

Integrating Moral Education into News Translation Teaching: A Theme-Based Approach Enhanced with AI Assistance

Xiaoyu Sun

Lingnan Normal University, Zhanjiang, Guangdong, China

Abstract: This study addresses the challenge of effectively integrating moral education into specialized foreign language courses. Focusing on News Translation, it develops and implements a Theme-Based and AI-Assisted pedagogical model. The core innovation lies in deliberately leveraging the inherent limitations of AI translation—such as its frequent errors in handling culture-loaded terms—as catalysts for critical thinking and value judgment. Through a structured process of AI-aided translation and guided critical post-editing, students analyze and correct AI-generated texts, engaging deeply with issues of cultural positioning and ethical responsibility in translation. Preliminary practice indicates this model successfully fosters the integration of professional skill development, critical capacity building, and values internalization. It offers a replicable, structured approach for achieving subtle yet profound moral education within foreign language and translation curricula, moving beyond superficial add-ons to deep, process-based integration. The study concludes with implications for instructional design and assessment in the age of AI.

Keywords: Moral Education; News Translation; Theme-Based Pedagogy; AI-Assisted Instruction; Human-AI Collaboration

1. Introduction

Integrating moral education into curriculum development is a crucial step for universities in fulfilling the fundamental mission of fostering virtue and talent [1]. The process of foreign language learning extends beyond the acquisition of linguistic skills, subtly yet profoundly shaping students' modes of thinking, value systems, and cultural stances [2]. Consequently, foreign language courses inherently possess a values-education dimension, and foreign language teachers bear significant

responsibility for guiding students in this regard [3]. Specialized courses form the core of the educational process. The frequent interaction and high level of trust between teachers and students in these courses provide a solid foundation for implementing moral education. Guided by the theme-based teaching approach and using a News Translation course as a case study, this paper conducts an empirical investigation into integrating moral education within an English major program. It focuses on exploring a pedagogical model organized around “theme-based” content and enhanced by “AI-assisted” processes as an enabling tool. This exploration aims to address the core research question: how to effectively implement moral education in foreign language specialized courses.

2. Literature Review on Integrating Moral Education into Foreign Language Courses

Integrating moral education into foreign language instruction has become a prominent focus in contemporary pedagogical research. Scholarly discussions have predominantly addressed this topic from macro-level perspectives, such as theoretical frameworks [1-3], educational models [4,5] and teaching material [6,7]. A significant portion of the existing literature concentrates on aspects like content integration, instructional design, and textbook development within the context of College English courses [8-10].

However, compared to the attention given to College English, empirical research dedicated to implementing moral education in core courses of foreign language major programs remains relatively scarce. There is a notable lack of systematic investigation into concrete implementation pathways, teaching methodologies, and effectiveness evaluation for specific courses. Current studies tend to be more speculative, often lacking robust empirical support. This gap is particularly evident for specialized courses like News Translation,

which are characterized by strong timeliness and distinct ideological positions; practical, operable ways for blending moral education into such courses are underdeveloped. The key to successful curriculum-based moral education lies not in the “why” but in the “how”, that is, how to invisibly integrate values cultivation into the professional teaching process.

Aiming to address this practical gap, this study takes News Translation as an example to construct and validate a theme-based, AI-enhanced pedagogical model for moral education that is both replicable and scalable.

3. Implementing Moral Education in News Translation

3.1 Characteristics of News Translation Relevant to Moral Education

News Translation possesses several distinct characteristics that make it an ideal vehicle for integrating moral education. First, it is highly time-sensitive [11]. Course content must keep pace with current domestic and international affairs. This requires instructors to possess strong political acumen and broad knowledge reserves. Since textbooks often lag behind real-world developments, instructional design must rely on authentic, real-time materials.

Second, the course involves considerable political sensitivity. The translation process necessitates adherence to morality and a careful navigation of political and public opinion guidance. This demands a high degree of conscientiousness from both instructors and students.

Third, it is profoundly humanistic. News dissemination inherently involves civilizational dialogue and the exchange of ideas. Instructors should delve deeply into the humanistic spirit and value connotations embedded within news content, thereby providing students with vivid material for value recognition and critical engagement.

3.2 Constructing a Practice Model for Moral Education: A Theme-Based and AI-Assisted Approach

3.2.1 Theoretical foundation and design philosophy of the model

This study constructs a “Theme-Based and AI-Assisted” teaching model. Using theme-based instruction as its pedagogical framework and AI-aided translation as its

technological pathway, the model aims to achieve an integration of professional knowledge, translation competence, and moral education. The core design philosophy lies in transforming the limitations exposed during AI translation into pedagogical resources for developing students' critical thinking and value judgment capabilities. Through systematic practice in human-AI collaborative translation and post-editing training, the model guides students to deepen their understanding of news translation ethics and cultural positioning by identifying and correcting flaws in AI-generated translations.

3.2.2 A structured implementation process for the teaching model

1) Phase 1: Themed task design and initial AI translation

Instructors design authentic translation tasks centered around broader themes with values-education significance, such as “the Chinese Dream”. Students first utilize AI translation tools (e.g., DeepSeek, ChatGPT) to perform machine translation on source news texts, generating preliminary drafts. The objective of this phase is to obtain raw material suitable for subsequent critical analysis while allowing students to gain an initial understanding of the inherent limitations of AI translation technology.

2) Phase 2: Critical post-editing and value discernment

This phase constitutes the core pedagogical component of the model. Students systematically review and evaluate the AI-generated preliminary translations. Under instructor guidance, they engage in in-depth analysis and correction of two primary categories of issues.

The discernment of mistranslated cultural imagery is central to guiding students in understanding cultural subjectivity and cross-cultural interpretive strategies in translation. Taking “*Tao Guang Yang Hui*” as an example, a direct AI translation might yield “hide one's capabilities and bide one's time.” While this rendering corresponds lexically, within contemporary international political discourse, it can easily be associated with a negative strategic connotation of “concealing strength and awaiting an opportunity to revenge”. This diverges from the phrase's intended meaning in China's context of peaceful development, which conveys the strategic resolve and wisdom of “maintaining humility”.

and focusing on self-development". In instruction, students are pushed beyond dictionary definitions to investigate the phrase's evolution, its current policy context, and its potential interpretations by target audiences. By comparing alternative translations such as "maintain a low profile" or "focus on self-development while keeping a modest posture", and by analyzing their usage and reception in different foreign media outlets, students gain a profound realization: translating culture-loaded terms is not about finding static equivalents. Rather, it is a strategy of selecting, based on an accurate grasp of the source culture's essence, the formulation for the target context that is least prone to misreading and most conducive to positive understanding.

The correction of diluted political stances is directly linked to forging students' capacity for articulating national positions and converting political discourse. For instance, an AI might simplify "*Quan Guo Cheng Ren Min Min Zhu*" to "people's democracy," erasing the crucial qualifier "whole-process", which sums up the most extensive, genuine, and effective characteristics of Chinese democracy. By consulting authoritative texts like official government white paper translations, students discover its standard translation: "whole-process people's democracy". This process of analysis leads students to understand that translating political terminology with Chinese characteristics requires strict and complete transmission of its institutional and theoretical connotations, preventing its reduction to a generalized concept within Western frameworks. In this process, the instructor's role is pivotal. By facilitating classroom discussions and guiding students to probe the question, "Why did AI make mistakes here?" the inquiry typically leads to the understanding that AI lacks a comprehensive grasp of cultural-historical awareness, political-theoretical complexity, and specific communicative contexts. Subsequently, by providing authoritative texts, the instructor steers students toward considering "how to revise the translation to more effectively convey the source text's value stance and cultural message".

This guidance elevates students' translation practice from an intuitive, experience-based level to a rational-cognitive level grounded in value judgment, theoretical analysis, and strategic choice. Consequently, it achieves a

deep integration and mutual reinforcement of moral education and the cultivation of professional competence within the curriculum.

3.2.3 Teaching evaluation and feedback mechanisms

This model adopts an assessment approach that combines formative evaluation with summative evaluation. Formative evaluation focuses on students' performance in critical thinking during post-editing discussions, their ability to solve problems collaboratively, and their understanding of translation ethics. Summative evaluation is achieved through students' submission of a Translation Practice Report. This report requires a detailed record of the AI-generated initial translation, the revision process, the rationale behind each correction, and personal reflections. It thereby showcases the complete cognitive process of making professional judgments under the guidance of values.

Preliminary teaching practice indicates that this model can effectively enhance students' comprehensive translation literacy, critical thinking skills, and awareness of the social responsibilities inherent in news translation. It provides a replicable pathway for the integration of moral education within specialized subject instruction.

4. Implications

Based on the teaching practice described above, this study derives the following three implications, aiming to provide reference for the systematic advancement and quality enhancement of moral education in foreign language programs.

First, it is imperative to construct a moral education teaching model that tightly integrates value guidance, thematic inquiry, and human-AI collaboration. This study demonstrates that effective moral education cannot rely on the sporadic insertion of isolated cases but requires a structured pedagogical model for systematic integration. Within this framework, a "theme-based" approach transforms broad value-based objectives into concrete, explorable knowledge units. AI assistance, by leveraging its technological characteristics, creates authentic scenarios for value judgment and ethical reflection.

Second, the role of the instructor in the age of AI should be redefined as that of a value guide and a learning designer. Against the backdrop where

human-AI collaborative translation is becoming the norm, the instructor's role must shift from a mere knowledge transmitter to a designer of learning processes, a facilitator of value-based discussions, and a mentor for human-AI collaboration.

Third, a multidimensional assessment system should be established, one that emphasizes both process observation and developmental tracking. The efficacy of moral education is difficult to measure solely through traditional final examinations. The combined evaluation method used in this study-integrating the Translation Practice Report with classroom performance-serves to externalize the otherwise implicit process of value-based judgment, thereby enabling effective assessment of students' critical thinking, ethical awareness, and cultural stance.

5. Conclusion

Under the imperative to fully implement the fundamental mission of fostering virtue and talent, determining how to effectively integrate moral education into foreign language specialized courses constitutes a core issue of both theoretical significance and practical urgency. Using a News Translation course as a case study, this research directly addresses the pivotal question of "how to do it" by constructing and preliminarily validating a Theme-Based and AI-Assisted pedagogical model.

The innovation of this model lies not only in its refusal to treat moral education as a mere add-on to professional instruction, but in its achievement of a structured integration of value-laden content and specialized knowledge through the "theme-driven" approach. More significantly, it moves beyond viewing artificial intelligence as a simple efficiency tool, instead creatively repurposing the limitations of AI translation into a core pedagogical resource for cultivating students' critical thinking and value judgment. Through practice in human-AI collaboration, students not only enhance their practical translation competence and technological literacy-essential for the digital age-but, more importantly, they gain a profound appreciation for the ethical dimensions, cultural positioning, and national responsibilities inherent in translation through the concrete choices made in response to AI's shortcomings. This facilitates the simultaneous construction

and internalization of knowledge, skills, and values.

This study confirms that a teaching model guided by themes, empowered by technology, and enacted through critical practice offers a viable pathway for implementing moral education within foreign language curricula. Acknowledging its limitations, such as sample size and research duration, the model's applicability to a wider range of courses requires further verification. Future research could track students' long-term development and explore the adaptation and transfer of this model to other specialized courses like Business Translation or Literary Translation. We believe that through continuous pedagogical innovation and practical exploration, foreign language education will better fulfill its honored mission of educating individuals for the nation, cultivating more outstanding talents who possess patriotic sentiment, a global perspective, and professional excellence.

References

- [1] LIU Zhengguang, & YUE Manman. (2020). Resetting the Educational Philosophy and Restructuring Learning Content to Implement Morality Cultivation in Foreign Language Course Instruction. *Journal of Foreign Languages*, 43(05), 21-29.
- [2] WEN Qiufang. (2021). A Framework of Integrating Moral Education into College Foreign Language Teaching. *Foreign Languages in China*, 18(02), 47-52.
- [3] XIAO Qiong, & HUANG Guowen. (2020). On the Ideological-Political Construction of Foreign Language Courses. *Foreign Languages in China*, 17(05), 1+10-14.
- [4] ZHANG Yining, MU Hongjia & LI Mingzhu. (2024). On a Writing Course Model of Ideological and Political Education through "Telling China's Stories Well" for Foreign Language Majors. *Foreign Language World*, (03), 68-74.
- [5] HU Jiehui. (2021). Foreign Language Instructional Design from the Ideological-Political Perspective. *Foreign Languages in China*, 18(02), 53-59.
- [6] SUN Youzhong. (2020). The Design of College Foreign Language Textbooks from the Perspective of Curriculum-Based Political and Virtuous Awareness. *Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education*, (06), 46-51.

- [7] XU Jinfen & LIU Wenbo. (2023). On Integrated Morality Cultivation through Foreign Language Courses in Primary and Secondary Schools and Universities. *Foreign Language World*, (03), 16-22.
- [8] QIN Lili, ZHAO Yingxu, GAO Yang & WANG Yongliang. (2023). Research Path on the Effectiveness of Ideological and Moral Education in College English Curriculum Informed by Sociocultural Theory. *Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages*, 46(01), 78-86+161.
- [9] ZHANG Jingyuan & WANG Na. (2021). Value Shaping-Based Teaching Task Design in the Ideological-Political Construction of Foreign Language Courses. *Foreign Languages in China*, 18(02), 33-38.
- [10] WANG Junju & LU Ping. (2024). Integration and Incorporation: POA-Guided Teaching Design of Moral Education through College Foreign Language Teaching. *Foreign Language Education in China*, 7(02), 29-37+92.
- [11] FENG Quangong & LI Jiawei. (2016). Investigation on the Post-editing of Machine-translated News. *Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education*, (06), 74-79.