

# Native culture, intercultural elements, and Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum (IPEC) in EFL learning among Chinese senior high school students

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## **Abstract**

With the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative and the promulgation of the new curriculum standards for high school English in China, high school English teaching has shifted from the traditional focus on foreign culture to equal emphasis on native culture, which requires integrating native culture into English teaching while deeply exploring intercultural elements. At the same time, ideological and political education in the curriculum (IPEC) in the new-era means that English teaching must highlight the educational value and give full play to the ideological and political elements and the value of implicit education in English courses. This study examined the integration and acceptance of native culture, intercultural elements, and IPEC in Chinese high school English learning. This study used descriptive research. A total of 360 students from Liulin Senior High School in Shiyan, Hubei Province participated in the study. The research results show that high school students' attitudes and awareness of their native culture have been greatly improved, so the overall learning effect is optimistic. The implementation effect of the IPEC in English class is generally positive. Girls attach greater significance to native culture, and thus can adopt more learning techniques, and better understand the meaning and importance of IPEC. In terms of native culture, liberal arts students are rated better than science students. In addition, native culture, intercultural elements and IPEC are highly relevant. Lastly, a language learning program was proposed to enhance the native culture, intercultural elements, and IPEC of Chinese high school EFL learners.

**Keywords:** native culture, intercultural elements, Ideological and Political Education in Course (IPEC), senior high school, EFL students

## **Native culture, intercultural elements, and Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum (IPEC) in EFL learning among Chinese senior high school students**

### **1. Introduction**

Culture and language are two inextricably intertwined factors in human development and education, neither of which can go without the other. Language is more than a tool of communication among people and it is also an important carrier of culture. In the process of second language acquisition, the mother tongue is always playing a role, whether positively or negatively, and that is also true with culture. In second language acquisition, native culture refers to the culture growing from the learners mother tongue which has been playing a significant role in his life and learning, including his thinking methods and learning patterns (Baker, 2016). With the development of full specialization of economy, cultural diversification and information network, intercultural communication has become a major feature of the new era. To better clarify intercultural elements, one should first understand what it means by “intercultural”. It refers to the activity or process in which the participants do not rely only on their own codes, habits, ideas, and ways of behaving, but they also experience and understand all the aspects of and relationships with other groups or communities (Bebenova, 2016). Therefore, intercultural elements refer to all the factors and aspects that can represent different cultures, including the habits, customs, common beliefs, ideas and thinking patterns. These elements are the carrier of different cultures and also embody the connotation of cultures.

In 2016, Chairman Xi Jinping proposed an epoch-marking initiative that all the curricula should go together in the same direction with ideological and political courses and shoulder their own responsibilities of educating the young citizens. Since then, ideological and political education in curriculum (IPEC) has become a heated topic in education. IPEC is one of the most heated education policies in all kinds of schools in China in recent years. High school students are at their critical stage of physical and mental development, which means combining English teaching with IPEC and politics can not only improve students’ English knowledge, but also help to improve students’ moral quality, form correct values in learning, and cultivate high-quality talents with all-round development for the construction of the motherland. It is exactly what the educational function of English requires.

Existing research seldom deal with the IPEC in high school and the combination of native culture, intercultural elements and IPEC in high school English. Therefore, the research seeks to determine the relationship among native culture, intercultural elements and IPEC and examine the current situation and problems of the three factors in EFL classroom in Chinese senior high school. The purpose of this study was to determine the native culture, intercultural elements and ideological and political education in curriculum (IPEC) among Chinese EFL learners in order to provide some enhancement for EFL learning in Chinese senior high school. Specifically, this study determined native culture of the learners reflected in their attitude, learning content, techniques as well as evaluation and reflection; identified the intercultural elements of the respondents in terms of content, classification, approaches, emotion and attitude as well as evaluation and reflection; assessed the ideological and political education in curriculum among learners in terms of perception and comprehension, implementation as well as personal value status; tested the relationship among the three variables, native culture, intercultural elements and ideological and political education in curriculum; and proposed an EFL learning program for Chinese senior high school students based on the findings of the study.

### **2. Methods**

Through descriptive correlational method, this research seeks to describe the basic information and the relationship among native culture, intercultural elements and IPEC. Survey questionnaires are utilized by the researcher to collect data from the respondents.

**Participants of the study** - The quantitative study was carried out in one high school in a city in a central province in China, where the education reform always leads the trends in the whole country. Based on the Raosoft sample size calculator, 360 out of 3500 students were chosen from all the three course selection types and they were grouped into history orientation and physics orientation, as is always done in Chinese high schools.

The study was conducted through survey questionnaire. The questionnaires mainly consist of four parts: the Participants' Profile, Native Culture, Intercultural Elements, and IPEC Questionnaire. For better understanding, all the items were stated in Chinese and English version. The first part of the questionnaire is the participants' profile, or the demographic data such as sex, school year and course selection. The second part is the Native Culture questionnaire (NC), which is designed with reference to Integration of Native Culture in English Teaching Scale (INCTS) developed by Shan He (2022). The third part is the questionnaire on Intercultural Elements (IE), which is designed based on the Cultural Experience in English Teaching Scale (CEETS) developed by Zhu Meihua (2021). The last part is the questionnaire on IPEC consisting of 27 items from 3 dimensions, perception and comprehension, implementation, and personal value status. This questionnaire is adapted from the IPEC in English Reading Teaching Scale (CIRTS) developed by Xi Tong (2022). Each of all the 100 items has a 4-point Likert response scale ranging from 4 to 1 for responses of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. All the responses are in positive statements so that the value of each item can be in accordance with the participants' evaluation and the survey result can reveal the true status of the native culture in high school English learning.

To solve the research problems, the data from the questionnaire was analyzed in SPSS. To be specific, descriptive statistics of all the domains show the level of native culture, intercultural elements, and ideological and political education in the curriculum. The t-test analysis for the samples was utilized to examine the differences between the three variables when grouped according to the respondents' profiles. In addition, the Spearman Correlation Analysis was adopted to report the relation of the three variables. The statistical results were calculated and then the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations were given accordingly.

Ethical consideration comes first when proposing this research as it should never be overlooked by any researcher. This researcher included several ethical considerations in this project. Firstly, the questionnaires were created without using any offensive, derogatory, or otherwise unacceptable words. Secondly, the consent from the principal of the school was obtained with the research and objectives clear so that the data collection was done with official approval. Thirdly, all the participants were given a detailed explanation of the research so that they were clear about it and made their free decision to take part in or not. Furthermore, considering their privacy and confidentiality, the personal information, and data of all the participants were kept in strict confidentiality. Lastly, all the ideas and achievements from previous studies were listed in references.

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 1**

*Summary Table on Native Culture*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Attitude	3.60	Strongly Agree	1
Learning Content	3.39	Agree	2.5
Learning Technique	3.39	Agree	2.5
Evaluation and Reflection	3.31	Agree	4
Composite Mean	3.42	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 1 is a summary table of native culture, covering attitude, learning content, learning technique as well as evaluation and reflection. Among the four items, attitude got the highest rank with a weighted mean of 3.6, meaning strongly agree. The majority of the respondents have a positive attitude towards the importance, necessity and the benefits of learning to export Chinese culture in English. The purpose of learning English is to better understand the world and learn about the excellent culture and advanced technology of other countries. Just as Luo Dan (2022) put it, to cultivate students' cultural awareness is to cultivate students' Chinese feelings, international perspective,

and intercultural communication skills, so that students can appreciate, identify and evaluate different cultures, and understand the significance of Chinese culture in order to express and spread Chinese culture in English proficiently in communication. It was followed by learning content and learning technique which have the same weighted mean of 3.39, indicating majority of the respondents agree with the two aspects.

Learning technique ranks the same as learning content. Learning techniques are also very significant in native culture learning. A combined utilization of diverse technology in English teaching has made it more inviting and efficient to learn native culture in English class. Evaluation and reflection comes last among the indicators with weighted mean of 3.31, meaning the majority of the respondents agree with the statements in the questionnaire. It can be found in the research that in English class, the teachers should pay more attention to students' process experience and growth process, truly activate students' learning motivation for native culture, improve their dialectical thinking ability and level, ensure that students acquire more knowledge, grow faster, implement core competencies of the subject, and achieve all-round development.

**Table 2**

*Summary Table on Intercultural Elements*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Content	3.48	Agree	2
Classification	3.43	Agree	3
Learning Approaches	3.40	Agree	5
Emotion and Attitude	3.51	Strongly Agree	1
Evaluation and Reflection	3.41	Agree	4
Composite Mean	3.45	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 is a summary table on intercultural elements. The composite mean is 3.45, indicating that the respondents agree with the indicators on the whole. There are five dimensions to this part, content, classification, learning approaches, emotion and attitude as well as evaluation and reflection. The dimension with the highest agreement is emotion and attitude (mean=3.51), followed by content (mean=3.48). The one with the lowest mean is learning approaches (mean=3.40). Most of the students in the research think they have gained a lot after learning intercultural elements and believe it is helpful in language and culture learning. Based on fully respecting the excellent cultures of other countries, one should deeply explore and integrate more excellent traditional cultures of his own country, so that students can form a cultural identity (Ma, 2022). Integrating intercultural elements into English learning and conducting cultural teaching are conducive to the overall improvement of students' knowledge literacy, ability literacy, emotional literacy, and cultural literacy. According to Morady and Tirnaz (2023), intercultural awareness means possessing knowledge of the cultures associated with one's native tongue and one's target language. As a result, "intercultural awareness" and "intercultural knowledge" are essentially synonymous. When the students learn enough of the intercultural elements consciously, their cultural awareness and intercultural competence will surely be improved. To this end, the intercultural teaching in the survey is satisfactory. Therefore, teachers must constantly keep pace with the times in teaching practice and optimize teaching strategies according to teaching needs and academic conditions. Modern technologies and means should be used rationally. Only in this way can teaching be closer to the requirements and expectations.

**Table 3**

*Summary Table on Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum (IPEC)*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Perception and Comprehension	3.35	Agree	3
Implementation	3.49	Agree	2
Personal Value Status	3.51	Strongly Agree	1
Composite Mean	3.45	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 is a summary table of respondents' evaluation of IPEC. The composite mean of these indicators is 3.45, meaning that the respondents agree with all the statements in general. To be more specific, personal value status ranks first with a mean of 3.51, followed by implementation which got a mean of 3.49. Perception and

comprehension listed the last with a mean of 3.35. The statements in the dimension “personal value status” got the highest agreement from the respondents because this is the reflection of the results of IPEC in English as well as in other courses. Just as Ma Xuna (2021) mentioned in her research, the integration and combination of all the courses is an important prerequisite for the synergy effect to be exerted. A comprehensive educational concept can be formed in the context of the integration of all students, entire courses, and courses (Ma, 2021). The next indicator on the list is the implementation of IPEC with a mean of 3.49, which means that the implementation of IPEC in English class is good enough and the elements and factors are well explained and received. According to Luo Yun, the key to promoting the implementation, reform and construction of IPEC lies in practical innovation (Luo & Ni, 2021). The perception and comprehension of IPEC ranks last with a composite mean of 3.35, showing that the respondents agree with the indicator in general, but there is still something to be expected. In order to implement curriculum ideological and political education, it is necessary to build up the concept of IPEC among teachers and strengthen the theoretical training of teachers in IPEC implementation, thereby strengthening teachers’ awareness and skills in implementing IPEC (Luo & Ni, 2021).

**Table 4***Relationship Between Native Culture and Intercultural Elements*

Attitude	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Content	.668**	0.000	Highly Significant
Classification	.627**	0.000	Highly Significant
Learning Approaches	.615**	0.000	Highly Significant
Emotion and Attitude	.652**	0.000	Highly Significant
Evaluation and Reflection	.699**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Learning Content</b>			
Content	.772**	0.000	Highly Significant
Classification	.756**	0.000	Highly Significant
Learning Approaches	.680**	0.000	Highly Significant
Emotion and Attitude	.698**	0.000	Highly Significant
Evaluation and Reflection	.770**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Learning Techniques</b>			
Content	.811**	0.000	Highly Significant
Classification	.795**	0.000	Highly Significant
Learning Approaches	.779**	0.000	Highly Significant
Emotion and Attitude	.727**	0.000	Highly Significant
Evaluation and Reflection	.824**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Evaluation and Reflection</b>			
Content	.797**	0.000	Highly Significant
Classification	.796**	0.000	Highly Significant
Learning Approaches	.811**	0.000	Highly Significant
Emotion and Attitude	.718**	0.000	Highly Significant
Evaluation and Reflection	.828**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 4 illustrates the association between native culture and intercultural elements. Strong direct correlation is indicated by the computed R-values, and the resulting p-values were below the alpha threshold. The findings indicate the presence of noteworthy correlations and suggest that the quality of the intercultural aspects increases with the quality of the original culture.

This finding is consistent with Liu’s (2016) research conclusion. In order to explore the role of mother tongue cultural transfer in intercultural teaching, Liu conducted a one-year survey of 48 non-English major college students using a combination of questionnaire, experiments, and interviews. The results show that students all believe that the integration of native culture is very important, and it has a significant role in promoting students’ awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes for intercultural elements learning and intercultural competence (Liu, 2016). According to Tareva (2014), the process of acquiring facts about another culture goes as follows: becoming familiar with the fact, understanding it and transferring it to one’s own culture, reevaluating the facts of one’s own culture, understanding the phenomenon of another culture based on these perspectives, and reevaluating the fact of another culture (Tareva, 2014).

On the premise of fully analyzing the objective situation of students (age, school stage, subject characteristics, etc.), teachers should give full play to the main role of students, motivate students, innovate teaching methods, and adopt a diversified evaluation system to effectively integrate native culture and excavate intercultural elements. This can be supported by Zofia's (2018) opinion in his research, in which he advocates that in the process of EFL teaching, the teachers are expected to apply efficient teaching approaches (such as students exchanges, email exchange, project work) and pay attention to motivating students, encouraging appropriate attitudes and considering students' age at the same time.

**Table 5***Relationship Between Native Culture and IPEC*

Attitude	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Perception and Comprehension	.662**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.640**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.657**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Learning Content</b>			
Perception and Comprehension	.744**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.690**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.652**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Learning Techniques</b>			
Perception and Comprehension	.769**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.738**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.669**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Evaluation and Reflection</b>			
Perception and Comprehension	.775**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.744**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.707**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 5 displays the association between native culture and ideological and Political Education in Curriculum (IPEC). The computed R-values indicate a strong direct correlation, and the resulting p-values were less than the alpha level. This shows that a significant relationship exists and implies that the better the native culture, the better the Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum. Han (2023) put forward several teaching strategies in her study, which are in consistence with the methods above—leverage the advantages of the digital age to provide students with a comprehensive learning experience; enhance teachers' quality and actively change teaching concepts; actively carry out social practice and promote the internalization of cultural self-confidence; clarify teaching objectives and combine online and offline teaching; improve the evaluation mechanism and verify the ideological and political education effects (Han, 2023).

By promoting the integration of excellent traditional culture into ideological and political education, teachers can help students better understand and inherit the essence of China's excellent traditional culture. Through this practice, students' intercultural communication skills will also be improved. In the process, students will also be able to improve their intercultural communication skills. It can gradually cultivate students' national pride and make students feel cultural confidence. Teachers should carry out diversified teaching activities both in and out of class, such as English speech contests, culture-themed English corners, reading activities, language and culture lectures, English writing and translation competitions and so on.

**Table 6***Relationship Between Intercultural Elements and Ideological and IPEC*

Content	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Perception and Comprehension	.746**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.796**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.711**	0.000	Highly Significant
<b>Classification</b>			
Perception and Comprehension	.798**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.819**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.724**	0.000	Highly Significant

Learning Approaches			
Perception and Comprehension	.811**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.787**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.718**	0.000	Highly Significant
Emotion and Attitude			
Perception and Comprehension	.783**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.772**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.748**	0.000	Highly Significant
Evaluation and Reflection			
Perception and Comprehension	.863**	0.000	Highly Significant
Implementation	.816**	0.000	Highly Significant
Personal Value Status	.799**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 6 presents the association between intercultural elements and Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum (IPEC). Strong direct correlation is indicated by the computed R-values, and the p-values that were produced were below the alpha threshold. This suggests that there is a strong correlation between the assessment of intercultural aspects and the quality of ideological and political education provided by the curriculum.

As can be seen in the table, the relationship among all the items of intercultural elements and IPEC are highly significant, which means they are closely related, and the learning of intercultural elements can influence the implementation and results of IPEC greatly. In high school English textbooks, ideological and political elements are divided into three categories: people and self, people and society, and people and country. Each category is presented in a unique way in the teaching materials to promote students' comprehensive quality and ideological and political awareness (Tong, 2022). Zhu's (2023) finding in her research can well support the researcher's opinion. To implement educational goals in English teaching, teachers need to deeply interpret the teaching materials, refine the themes, determine the value orientation of each unit, explore the growth points of hidden education, and make appropriate adjustments based on the actual situation of the students to achieve moral education effect (Zhu, 2023).

**Table 7**

*Proposed EFL Learning Program to Enhance the Native Culture, Intercultural Elements and IPEC among Chinese Senior High School Students*

Key Result Area	Objectives	Program/ Projects	Success Indicators	Persons involved
Native culture attitude	1. To improve the students' awareness and attitude in terms of native culture	1. Teachers organize English salons and lectures about the importance of importing Chinese culture with English;	90% of the students realize the significance of native culture learning and exporting Chinese culture with English;	Teachers and students
1.2 evaluation and reflection	To encourage students' learning interest in learning Chinese culture in English class; To diversify the evaluation and reflection approaches in terms of Chinese native culture.	2. Teachers have research on the presentation of Chinese cultural elements and its orientation in all kinds of exams and present the result to the students in lectures; 3. Teachers introduce self-evaluation and group mutual evaluation for their performance in culture-themed activities.	90% of the students' learning interest is greatly aroused; 3.95% of the students can realize that exams are not the only way to assess their English level and pragmatic competence is equally important.	Teachers and students
Intercultural elements	To diversify the learning approaches in terms of intercultural elements and thus improve learning efficiency.	The school can invite foreigners (adults or adolescents) to give lectures and share parties about culture; School can hold cultural events such as festival celebrations and invite foreigners to enjoy and communicate together; Teachers can introduce extracurricular books and educational films and documentaries to the students to broaden their horizons and scope of knowledge.	90% of students believe they have access to various channels of intercultural elements of learning and their interest and learning results are greatly improved.	School, teachers and students
Learning Approaches				
Ideological and Political Education Courses (IPEC)	1. To enhance the student's understanding of the concept and	Teachers give lectures and quizzes about the concept and connotation of IPEC and its role in English class;	1. 90% of the students clearly understand the concept and connotation of IPEC and	English teachers; Students;

Perception& comprehension	connotation of IPEC; 2. To cultivate the students' awareness of IPEC in English class; 3.To better find and explore the IPEC materials and elements in English textbooks and class.	2. Teachers organize writing competitions and speech contests with the theme of IPEC in English. 3. Teachers adopt flipped classroom method, giving students the dominance of the class and combining in-class learning with after-class activities to help the students better explore and understand the IPEC materials.	strongly agree with the significance of combining IPEC with English learning; 2. 90% of the students know very well the IPEC elements in English textbooks and class. 3.90% of the students find themselves quite interested in learning IPEC in English class;
Implementation	4.To encourage the students' interest in learning IPEC in English class;		

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings revealed seven points. First, all the respondents in this study come from three grades in a public senior high school in Shiyan Hubei, central China, and the females slightly outnumbered the males. The respondents were evenly distributed in the three grades and the two-course selections. The majority of the students have positive responses to native culture, intercultural elements, and IPEC. Second, Chinese EFL students in high school agree with all four indicators of native culture: attitude, learning content, learning techniques, evaluation, and reflection. The majority of the respondents agree that with the focus and emphasis on native cultural content in the new textbooks, the innovation and enrichment of teachers' teaching techniques, and the diversification of evaluation models, students' native cultural awareness, abilities and qualities have been greatly improved. Third, most of the respondents have learned the diversified kinds of cultural content through various teaching techniques, and therefore developed positive attitude and emotion towards intercultural elements. Meanwhile, the learning approaches, activities as well as the evaluation system play an important role in EFL classroom. Fourth, the students have good perception and comprehension of IPEC and have benefited from the implementation of IPEC and developed healthy and positive personal value status. However, there is more to be expected as for the excavation of the IPEC elements in English class and it should be better integrated with intercultural communication competence. Fifth, It was found that female have greater assessment on attitude of native culture; female respondents have better reflection on learning approaches of intercultural elements and perception and comprehension of IPEC. Moreover, respondents from different year levels differ significantly in terms of the three variables and grade 10 students have better assessment. Sixth, a highly significant relationship among the three variables was found and that suggested that the better assessment towards native culture, the better the students grasp the intercultural elements; the better assessment towards intercultural elements, the more they benefited from IPEC in English class; the better assessment towards IPEC in English class, the higher level of native culture awareness and competence. Last, An EFL learning program was presented to help the Chinese senior high school students improve their native culture learning, intercultural elements and IPEC in English class.

Some recommendations are proposed. First, course designers for Chinese high school English teaching may encourage diversified evaluation and reflection approaches and invite the students to have self-assessment and mutual assessment so that the teachers and students may be given more freedom and autonomy in English class management. Second, Chinese high school English teachers may utilize more diversified teaching approaches and learning activities to better stimulate the students' learning initiative. Multiple evaluation modal should be introduced so that the students can be more encouraged and driven by the expected results. Third, EFL learners in Chinese high school may play a more active role in English class and consciously develop their native cultural awareness and competence and therefore improve their intercultural learning and IPEC education in English. Fourth, The proposed enhancement program for Chinese EFL learners in high school may be tried out for implementation. Last, Future researchers may broaden the range of the respondents in quantity and scope, like involving more students from public and private schools from different regions.

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