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Practical Reform of Ideological and Political Education in Advanced English Reading, Writing, and Translation Courses Against the Background of the International Promotion of Traditional Chinese Medicine—Taking Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine as an Example*

HUANG Min, He Yan
Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China

The internationalization of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) imposes comprehensive demands on the English proficiency of senior university students, encompassing linguistic skills, professional communication, and value-oriented competencies. However, traditional advanced English courses at TCM institutions such as Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine have long suffered from issues including poor professional relevance, rigid integration of ideological and political education, and superficial utilization of digital tools. This study employs the 32-hour "Advanced English Reading, Writing, and Translation" course as a practical platform, integrating outcome-based teaching methods with project-based learning principles for ideological and political education. Leveraging the Unipus Intelligent Teaching Platform and the Pigai English Writing Intelligent Grading Software, a three-dimensional teaching framework of "project-driven instruction—digital support—ideological and political integration" was developed. Focusing on two real-world projects—English translation of the 24 Solar Terms culture and scientific communication writing for health promotion—the evaluation system adopted a combination of "process assessment (60%) + final assessment (40%)". Semester-long implementation demonstrated that the experimental class (n = 64) significantly outperformed the control class (n = 52) in translation accuracy, proper handling of culturally loaded terms, and self-assessment scores for cultural confidence. This paper outlines actionable reform strategies tailored to TCM institutions and constrained by limited class hours, while providing targeted recommendations for digital resource development and addressing faculty competency gaps.

Keywords: internationalization of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Advanced English Reading, Writing, and Translation, Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum, project-based learning (PBL)

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HUANG Min, Associate Professor, College of Foreign Languages, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China.
He Yan (corresponding author), Lecturer, School of Foreign Languages, Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, Nanning, China.

Statement of the Problem

New Requirements for English Teaching in the Internationalization of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Since Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) was officially incorporated into the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), its internationalization has expanded beyond the export of medical technologies to include joint standard development and cultural dialogue. Language proficiency plays a dual role in this process: serving both as a tool for academic exchange and as a vehicle for cultural interpretation and value transmission. For students trained in TCM institutions, merely mastering general English reading, writing, and translation skills is no longer sufficient. A notable phenomenon is that when translating core concepts such as "preventive treatment of disease" and "strengthening healthy qi and eliminating pathogenic factors", students often encounter comprehension difficulties among overseas readers—even when grammatically correct translations are produced—due to a lack of cross-cultural interpretive awareness. This underscores the need for advanced English courses to cultivate a "triple integrated competence": solid language fundamentals, professional English translation skills for TCM content, and a conscious cultural perspective.

The Practical Challenges of the Advanced English Reading, Writing, and Translation Course at Guangxi University of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Since introducing the "Advanced English Reading, Writing, and Translation" course in 2019, the English program at Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine has consistently faced several persistent challenges.

The primary challenge lies in the conflict between limited class hours and expanding course content. The course is scheduled for only two class hours per week, totaling 32 hours per semester. Within such a constrained timeframe, instructors must cover core topics—including advanced English reading strategies, complex sentence analysis, and academic writing standards—while also addressing specialized training in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), often resulting in compromised quality. One instructor who participated in the preliminary discussions remarked, "By the time we finish teaching a unit, half the semester has already passed, leaving no time whatsoever to address TCM English translation".

The second issue is the disconnect between the textbook and the professional field. The course has long relied on Volume 4 of the *New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Textbook*, whose selected texts primarily focus on universal themes such as social culture, technological ethics, and educational topics, while traditional Chinese medical classics and health education materials are largely absent. Students have reported: "Although studying this textbook has expanded my vocabulary, I still struggle to write a proper herbal medicine instruction manual".

Third, the integration of ideological and political education often remains superficial. Previous designs typically involved playing a video titled "China's Cultural Outreach" at the beginning of the course or adding a prompt like "Please reflect on how to convey cultural confidence through translation" after translation exercises. Such tokenistic and call-to-action approaches to ideological education fail to resonate with students. In an informal feedback session, one student stated bluntly: "I know we should be confident, but when it comes to translating the term 'Sanjiao', whether to use 'triple energizer' or 'Sanjiao', I still don't know how to choose".

Fourth, the utilization of digital tools remains superficial. Although the university has implemented the Unipus Smart Teaching Platform (designed to complement the "New Horizon College English" textbook) and

the Pigai English Writing Intelligent Grading Software, these tools were previously primarily used for attendance tracking, assignment distribution, and automated essay grading. The bilingual Chinese-Medicinal Medicine corpus and CAT tools have not yet been integrated into routine teaching practices. Furthermore, the Pigai is mainly employed for identifying surface-level language errors and lacks the capability to provide feedback on cultural translation strategies.

These challenges are not unique to Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine. Based on our visits to similar institutions within the region, these issues are essentially common to advanced English courses in traditional Chinese medicine universities. Consequently, exploring an instructional model that is suitable for short class hours, balances professional training with ideological and political education, and is practical to implement became the direct impetus for this study.

Theoretical Perspective and Design Approach

The teaching reform in this study did not aim for a comprehensive theoretical framework but selectively drew upon two types of theoretical resources proven effective in integrating language teaching with ideological and political education.

Selective Application of the Output-Oriented Approach (POA)

The output-oriented approach proposed by Wen Qiufang (2017), with its core principle of "output-driven, input-enhanced, and integration of learning and application", is particularly well-suited for a 32-hour course. We adopted a streamlined implementation model characterized by "reduced emphasis on driving demonstrations and enhanced task integration": Instead of setting aside dedicated driving segments, we directly positioned the course's core outputs—two practical tasks (English translation of seasonal terms and health promotion outreach)—as both the starting point and ultimate goal of instruction. Within each task cycle, students first draft their work, revealing specific challenges across the "language, professional, and ideological-political" dimensions, before engaging in targeted study of the input materials. This approach transforms the resolution of the "disconnection between learning and application" from a mere slogan into an actionable teaching process.

Embedded Design of Project-Based Learning (PBL + Ideology) for Ideological and Political Education

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) is not merely about "carrying out a project", but rather integrates ideological and political elements into authentic decision-making scenarios within tasks. Drawing on Zhao Xue's (2018) PBL design experience in translation teaching, we introduced a key modification: While traditional PBL focuses on "problem-solving", we incorporated a "value reflection" component. Upon completion of each project, students are required to answer two questions in brief reflective notes: "Which aspect of my translation/writing decisions demonstrates respect for or reinterpretation of Traditional Chinese Medicine culture?" and "If the reader comes from a non-TCM cultural background, would my expression lead to misunderstandings?" This approach transforms ideological and political education from external directives into internal self-reflection.

A Simplified Transformation of Cross-Cultural Communication Theory

In terminology translation and cultural load word processing, we introduce a core distinction from intercultural communication theory—the choice between "defamiliarization" and "familiarization" strategies. Students are guided to determine the appropriate approach based on the communication purpose: For academic readers, it is advisable to retain heterogeneous expressions (e.g., pinyin with parenthetical notes); for general

readers, greater reliance on cultural analogies is required (e.g., interpreting "qi" as "vital energy"). This distinction is straightforward and practical, making it easy for students to master.

Specific Design of Teaching Reform

Basic Course Information

Table 1

Advanced English Reading,Writing, and Translation Course Information Sheet

Course title	Target audience	Class schedule	Practice cycle	Teaching material	Add resources	Digital platform
Advanced English Reading, Writing, and Translation course	The 2021 grade of Non-English majors consists of two regular classes (64 students in the experimental class and 52 students in the control class).	32 credit hours (2 hours per week, for a total of 16 weeks)	First Semester of the 2023-2024 Academic Year	*New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Coursebook*, Volume 4 (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press)	Examples of public communication on the 24 solar terms and health preservation knowledge	The Unipus Smart Teaching Platform (Accompanying textbooks, used for task assignment, discussion forum interaction, and learning data recording) and thePigai platform (for automatic essay grading and language standard feedback)

Overall Framework: "Project-Driven—Digital Support—Integration of Ideological and Political Education"

We divided the 32 credit hours into two project cycles, with each cycle lasting 12-14 hours; the remaining six hours were allocated to project introduction, mid-term integration, and final presentation and reflection. The textbook usage was streamlined: Three units (approximately 12 hours) covering core reading and writing strategies from Volume 4 of the *New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Textbook* were retained, while the remaining 20 hours were dedicated to the TCM-themed project-based instruction.

Project 1: English Translation of the Culture of the 24 Solar Terms (14 class hours):

- Task: Write a bilingual tweet on "Jingzhe Health Preservation" for an overseas social media account dedicated to Traditional Chinese Medicine culture.
- Ideological and political approach: Understand the holistic concept of "harmony between heaven and humanity" underlying the solar terms, and analyze the similarities and differences between "adhering to nature" and Western environmental philosophies.
- Digital support: Submit drafts via Unipus and engage in peer review through discussion forums; utilize the self-built corpus to examine how the term "Jieqi" is translated in various official versions; employ the Pigai Platform to identify language errors in drafts.
- Integration with the textbook: Select 1-2 texts from the textbook that involve cultural comparison or expository writing as reading materials to apply their writing strategies.

Project 2: Scientific Communication Writing on Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Preservation (12 credit hours):

- Task: Write an approximately 800-word English essay for international university students, introducing either "the Traditional Chinese Medicine principles of postpartum confinement" or "the modern interpretation of the concept of 'food as medicine'".
- Ideological and political approach: By addressing cultural misconceptions (such as the belief that "postpartum confinement is an outdated custom"), cultural confidence and a spirit of dialogue are naturally cultivated.

- Digital support: The team uses online document collaboration; the Pigai Network provides feedback on writing standards and allows multiple revisions; the Unipus discussion forum facilitates strategy sharing and peer review.
- Integration with teaching materials: Apply the structural framework of the argumentative writing unit in textbooks (thesis—evidence—argumentation) to health science communication writing.

Integrated schedule for six class hours:

- Week 1 (two class hours): Course introduction and project overview, covering basic corpus usage and the operation of the Pigai platform.
- Week 7 (two class hours): Mid-term presentation of Project 1 outcomes and focused feedback session (use the Unipus discussion forum to collect students' concerns in advance).
- Weeks 15-16 (four class hours): Final project presentation (group presentation + individual reflective statement), followed by the instructor's summary.

Simplified Adjustment of Evaluation Methods

Given the 32-hour limit, we adopted a clear binary structure:

- Process evaluation (60%): The initial draft of each project, peer review records, revised drafts, and reflective notes each account for 15% (2 projects = 30%). Class attendance and participation in the U Campus discussion forum account for the remaining 30%.
- Final evaluation (40%): At the end of the term, each student selects one of the two projects for in-depth revision and submits the final version along with a 300-word "revision note" explaining the adjustments made based on feedback, particularly decisions regarding cultural expression.

The Pigai platform serves an auxiliary role in the assessment process: Both students' initial drafts and revised versions are submitted through the platform, and the system automatically generates language error reports that serve as one of the references for self-study, but are not directly counted toward the final score to prevent students from prioritizing "score" over "expression quality".

The teaching arrangement for the control class follows the traditional model of textbook explanation + exercise practice + final written exam, utilizing all eight units of Volume 4 of the *New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Course* (without compression). The digital platform is solely used for attendance tracking and assignment submission, with no implementation of project-based learning or Traditional Chinese Medicine-specific training.

The advantage of this design is that it integrates "learning" and "evaluation" throughout the entire project implementation process. Evaluation is no longer merely an isolated written test, but rather a comprehensive review and reflection on the learning journey.

Implementation Outcomes and Discussion

Data Sources and Analytical Methods

We employed a quasi-experimental design, assigning two natural classes from the 2021 grade as the experimental class (n = 64, using the aforementioned model) and the control class (n = 52, following the traditional model). It should be noted that due to objective constraints in course scheduling, complete random class assignment was not feasible; however, the average GPA (Grade Point Average) for core courses in the first and second years was 3.31 for the experimental class and 3.34 for the control class, with no statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$), indicating comparable initial performance levels.

The data sources include: (1) blind evaluation scores for end-of-term project outcomes (assessed independently by two English teachers not involved in teaching, with the mean value used); (2) self-assessment questionnaires on "Confidence in Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture and Communication Effectiveness" at both the semester's beginning and end (using a five-point Likert scale); (3) interaction records from the Unipus discussion forum; (4) essay grading logs from the Pigai Platform; (5) classroom observation notes and focus group interviews (with six-eight participants randomly selected from each group).

Main Findings

Discovery 1: The quality of project outcomes has significantly improved.

The final project comprehensive score for the experimental class was 85.7 points (SD = 4.3), while the final written test score for the control class was 76.8 points (SD = 5.2), with a statistically significant difference ($t = 4.05$, $p < 0.001$). Among the individual indicators, the experimental class achieved a term accuracy rate of 90.5% (based on the "Standard for English Translation of Basic Terms in Traditional Chinese Medicine"), compared to 76.9% for the control class in translation questions; regarding the item "Whether cultural load term processing includes explanatory or strategic descriptions", the experimental class demonstrated an appropriate response rate of 86.8%, versus only 63.7% for the control class.

Notably, the score distribution in the experimental class was more concentrated: Only three students (4.7%) scored in the low range (< 70 points), compared to nine in the control class (17.3%). A reflective note from a low-scoring student in the experimental class stated, "My translation's grammar is correct, but the teacher pointed out that I merely transliterated 'qi and blood' as qixue without providing any explanation, making it incomprehensible to overseas readers. Next time, I'll include 'vital substances and their movements'". Such targeted reflections are precisely what are rarely found in traditional assignments.

Discovery 2: The enhancement of cultural confidence and communication awareness is observable.

The pre-post test comparison of the self-assessment questionnaire revealed that in the item "I can explain core concepts of Traditional Chinese Medicine in English", the mean score in the experimental class increased from 2.5 ("not very agree") to 4.2 ("somewhat agree"), while in the control class it rose from 2.6 to 3.0. For the item "I am willing to proactively introduce Traditional Chinese Medicine to overseas audiences", the mean score in the experimental class increased from 2.7 to 4.4, and in the control class from 2.6 to 3.2.

During the focus group interviews, students from the experimental class provided richer qualitative insights. One student remarked, "Previously, I thought translating Traditional Chinese Medicine texts meant memorizing vocabulary. It wasn't until working on the 'Jingzhe Health Preservation' project that I realized the same solar term could be presented entirely differently—whether submitted to academic journals or illustrated for social media posts. This strategic approach made me feel I was truly 'engaging in communication' rather than merely 'doing homework'". Another student recalled, "During peer review, my deskmate asked me if translating 'yao shi tong yuan' (medicine and food share the same origin) as 'food as medicine' sounded too Westernized. I later revised it to 'food and medicine share the same origin' and added a footnote. This debate taught me to always keep my readers in mind".

Discovery 3: The use of digital tools has evolved from being "superficial" to being "problem-driven".

In the experimental class, the Unipus discussion forum generated 287 thematic posts and comments—significantly higher than the control class (which opened its discussion forum during the same period with only 41 entries). The use of the Pigai platform also showed a clear trend: During Weeks 1-2, students submitted their

essays an average of 2.3 times, typically submitting them immediately after completion; by Weeks 10-12, this average rose to 4.1 submissions per week, with students actively reviewing system feedback, consulting language corpora, or consulting peers between submissions. One student recalled in an interview: “Previously, when using the grading platform, I only checked the total score and submitted once the score reached 75 or higher. Later, the instructor required us to include a “revision note”, which prompted me to carefully examine each error prompt. On one occasion, the system indicated an issue with my phrase ‘cold natured foods’. After consulting the language corpus, I discovered the more authentic expression is ‘cool-natured foods’. This revision process gave me greater confidence”.

The active usage frequency of the corpus has also shifted from “teacher-led demonstrations” to “student-initiated searches”: In Week 1, only five participants attempted to access the corpus; by Week 10, 48 participants (accounting for 75% of the experimental class) reported using the corpus at least once per week to verify term translations.

Discovery 4: The feasibility of group collaboration under large class sizes (64 students).

The size of 64 students in the experimental class posed challenges for group activities. Our measures included dividing the class into 16 groups of four students each, utilizing Unipus’s random grouping feature to quickly assign discussion partners during class sessions, and implementing a “two-round” peer evaluation system—first round of intra-group evaluations followed by cross-group evaluations (each group reviewed two assignments from another group). The final student satisfaction survey revealed that 86% of students believed “this arrangement did not diminish participation despite the large class size,” while 12% reported instances of “some members occasionally freeloading on group work”. This suggests the need for more refined design of group role assignments and self-assessment mechanisms for contribution evaluation in future implementations.

Limitations and Reflections

Despite the positive outcomes, we are also acutely aware of several shortcomings.

The primary constraint lies in the rigid class hour allocation. The 32 class hours cover two projects plus textbook unit instruction, resulting in a highly intensive schedule. During implementation, Project 2 (Health Science Writing) originally required four hours for peer evaluation and revision but was completed in only 2.5 hours, leading to insufficient revisions in some groups. Expanding the duration to 48 hours would likely yield better outcomes.

The second challenge lies in teachers’ workload. The new model requires educators to devote substantial time to corpus maintenance, project feedback, and peer review guidance. This semester, the experimental class teachers (who are also co-authors of this paper) were responsible for 64 students, with lesson preparation and feedback time amounting to approximately 2.5 times that of the traditional model. Although the school has recognized part of this workload, scaling it to more classes would necessitate corresponding policy support or teaching assistant assistance.

The third limitation lies in digital platforms. While the Unipus and the Pigai platform can meet basic teaching needs, their data systems remain disconnected, forcing students to switch between the platforms. Moreover, the Pigai platform exhibits low accuracy in identifying errors in Traditional Chinese Medicine terminology and professional expressions (in our end-of-term sample of 20 translations, 34% of terms were misclassified as “spelling errors” by the Pigai platform), necessitating additional manual verification efforts from instructors.

The fourth challenge lies in the difficulty of textbook integration. The content of Volume 4 of the *New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Course* lacks a natural connection with the theme of Traditional Chinese Medicine. When compressing textbook units while incorporating distinctive projects, instructors must independently design extensive bridging materials. This imposes significant demands on teachers' curriculum design capabilities.

Recommendations for the Reform of Advanced English Courses in Traditional Chinese Medicine Institutions

Based on the practices at Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine, we have proposed three actionable recommendations for similar institutions.

First, in terms of curriculum positioning, it is essential to clearly emphasize the equal importance of the three objectives—"language, professional competence, and ideological and political education"—with "assessable tasks" serving as the connecting thread. It is not advisable to list abstract ideological and political objectives (such as "enhancing cultural confidence") in the course syllabus; instead, these should be translated into specific behavioral indicators. For example, in translation projects, students should demonstrate initiative in adding annotations for cultural concepts prone to misunderstanding; in writing projects, they should be able to identify and address common questions from Western readers regarding Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Second, in terms of resource development, priority should be given to establish a "small but refined" school-based bilingual corpus. Rather than waiting for the completion of a national large-scale English translation corpus on Traditional Chinese Medicine, it is more effective to gradually build a micro-corpus encompassing 200-300 core terms and 20-30 representative texts, drawing from faculty research abstracts, outstanding student translations, and highly cited TCM papers in international journals. This process itself fosters both faculty development and student engagement.

Third, in textbook utilization, a strategy of "streamlining the fundamentals while enhancing specialized features" is adopted. For general textbooks like the *New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Coursebook*, detailed explanations of each passage are unnecessary; instead, modular instruction focuses on project-relevant reading strategies, writing frameworks, and grammatical points. The freed-up instructional hours are allocated to the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) specialized program, establishing a progressive framework that builds foundational general competencies while advancing professional skills.

Conclusion

In the dual context of internationalizing Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and integrating ideological and political education into university foreign language curricula, advanced English reading, writing, and translation courses urgently need to move beyond the conventional approach of "general textbooks supplemented with ideological elements". The 2021 teaching practice involving 32 class hours at Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine demonstrated that a model guided by real-world projects, supported digitally through the Unipus and the Pigai platform, and embedded with ideological and political education within a three-dimensional framework for cross-cultural communication strategies can effectively enhance students' language proficiency, professional communication awareness, and cultural confidence within limited class hours. The implementation in a large experimental class of 64 students also preliminarily validated the feasibility of this model in medium-sized classes.

Of course, this is merely a preliminary, small-scale exploration. Moving forward, we plan to deepen our efforts in two key areas: first, applying the project's outcomes to authentic overseas social media platforms or student international exchange programs, thereby bridging the gap between "classroom assignments" and "real-world dissemination"; second, exploring data interoperability solutions between the Unipus and the Pigai platform to reduce teachers' switching costs between platforms.

As Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) expands globally, language serves as the bridge, and curriculum design constitutes the engineering task of building this bridge. We hope this report—based on authentic teaching data from Guangxi University of Chinese Medicine (course launched in 2019, using the fourth volume of the *New Horizon College English Reading and Writing Textbook*, with 64 + 52 students enrolled in the 2021 grade, 32 instructional hours, and utilizing the Unipus and the Pigai platform)—will provide peers with an honest, dialoguable, and replicable reference.

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