching but a vital opportunity to enhance its academic implication, intellectual depth, and educational efficacy.

II. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Connotation and Development of “Curriculum Ideology and Politics”: Distinguishing from Traditional “Ideological and Political Education”

In the context of Chinese higher education, “Curriculum Ideology and Politics” (CIP) is not an isolated concept but represents a significant evolution in educational philosophy. Scholars generally agree that its core connotation lies in breaking the “silo effect” where ideological and political education was solely the responsibility of specific political courses, emphasizing that all courses share the common responsibility of “Fostering Virtue through Education” (Gao, 2017). The key distinction from traditional “Ideological and Political Education” lies in its integrative rather than additive nature. Traditional political courses involve explicit, systematic theoretical indoctrination, whereas CIP requires the organic and implicit embedding of value guidance into the very fabric of specialized knowledge teaching, achieving an effect akin to “salt dissolving in water” (Shen, 2020). This integration emphasizes a “subtle and silent” influence. Its success is measured not by how many political terms students memorize, but by whether they can gradually form correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values during their professional learning process. For foreign language majors, this implies that values education cannot be conducted in isolation from language practice and cultural analysis. Instead, it must identify entry points that align with the discipline's internal logic, thereby avoiding mechanical preaching and achieving a dialectical unity of knowledge imparting and value guidance.

2.2 Values Education in Foreign Language Teaching: A Global Perspective

In the global field of foreign language education, the issue of values transmission, though not always under the name “CIP,” has long been a central concern. This discussion primarily revolves around “Intercultural Communicative Competence” (ICC). Byram’s (1997) influential model moves beyond mere linguistic competence to include attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness. Here, attitudes refer to the willingness to relativize one’s own values and be curious about and open to other cultures; critical cultural awareness is the ability to critically evaluate, based on explicit criteria, cultural practices and products in one’s own and other countries. This theory provides a crucial insight for this study: the goal of values education is not to replace one set of values with another, but to foster a critical stance and negotiating ability in learners. In the foreign language classroom, this means creating a safe space where students can examine, compare, and discuss the values embedded in different cultures (both the target culture and their own), thereby forming reflected and more mature value judgments. This aligns closely with the implicit guidance and thinking cultivation advocated by CIP.

2.3 The Value of Literature as an Educational Medium

Literature, as the art of language and a crystallization of culture, plays an irreplaceable role in values education. Its strength lies in its inherent ambiguity, complexity, and emotional resonance. Unlike straightforward preaching, literary works present ethical dilemmas and life choices through characters, plots, and metaphors, inviting readers to engage in multi-perspective interpretation and emotional investment (Rosenblatt, 1995). This experiential learning effectively stimulates students' empathy, imagination, and critical thinking. When students discuss the moral choices of characters in *Rashōmon*, they are not receiving a predetermined answer but are participating, under the teacher's guidance, in a complex debate about human nature, survival, and ethics. This process itself is one of value exploration and construction. Therefore, literature teaching provides an ideal medium for the kind of values guidance envisioned in this study: it naturally resists simplistic, black-and-white conclusions, demands deep thinking, and thereby lays the foundation for natural, sincere, and academically rigorous classroom discussions.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Integrating CLIL and Critical Pedagogy

Based on the above literature review, this study constructs a theoretical framework integrating the “Content and Language Integrated Learning” (CLIL) approach and “Critical Pedagogy” to guide the analysis and practice.

Support from CLIL: CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach where an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language (Coyle et al., 2010). Its “4Cs” framework—Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture/Community—provides an operational blueprint for this study. Here, Content refers to Japanese

literary works and their embedded value issues; Communication refers to the listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities in Japanese around this content; Cognition refers to higher-order thinking skills like analysis, evaluation, and creation; and Culture refers to cross-cultural comparison and reflection. CLIL ensures the structural integration of language learning and values exploration in instructional design.

Deepening by Critical Pedagogy: Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970) emphasizes the emancipatory nature of education, advocating for a “problem-posing education” that awakens students’ critical consciousness, enabling them to question and challenge inherent power structures and social injustices. This theory injects soul into the framework. It demands that the Cognition dimension within the CLIL framework goes beyond general thinking training and must be directed toward a critical cultural awareness. It guides instructors not to simply transmit “correct” values, but to lead students in uncovering the ideologies within texts, questioning power relations, and reflecting on the connection between these value positions and their own lives and social reality.

The core proposition of this integrated framework is that in Japanese literature teaching, through CLIL-based instructional design that creates a learning environment grounded in the principles of Critical Pedagogy, the synergistic development of language proficiency, literary competence, and critical value judgment ability can be achieved, thereby effectively fulfilling the advanced goals of CIP.

III. Case Analysis: Values Guidance in Practice through Japanese Literature

3.1 Case Selection Criteria

To ensure the effectiveness and demonstrative value of the case analysis, this study selects Japanese literary works based on the following criteria: First, the work must contain profound ethical dilemmas, where characters face moral choices with no simple right or wrong answers, thereby stimulating students’ moral reasoning. Second, the work should exhibit significant cultural tension, meaning the values embedded within it (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism, *giri* vs. *ninjou*) have both similarities and differences or even conflicts with Chinese cultural values, facilitating cross-cultural comparison. Finally, the work needs to possess philosophical depth, enabling it to transcend the specific plot and provoke thinking about universal issues such as human nature, society, and existence. Based on these criteria, this study selects Natsume Sōseki’s *Kokoro* and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s *In a Bamboo Grove* as core case studies. The former offers a profound dissection of individualism, egoism, guilt, and responsibility; the latter, with its *Rashōmon*-like narrative structure, directly challenges the existence of objective truth and absolute morality, making it highly valuable for discussion.

3.2 Demonstration of Teaching Strategies

Strategy 1: Comparison and Contrast

This strategy aims to use cultural differences as a catalyst for thinking, not to create opposition. Take, for example, the character “Sensei” in *Kokoro*, who, after a dispute over inheritance with his relatives, chooses to live in isolated seclusion. Teaching Practice: The instructor would not directly judge whether the Sensei’s action is right or wrong but would guide students to compare his situation with Chinese ethical concepts. For instance, posing questions like: “After the inheritance dispute, Sensei chose complete withdrawal from family and society. In a Chinese cultural context, we often emphasize ‘family harmony leads to prosperity’ and the individual’s responsibility to the family and society. Faced with a similar conflict, what factors might an individual deeply influenced by traditional Chinese values prioritize? What values does Sensei’s choice reflect? What are the respective rationalities and potential consequences of these two approaches?”

Objective and Effect: The goal of this comparison is not to determine which is superior but to help students understand the cultural relativity of values. Through contrast, students can more clearly see the individualism behind Sensei’s behavior while also reflecting on the causes, advantages, and disadvantages of the collectivist orientation in traditional Chinese culture. This cultivates students’ cross-cultural empathy (understanding Sensei’s choice) and critical cultural awareness (analyzing its cultural roots and referencing their own culture), achieving the “Culture” and “Cognition” objectives within the CLIL framework.

Strategy 2: Question-guided Critical Discussion

This strategy is at the heart of Critical Pedagogy, using open-ended questions to challenge students’ thinking patterns. In a *Bamboo Grove* serves as an extreme case.

Teaching Practice: The instructor designs a series of interconnected open-ended questions to guide students into the ambiguous zones of the text:

Fact-checking and Questioning: “Which details in the seven testimonies are completely contradictory? Why does each party involved (the bandit, the woman, the deceased) alter the facts? What kind of self-image are they trying to create?”;

Motivation Exploration: “Why does the bandit Tajōmaru beautify his actions? In her testimony, the woman first claims she was violated and then expresses a wish for her husband’s death—what psychological struggle does this reveal? Why does the samurai, speaking through the medium, portray himself as a tragic hero?”; Critical Reflection: “If the complete truth is unrecoverable, what basis do we have for judging right and wrong? Does the legal verdict (catching the bandit) equate to the moral truth? What implications does this story have for how we judge information (e.g., online news) in real life?”; Role-playing: “If you were the woodcutter in the story, who witnessed everything but chose to remain silent, what would your reasons be? Would you feel guilty? Why?”;

Objective and Effect: These questions have no single correct answer. Their purpose is to deconstruct the authoritative narrative of the text, making students aware of the multifaceted nature of truth and the subjectivity of narration. The discussion process itself is a training in critical thinking, requiring students to return to the text for evidence to support their views while listening to and responding to others’ opinions. This perfectly embodies the “Communication” (discussing in Japanese) and “Cognition” (analyzing, evaluating, reasoning) dimensions of CLIL and practices the “problem-posing education” advocated by Critical Pedagogy.

Strategy 3: Creative Task Output

This strategy aims to have students creatively reconstruct their internalized thoughts through language output, achieving the internalization and sublimation of knowledge.

Teaching Practice: At the end of the teaching unit on *Kokoro*, the following tasks can be assigned for students to choose from:

Writing Task: “Suppose ‘Sensei’ wrote a letter of confession to ‘K’s family before his suicide, or a longer letter of life advice to the young narrator. Draft this letter. Requirements: Use honorific language (Keigo), conform to the character’s personality and the historical context, and reflect his complex psychology.”; Role-play/Debate: “Simulate a court trial or a TV debate on the topic: ‘Who bears the primary responsibility for Sensei’s tragedy?’ Students role-play characters such as Sensei, his wife, the young narrator, a psychologist, and a social commentator, stating their views and cross-examining each other in Japanese.”; Analytical Report: “Write a short essay on the topic ‘Egoism in *Kokoro* and Individualism in Modern Society,’ combining textual details with contemporary social phenomena (e.g., ‘lying flat,’ ‘involution’) to explore the balance between personal pursuit and social responsibility.”; Objective and Effect: Creative tasks transform students from passive text interpreters into active meaning-makers. Letter writing requires deep empathy and linguistic imitation; debate requires logical organization, quick response, and oral expression; writing an analytical report comprehensively trains research, analysis, and academic writing skills. All these tasks compel students to comprehensively use the language knowledge they have learned (CLIL’s “Communication”), process the textual content deeply (CLIL’s “Content” and “Cognition”), and make personalized value expressions, thereby achieving the integrated output of language ability, thinking ability, and value judgment ability under the guidance of CIP.

IV. Discussion: Constructing Effective Integration Strategies

4.1 Strategy Summary: From Implicit Integration to Critical Engagement

Based on the in-depth analysis of teaching cases, this study distills three interconnected and progressively advanced core integration strategies, which together form a practical framework for achieving the higher-order goals of CIP.

First, Implicit Integration. This is the cornerstone of all strategies. It requires that values guidance be deeply rooted in the internal logic and appeal of the disciplinary content itself, rather than attached as an external, independent module. In literature teaching, this means the entry point for guidance is not abstract political principles but the inherent ethical dilemmas, emotional conflicts, and philosophical contemplations of the text. For instance, the discussion of *Kokoro* begins with a literary analysis of Sensei’s psychology, not direct moral judgment. This approach of “using literature as a vehicle for principles” ensures academic rigor, avoids student resistance, and allows values guidance to be absorbed imperceptibly, like a scent naturally emanating from the text.

Second, Comparative Perspective. Building upon implicit integration, this strategy provides students with a cognitive scaffold to make latent values explicit for examination through conscious cross-cultural comparison. It is not about creating cultural opposition but rather using the “other” as a reference point to reflect upon the “self,” thereby deepening the understanding of both cultures and even universal human nature. When students compare Sensei’s individualistic choices with the concept of family in Chinese culture, they not only gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual world of modern Japanese intellectuals but also reflect on the origins and contemporary significance of their own cultural values. This strategy seamlessly connects the cultivation of intercultural competence in language learning with values education, concretizing and deepening the “Culture” dimension in the CLIL framework.

Third, Critical Engagement. This is the apex of the strategic system, aiming to cultivate students’ subjectivity in value judgment. Through open-ended questioning and creative tasks, it encourages students not to be satisfied with accepting predetermined conclusions but to actively question, debate, and construct meaning. When deconstructing the conflicting narratives in *In a Bamboo Grove*, students are forced to abandon reliance on a single authoritative truth and instead evaluate the motivations and plausibility of each account, thereby developing evidence-based, prudent moral judgment. This strategy directly embodies the essence of Critical Pedagogy, transforming the classroom from a site of knowledge reception into a space for the emergence of critical consciousness, ultimately empowering students to become independent and responsible subjects of values.

4.2 Challenges and Countermeasures: Navigating Implementation Difficulties

While the strategies offer significant advantages, their effective implementation is not without challenges. A clear-eyed recognition of these challenges and prepared countermeasures is crucial for the successful dissemination of this model.

Challenge 1: Student Silence and Cognitive Inertia. Students accustomed to passive knowledge reception may tend to remain silent when faced with open-ended questions that have no single correct answer or may offer superficial responses intended to please the instructor. Countermeasures: Creating a safe classroom atmosphere is paramount. The instructor should explicitly emphasize that the process of critical thinking is more important than arriving at a “correct” conclusion. Techniques like “Think-Pair-Share” can be employed, giving students individual thinking time, followed by small-group discussion with peers, before a whole-class share, thereby reducing the anxiety of public speaking. Meanwhile, the instructor should provide positive reinforcement for all tentative answers, praising the angle of thinking rather than the answer itself.

Challenge 2: Interpretative Deviation and Critical Relativism. Encouraging multiple interpretations might lead students into a “anything goes” critical relativism, or result in over-interpretations detached from the text, or even defending negative values. Countermeasures: The instructor’s guiding role is particularly critical here. It is essential to insist on the principle of “returning to the text,” requiring that any interpretation be supported by textual details. For interpretations that clearly contradict social norms and morality, the instructor should not simply dismiss them but guide the whole class

to examine their logical flaws or inconsistencies with the overall text through further questioning. The key is to distinguish between “understanding” a character’s motivations and “endorsing” their actions, cultivating students’ ability to hold empathetic understanding and critical scrutiny simultaneously.

Challenge 3: Teacher Role Confusion and Insufficient Expertise. The transition from knowledge authority to discussion guide and facilitator places high demands on teachers. They may worry about losing control of the discussion’s direction or feel their own understanding of the theories and works is insufficient. Countermeasures: This requires systematic teacher development support, including specialized workshops on CIP pedagogy and establishing teaching communities for collaborative lesson planning and observation. Teachers themselves need to enhance their theoretical knowledge and close textual reading, carefully pre-design discussion questions, and anticipate possible directions. It is important to recognize that the teacher’s role is not that of an omniscient authority, but rather the “lead learner”—a guide who explores complex issues alongside students. Allowing for temporary uncertainty in the classroom and seeking answers together with students is a democratic and sincere pedagogical stance.

4.3 Teacher’s Role Transformation: From Authority to Facilitator

The strategies and challenges discussed above collectively point to a fundamental shift: the redefinition of the teacher’s role. In traditional language teaching, the teacher acts primarily as a transmitter of linguistic knowledge. In the model constructed by this study, the teacher must transition into multiple roles: first, a designer of the learning environment, meticulously selecting texts, and designing tasks and question sequences; second, a facilitator of in-depth discussion, skilled in listening, probing, and connecting different viewpoints to steer the discussion towards depth, rather than mechanically guiding it towards a predetermined conclusion; and finally, a demonstrator of critical thinking, willing to showcase their own thought processes when grappling with complex issues, even admitting uncertainty. The core of this transformation lies in the fact that the teacher’s value is no longer manifested in the absolute superiority of their knowledge reservoir, but in their empowering ability to stimulate student thinking and guide the process of value exploration. This represents a profound change from “giving a fish” to “teaching how to fish,” playing a decisive role in the success or failure of CIP implementation.

4.4 Theoretical Contribution: Expanding the Boundaries of CLIL and Critical Pedagogy

The practical exploration of this study not only verifies the feasibility of integrating CLIL and Critical Pedagogy but also makes unique contributions to the application of these two theoretical frameworks in the context of foreign language teaching.

For CLIL, this study expands its application from common content areas like science and history to the more normative and sensitive domain of “value-laden content.” We propose that within the CIP context, the fourth “C”—“Culture/Community”—in the CLIL framework should be endowed with a stronger critical dimension. It is not merely about learning about the target culture but serves as an arena for critical cultural reflection and values negotiation. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the central role of critical thinking within the “Cognition” dimension, infusing the “4Cs” framework with a clear emancipatory educational goal, thereby enhancing its explanatory and guiding power when dealing with complex humanities content.

For Critical Pedagogy, this study provides a concrete, practical case within a non-Western educational context under specific policy guidance. It demonstrates that Critical Pedagogy is not necessarily antagonistic to mainstream educational policies but can instead serve as an effective pedagogy for achieving its deep-seated goals (e.g., cultivating citizens with independent judgment). By combining it with the highly structured teaching methodology of CLIL, this study offers an operable “teaching toolkit” for Critical Pedagogy—including comparative analysis, open-ended question design, etc.—transforming its abstract philosophical concepts into daily classroom practices, thereby addressing the frequent question of “how to implement” faced by Critical Pedagogy.

In summary, the strategic framework constructed in this study builds a bridge connecting macro-educational policy (CIP), international pedagogical theory (CLIL), and critical educational philosophy (Critical Pedagogy), offering valuable theoretical insights and a practical pathway for considering the integration of values, guidance, and language learning within the global context of foreign language education.

V. Conclusion and Implications

This study, through theoretical construction and practical case analysis, has systematically explored viable pathways for the deep integration of CIP with literature courses for Japanese majors. The findings indicate that successful integration is not a mechanical addition but an organic unity of “embedding principles into teaching”, “embedding virtue into learning”, and “embedding education into research”. Therefore, the core conclusion of this research is that the advanced form of CIP in foreign language teaching is the three-dimensional unification of knowledge imparting, ability cultivation, and value guidance. Its essence is a profound teaching reform directed towards the fundamental purpose of education.

Teachers should proactively identify the inherent values education elements within their specialized courses, particularly content involving cultural tension and ethical controversy. Instructional design should shift from “teaching knowledge” to “designing learning experiences,” meticulously planning a complete chain of tasks from close reading and comparative reflection to critical output. Assessment should go beyond traditional tests of linguistic knowledge points to include the evaluation of procedural thinking and value judgment abilities. Incorporating contributions to class discussions, reflective journals, text-based ethical analysis reports, and creative writing into the assessment system can guide students’ learning orientation.

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