

Educational Philosophy and Practical Approaches to Subject-Based Education under the Framework of Core English Literacy

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Abstract: To fulfill the fundamental mission of fostering virtue through education, align with the requirements of quality education in the new era, and build upon the *Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)*, this paper explores the educational philosophy and practical pathways of the English discipline. The study aims to leverage the educational value inherent in the unity of English's instrumental and humanistic dimensions to promote the comprehensive development of students' core competencies. Using the 2024 edition of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) English textbook for Grade 7, Volume 1 as the analytical framework, this study employs a methodology that combines textual interpretation, case analysis, instructional pathway design, and evaluation system optimization. It systematically explores educational elements within the textbook—such as moral education, aesthetic education, and scientific inquiry—and investigates educational strategies for creating classroom contexts, expanding extracurricular activities, and implementing diversified assessment. The study clarifies that the essence of educational development in the English discipline lies in fostering virtue and cultivating talent, which requires synergy with ideological and political education and reliance on cultural comparison and mutual learning. It distills four actionable pathways—deepening textbook analysis, creating contextual scenarios, implementing practical activities, and optimizing assessment—to drive English instruction toward a shift from knowledge transmission to competency cultivation. Future English education should focus on personalized development and the cultivation of global competitiveness, leveraging technological and resource innovation to continuously deepen the effectiveness of

educational development within the discipline.

Keywords: English Education; Core Competencies; Curriculum Standards; Practical Approaches

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Education has issued subject-specific curriculum standards centered on “core competencies”, emphasizing the fundamental mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talent, and requiring that character education be integrated into subject instruction. This reflects China's emphasis on character education within the compulsory education system and provides clear guidance and requirements for its implementation.

As a language discipline, English serves a dual purpose—both as a practical tool and as a humanities subject—and possesses the unique characteristics of cross-cultural education, offering students rich cultural understanding and a global perspective. The significance of character education in English lies in its ability to promote students' comprehensive development—including language proficiency, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and learning skills—through the language learning process. This shift from a focus on “teaching” to “nurturing” lays a solid foundation for students' lifelong learning and adaptation to future society [1]. Therefore, teachers should focus on exploring the educational value within English textbooks, innovate teaching methods, support the cultivation of students' core competencies, and advance the in-depth development of character education in English.

2. Overview of the English Curriculum Standards

2.1 Core Content of the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education

In the *Compulsory Education English*

Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as *the 2022 Curriculum Standards*), the core content of the English curriculum has been carefully structured to fulfill the fundamental mission of fostering virtue and nurturing talent. The nature of the curriculum is defined as an organic combination of practicality and humanities, aiming to cultivate students' foundational, practical, and comprehensive competencies. The curriculum philosophy reinforces an educational orientation [2], focusing on nurturing a new generation of young people with ideals, capabilities, and a sense of responsibility, and emphasizing that they should possess cross-cultural communication skills.

The curriculum objectives are closely aligned with the educational requirements of fostering students who are "idealistic, capable, and responsible". The curriculum content emphasizes a theme-driven approach, focusing on three major themes: the relationship between the individual and the self, the individual and society, and the individual and nature. The content is organized around different types of texts and presented in units, aiming to address issues such as fragmented knowledge instruction and low learning effectiveness [3].

In terms of curriculum implementation, the standards provide enhanced guidance by clarifying academic requirements and instructional tips, ensuring consistency in teaching, learning, and assessment. At the same time, they advocate organizing instruction based on an activity-based approach to English learning, ensuring that the cultivation of core competencies is effectively implemented in the classroom. Furthermore, the curriculum standards offer assessment recommendations, guidelines for textbook development, and strategies for the development and utilization of curriculum resources, with the aim of comprehensively improving the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring that English education meets the demands of the new era.

2.2 Educational Objectives in the Curriculum Standards

Based on the educational objectives of compulsory education, *the 2022 Curriculum Standards* specify the core competencies that the English curriculum should focus on cultivating, including language proficiency, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and learning skills.

These competencies are key abilities that enable students to adapt to lifelong development and societal needs, and are intended to be gradually developed through English language instruction. *The 2022 Curriculum Standards* emphasize that English education should not only impart linguistic knowledge but also achieve the goal of nurturing students through language instruction—that is, cultivating students' well-rounded qualities so that they may possess correct values, essential character traits, and key competencies. This educational objective reflects the unity of the English curriculum's instrumental and humanistic dimensions, aiming to promote students' comprehensive development in language use, cultural understanding, critical thinking, and learning strategies through the implementation of a student-centered approach to English learning activities.

3. The Educational Significance of the English Subject

Wang Chunhui outlines the educational significance of the English language discipline [4], which encompasses the following three aspects.

3.1 The Essence of English Education Is TO Foster Virtue and Nurture Talent.

The essence of education in the English discipline lies in fostering virtue and nurturing talent, a philosophy that has a profound impact on English education. As the fundamental mission of education, fostering virtue and nurturing talent is primarily reflected in the three aspects—moral, intellectual, and aesthetic—where the educational value of the English discipline is most pronounced: First, the humanistic nature of the English discipline means that, like the Chinese language discipline, it possesses an inherent advantage in integrating moral education into subject instruction [5]. As a bridge for cultural exchange between the East and the West, the English discipline embodies the essence of Western culture and the depth of Western thought. It is closely linked to Western academic traditions, offering students a unique educational perspective. Second, language and intellectual development are closely intertwined; through language learning activities, students' thinking and innovative abilities are stimulated, fostering critical thinking. Finally, the aesthetic education function of the English discipline

cannot be overlooked; through the study of literary works and cultural content, students' aesthetic sensibilities and humanistic literacy are enhanced.

However, the current tendency toward exam-oriented education has, to some extent, hindered the full realization of the educational functions of the English discipline. The concept of "English as an educational discipline" aims to transform English education from knowledge transmission to the cultivation of competencies and character development by reforming teaching methods, updating educational philosophies, and optimizing evaluation systems. It is dedicated to nurturing the next generation with a global perspective, a sense of national pride, and an awareness of the community with a shared future for mankind.

3.2 In Terms of its Educational Function, English Instruction Works in Synergy with Moral Education.

In terms of its educational function, the English curriculum exhibits a synergistic effect with moral education; this synergy is evident not only in the transmission of knowledge but also in the shaping of values and ethical standards. As a bridge connecting Eastern and Western cultures, the unique educational value of the English discipline lies in its ability to guide students, through language learning, to deeply understand and absorb the essence of Western culture, while simultaneously strengthening their identification with and respect for their own culture through comparative study. This cross-cultural perspective provides students with a comprehensive and balanced worldview, helping them form sound values and moral standards in the context of globalization.

Knowledge acquisition and skill development form the foundation for the formation and development of literacy and hold a significant position in English language instruction. Literacy-centered teaching regards them as integral components; however, knowledge and skills are not synonymous with literacy nor can they be directly transformed into it. As Meng Qingtao points out, literacy is essentially the comprehensive ability an individual demonstrates when addressing complex situations and solving complex problems [6]. This concept is particularly prominent in the educational process of the English discipline. Educating students through the English

discipline is by no means a mechanical conversion of teaching content into moral education material, nor is it the rigid addition of moral education elements after stripping away linguistic knowledge. Rather, it requires educators to deeply explore the intrinsic educational value of the English discipline, meticulously plan teaching activities and curriculum frameworks, and achieve a natural integration of English language instruction and moral education. Through this approach, as students acquire language skills, they are subtly nurtured on the intellectual and moral levels, achieving synergistic progress in both knowledge acquisition and moral development. This effectively enhances their comprehensive literacy, enabling them to adapt to the demands of societal development.

3.3 The Unique Educational Value of the English Language Subject Lies in Cultural Comparison and Mutual Learning.

In today's world of increasingly frequent cross-cultural exchange, the unique value of English education lies notably in cultural comparison and mutual learning. Through the study of English, students are exposed to the rich and diverse cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking found in English-speaking countries—such as the religious and humanistic significance behind Western holidays, which stand in stark contrast to local traditional festival cultures. Through this process of comparison, students not only gain a deeper understanding of the unique charm and foundations of their own culture but also develop a more open and inclusive mindset toward other cultures, thereby avoiding cultural ethnocentrism. At the same time, opportunities for mutual cultural learning emerge, allowing students to absorb positive elements from English-speaking cultures—such as models for fostering innovation and critical thinking—which infuse new vitality into their personal growth and societal development. As linguist Krashen emphasizes the close connection between language learning and cultural input [7], the English language discipline serves as a natural bridge for cultural comparison and mutual learning, helping students become new-era talents with a global perspective and cultural literacy.

4. Implementation Strategies for Character Education in English Language Education

In terms of implementation strategies, teachers should adhere to the principle of unifying the instrumental and humanistic aspects of the English curriculum, using cross-cultural education to provide students with a rich understanding of culture and a global perspective [8]. For example, by introducing elements of China's outstanding cultural heritage, teachers can enhance students' cross-cultural communication skills and foster a sense of patriotism [9]. Furthermore, cross-cultural critical thinking serves as an effective means of fostering humanistic values in English instruction. By comparing and analyzing different cultural structures, students can gain insight into and master a way of observing and thinking about the world, thereby better empathizing with others and understanding the world [10]. The following outlines specific implementation strategies.

4.1 Conduct an in-Depth Analysis of Textbook Content to Fully Explore Its Educational Implications [11].

As the core component of teaching, textbooks offer value that extends far beyond the mere transmission of linguistic knowledge; they serve as a vital medium for achieving the goals of moral and holistic education. Under the framework of core literacy, the development of English textbooks generally adheres to the principles of ideological soundness, scientific rigor, systematic organization, appropriateness, innovation, and contemporary relevance. These textbooks employ a theme-driven approach to design integrated units and rely on diverse textual materials to form a comprehensive educational system [12]. In the context of the new era, teachers bear an even deeper educational mission. English reading serves as a vital vehicle for implementing educational goals within the discipline. Through in-depth interpretation and critical inquiry, the educational value of texts can be further explored, fostering students' thinking skills and humanistic literacy [13]. We should conduct a thorough and meticulous analysis of textbook texts, grounded in the overall framework and unit structure of the materials. By examining thematic significance, textual connotations, and activity design, we can uncover their rich underlying meanings. Through this process, we can naturally and comprehensively integrate the philosophy of moral and holistic education into

every aspect of teaching and learning, ensuring that students achieve balanced development in morality, emotions, and critical thinking while learning the language.

The new edition of textbooks generally relies on thematic contexts and uses discourse as a vehicle; they feature clearer themes, more diverse educational scenarios, and more explicit educational objectives [14]. Teachers can draw on the contextual resources provided by the textbooks to further explore the educational elements embedded within the discourse, thereby making their interpretation of the materials more systematic and educationally targeted. Taking Unit 5 of the 2024 edition of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press 7th Grade, Volume 1 as an example, the text "Pigeon Surprise" describes the shift in Henry's attitude as documented in his blog posts about observing pigeons. By detailing how Henry studied pigeons through park observations and online research, the text reveals the evolution of his attitude toward pigeons and illustrates that a comprehensive understanding of animals can only be achieved through scientific, evidence-based methods such as learning, careful observation, and consulting reference materials. Based on the educational objectives summarized by Cheng Xiaotang and Cong Lin [15], teachers can establish the following educational goals: (1) Moral Character: Understand the meaning and value of life, and adopt a more comprehensive and objective attitude toward observing and evaluating things, thereby fostering students' qualities of fairness and tolerance; (2) Aesthetic Sensibility: Enable students to appreciate and discern beauty, and develop healthy aesthetic values.

In addition, this article emphasizes the cultivation of a spirit of scientific inquiry. Through the observation and study of pigeon behavior, students can acquire basic knowledge of animal behavior and biology, which helps foster their spirit of scientific inquiry and scientific literacy. The textbook text contains rich intellectual and moral educational value. Teachers need to continuously strive for self-improvement, actively broaden their knowledge and horizons, and, through in-depth, multidimensional analysis and exploration, gain a more comprehensive understanding of the textbook's underlying meanings, thereby effectively enhancing their own text interpretation skills.

4.2 Crafting Meaningful Contextual Scenarios to Integrate Educational Objectives through Thematic Approaches

Jonassen, an American instructional design expert, defines a context as the use of a familiar reference point to help learners connect a concept under investigation with their own experiences, guiding them to draw upon those experiences to interpret, explain, and construct their own knowledge [16].

In modern education, teachers can utilize diverse tools and formats to create humanistic contexts that promote students' holistic development. Multimedia technologies such as video, audio, and animation provide students with vivid, intuitive experiences that stimulate emotions and critical thinking. Role-playing and simulation activities, such as Model United Nations, allow students to experience different roles, thereby enhancing their sense of social responsibility and empathy. Together, these methods foster students' intellectual and moral development, helping them form well-rounded personalities and cultivate a deep cultural foundation. When selecting methods to create humanistic contexts, teachers should comprehensively consider students' age characteristics, interests, cognitive levels, and instructional objectives, avoiding the use of monotonous or one-dimensional teaching approaches. Teachers should flexibly employ a variety of teaching methods to effectively bridge the gap between instructional content and students' prior experiences. At the same time, teachers need to continuously update their pedagogical philosophies and enhance their professional competence to better guide students in learning and growing within humanistic contexts [17]. Through these methods, teachers can effectively promote students' intellectual and moral development, helping them form well-rounded personalities and cultivate a deep cultural foundation.

Taking Unit 4 of the 24th edition of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press's 7th Grade, Volume 1 textbook as an example, the unit "Time to Celebrate" introduces traditional ways of celebrating various festivals and the potential issues associated with them. It encourages students to reflect on eco-friendly ways of celebrating and to learn to appreciate and respect the workers who remain on duty during holidays.

In the classroom, teachers can create a family

reunion scenario and simulate Spring Festival celebrations by hanging lanterns and pasting Spring Festival couplets, allowing students to experience the atmosphere of traditional Chinese festivals. Using video conferencing tools, teachers can arrange for students to engage in a dialogue with the virtual character Emilia. Emilia can share her observations and experiences of the Spring Festival, as well as how she has come to understand and appreciate Chinese culture through participating in Spring Festival activities. This interaction not only enhances students' language communication skills but also sparks their curiosity about cultural differences.

Building on this, teachers can further guide students to explore the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign festival cultures. They should encourage students to compare the Spring Festival with festivals in other cultures, such as Christmas or Thanksgiving, discussing the similarities and differences in family reunions, food, traditional customs, and celebration methods. Through such comparisons, students can gain a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and learn to respect and appreciate the uniqueness of different cultures.

Furthermore, teachers should encourage classroom interaction through methods such as group discussions and role-playing to facilitate meaning-making among students and enhance language comprehensibility. Such interaction not only aids language learning but also cultivates students' spirit of cooperation and communication skills [18]. Through these comprehensive teaching activities, students can learn through experience, grow through comparison, and develop cross-cultural understanding and communication skills. Teachers can also guide students to deepen their understanding of texts through group collaboration, presentations, and self- and peer-assessment, making situational teaching more interactive, multi-layered, and effective, thereby further realizing the educational goals of the discipline [19].

4.3 Expanding Diverse Extracurricular Activities to Foster Student Development through Hands-On Experiences

Extracurricular activities play a crucial role in the educational system; they not only provide students with learning opportunities outside the

classroom but are also indispensable to their well-rounded development. Through participation in extracurricular activities, students are able to learn through hands-on experience, develop teamwork skills, cultivate leadership abilities, and strengthen their sense of social responsibility. Extracurricular activities come in a wide variety, including academic competitions, community service, sports competitions, artistic creation, technological innovation, and cultural festivals. These activities cover all aspects of students' interests and talents, providing them with a platform to showcase themselves, challenge themselves, and surpass their own limits.

When implementing extracurricular activities, educators should thoroughly explore the educational value of each activity to ensure that the activity design aligns with educational objectives. This means that during the planning and execution of activities, emphasis should be placed on guiding students to learn through experience and achieve educational outcomes through practical activities. For example, in community service, teachers can guide students to pay attention to social issues and think about solutions, thereby fostering their sense of social responsibility and problem-solving skills. In sports competitions, teachers can emphasize the importance of teamwork and fair play, helping students establish sound values. In this way, extracurricular activities not only enrich students' campus life but also subtly achieve educational goals, laying a solid foundation for their lifelong development.

4.4 Carefully Selecting Discourse-Based Questions and Leveraging the Assessment System to Enhance Educational Effectiveness

The content of the textbooks is closely tied to the real-life experiences of both Chinese and international students, emphasizes the integration of cultural elements, and inherently possesses strong cultural and educational value [20]. By selecting texts that are closely related to students' lives and rich in inspiration, teachers can guide students to naturally absorb positive values through reading. The assessment system plays a central role in this process; it serves not only as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but also as a means of guiding and motivating students. A reasonable assessment system should integrate formative and summative evaluation, focusing on students' holistic development,

including knowledge acquisition, skill development, and the formation of values.

To maximize the educational effectiveness of assessment, teachers should design open-ended and inquiry-based assessment tasks that encourage students to express their viewpoints and demonstrate their thought processes, thereby fostering critical and creative thinking. Assessment feedback is key to promoting students' self-awareness and growth; it helps students identify their strengths and areas for improvement, while stimulating intrinsic motivation.

Taking Unit 5 of the 2024 edition of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press 7th Grade Volume 1 as an example, the unit titled "The Power of Plants" primarily describes the importance and diverse roles of plants in nature and human life. This unit introduces how plants produce oxygen and food through photosynthesis, how they influence the climate and provide food and medicinal resources, as well as the symbolic significance of plants in different cultures. Additionally, it explores the contribution of plants to human spiritual life, such as the global influence and significance of tea culture. Based on the educational objectives summarized by Cheng Xiaotang and Cong Lin, the primary educational goals of this unit are: (1) Moral Character: To cultivate students' respect and care for plants and the natural environment, and to strengthen their environmental awareness and commitment to sustainable development. (2) Aesthetic Sensibility: This unit offers rich content that allows students to appreciate the beauty of plants and their artistic qualities in the natural world. By observing and studying plant diversity, students can develop an appreciation for and respect toward natural beauty, thereby forming healthy aesthetic values.

To achieve these educational goals, teachers can design a project that engages students in plant conservation activities, such as campus greening or maintaining community gardens. Through these activities, teachers can assess whether students demonstrate teamwork, a sense of responsibility, and care for the environment. When evaluating students, focus on their behavioral performance during the activities, such as whether they actively participate, help others, and respect nature. At the same time, encourage students to document their experiences and insights gained during the learning process, particularly their emotional

experiences when interacting with plants. Teachers can assess students' reflection journals to see if they are able to express awe and appreciation for plant life. Through these assessment activities, guide students to learn and experience through practice, achieving both intellectual and emotional growth.

5. Conclusion

This study conducts a systematic exploration of the educational philosophy and practical pathways for the English discipline within the framework of core English literacy. Grounded in the *Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)*, it clarifies that the English discipline possesses both instrumental and humanistic dimensions, with its fundamental educational purpose being the cultivation of virtue and the nurturing of talent. It must be advanced in tandem with moral education, and its unique educational value is demonstrated through cultural comparison and mutual learning. By analyzing case studies from the first-semester Grade 7 textbook published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, this study identifies four practical pathways: in-depth analysis of textbook texts, skillful design of humanistic contexts, expansion of diverse extracurricular activities, and careful selection of discourse materials alongside optimization of the evaluation system. The findings confirm that integrating educational objectives into language instruction can effectively cultivate students' moral character, aesthetic sensibilities, spirit of scientific inquiry, and cross-cultural understanding, thereby driving the transformation of English education from knowledge transmission to the cultivation of literacy and character development.

This study has certain limitations. It focuses solely on case analyses of textbook units from the first year of junior high school, resulting in a relatively narrow coverage of educational stages and textbook editions. There is insufficient exploration of the adaptability of these educational practices to schools with varying student profiles and regional contexts. Additionally, while the study concentrates on classroom instruction and on-campus activities, it lacks in-depth research into collaborative educational scenarios involving families and society, failing to establish a comprehensive, integrated educational implementation system. In the future, English education should adhere to

the fundamental orientation of fostering virtue and cultivating talent, broaden the scope of research and practical scenarios, cover textbooks across all educational stages, and integrate regional teaching realities to construct a more universally applicable educational model; strengthen collaborative education both inside and outside the classroom and within and beyond the school, and enrich the forms of practical activities; continuously optimize the evaluation system, using formative and comprehensive assessments to support students' all-round development; leverage modern educational technology and online resources to focus on students' personalized development and the cultivation of global competitiveness, continuously enhancing core competencies such as cross-cultural communication and critical thinking; and truly maximize the educational value of the English discipline to cultivate new-era talents who possess both a sense of national identity and a global perspective.

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