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Exploring the Thematic Significance of Ideological and Political Education in High School English Curriculum Based on Discourse Reading

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Abstract: Integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum represents a core requirement for moral development in high school English teaching, as well as a key pathway to fulfilling the fundamental mission of cultivating virtue through education. Currently, in high school English instruction, teachers often focus excessively on linguistic forms while neglecting the exploration of thematic meanings during text analysis, resulting in a superficial integration of ideological education and making it difficult to achieve unity between language teaching and educational values. Drawing on relevant requirements from national educational policy documents, including the Outline for Building an Educational Power (2024--2035) and the Curriculum Standards for Senior High School English (2017 Edition, Revised 2025), this paper proposes a three-dimensional reading strategy centered on exploring the thematic significance of texts. The strategy encompasses three progressive stages: analyzing texts to uncover meaning, grounding meaning to extract values, and aligning with values to integrate ideological education. Through detailed case studies, this paper examines the interrelationships among texts, their underlying meanings, and ideological values, thereby promoting deep integration between ideological education and text analysis in high school English teaching. The findings suggest that discourse reading, when systematically applied, enables teachers to move beyond surface-level language instruction and foster students' comprehensive development by embedding moral and civic education within authentic textual contexts. This approach not only enhances students' language proficiency but also cultivates their critical thinking abilities and sense of social responsibility, ultimately contributing to the holistic educational goals of the high school English curriculum.

Keywords: discourse reading; high school english; ideological education; thematic meaning; curriculum integration

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1. Introduction of the Problem

Recent national educational policy documents emphasize strengthening moral education and nurturing talents through integrated ideological and political education across all levels of schooling, establishing a strategic framework for embedding value guidance throughout curriculum implementation. The Outline for Building an Educational Power (2024--2035) specifies systematic requirements for comprehensive integration of ideological and political content into curricula, ensuring value orientation is embedded across the entire teaching process of every subject. In alignment with these goals, the English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools (2017 Edition, Revised 2025) identifies discourse as the central vehicle for conveying thematic meaning and cultural values, positioning discourse analysis as the foundational entry point for pedagogical design. As a structured approach to analyzing instructional texts, discourse reading serves not only as a prerequisite for achieving core competency objectives and designing effective learning activities, but also as a key avenue for teachers to deepen professional knowledge, strengthen pedagogical awareness, improve instructional

quality, and advance professional growth [1, 2]. Consequently, instruction must be grounded in discourse analysis when exploring thematic meaning, thereby supporting the coordinated development of language proficiency and value literacy—enabling students to engage thoughtfully with cultural perspectives, develop a sense of social responsibility, and cultivate confidence in shared humanistic and civilizational values.

However, current classroom practice often treats discourse reading superficially, prioritizing linguistic forms, surface-level meanings, and mechanical usage through explanation and repetitive exercises [1, 3]. This approach frequently neglects thematic depth and overlooks the broader educational significance embedded in texts. Teachers commonly focus on vocabulary and grammar without attending to the underlying value dimensions and thematic implications inherent in discourse, limiting students' capacity to discern deeper textual significance, internalize constructive values, or develop reflective civic dispositions. A fundamental challenge lies in the absence of a coherent, discipline-specific strategy for uncovering thematic and value-oriented dimensions within discourse. Under the principle of holistic education, English instruction should not involve converting language content into moral instruction, nor entail appending external ethical messages after stripping away linguistic substance. Instead, it requires identifying the intrinsic value-bearing elements already present within the discipline, refining instructional design accordingly, and achieving organic alignment between language learning and value formation.

Drawing upon the guiding principles of the English Curriculum Standards for General Senior High Schools and consistent with broader curriculum-based expectations for value integration, this paper proposes a three-dimensional strategy for embedding value-oriented education in discourse-based English instruction: 'Read the discourse to uncover its meaning; base instruction on the meaning to extract values; and align closely with those values to integrate value-oriented education.' First, teachers conduct rigorous discourse analysis to identify core thematic meanings [4, 5]. Second, they draw upon those meanings to distill relevant, contextually grounded value orientations. Third, they design pedagogical activities anchored in those values to ensure seamless integration of value-oriented education into daily instruction. This strategy supports teachers in clarifying the interrelationships among discourse structure, thematic content, and value dimensions; enhances precision in instructional planning; and advances meaningful convergence between high school English discourse instruction and value-oriented education—ultimately fostering synergistic development of linguistic competence and ethical reasoning.

2. Three-Dimensional Pathway for Ideological and Political Education in Textual Analysis

Carrying out ideological and political education through textual analysis requires a deep understanding of the text's connotation, systematic extraction of embedded value concepts, and purposeful integration of those concepts into pedagogical practice [6]. This three-step logic can be conceptualized as a 'textual voyage' for student development: first, analyzing texts to uncover thematic meanings; second, deriving educational values from those meanings; and third, aligning those values with classroom-based ideological and political education.

Textual analysis fulfills dual functions: it meets curricular requirements while serving as a foundational tool for teachers to grasp thematic context, examine textual features, organize logical structure, and interpret teaching content. It underpins student engagement with thematic meaning, language knowledge acquisition, language skill development, and cultural understanding—and informs the design of pedagogically sound objectives and methodologically appropriate instructional strategies. As such, textual analysis constitutes the logical starting point of instruction, orienting the entire curriculum. Clarifying thematic frameworks, structural logic, and linguistic details sharpens teaching objectives and ensures that value cultivation and ideological and political education remain closely anchored to textual substance. Value extraction

functions as an orientation mechanism: grounded in close reading of core textual content, it identifies thematic ideas, cultural implications, and normative values—much like calibrating a navigational reference point—to guide the integrated implementation of ideological and political education with precision and purpose, avoiding reduction to surface-level linguistic instruction. While many foreign language teaching materials do not overtly foreground ideological or political content—a distinguishing feature relative to dedicated ideological and political courses—the broader educational mandate necessitates embedding such elements across all disciplines. The fundamental question of education—what kind of individuals to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for what societal purpose—requires that value-laden dimensions be deliberately identified and woven into ostensibly neutral texts. Consequently, integrating ideological and political education represents both the culminating objective of this pedagogical voyage and the essential educational function of textual analysis. Centered on value concept extraction, this stage delivers value guidance through language instruction, fulfills the core mission of moral education, and supports students' concurrent advancement in linguistic proficiency and ideological development. The proposed three-dimensional pathway is theoretically grounded and aligned with high school English curriculum goals. Its foundation lies in the 'What-Why-How' analytical framework outlined in national curriculum standards, which directs teachers to clarify: the text's theme and content (What), its expressive intent and underlying significance (Why), and its structural organization and linguistic characteristics (How). Within the context of curriculum-integrated ideological and political education, textual analysis must extend beyond descriptive interpretation to deliberate exploration of pedagogical value—enabling a shift from linguistic comprehension toward intentional value guidance [7]. This pathway refines and extends the original reading framework: 'Textual analysis' maps onto the 'What' dimension, establishing thematic and factual grounding; 'Value extraction' corresponds to the 'Why' dimension, forging explicit connections between textual meaning and educational aims; and 'Integration of ideological and political education' expands the 'How' dimension into actionable moral education practice—refocusing attention from formal textual analysis toward purposeful character and value formation. These three stages are interdependent: beginning with textual grounding, proceeding through value-oriented guidance, and culminating in coherent ideological and political outcomes, they constitute a unified implementation path for curriculum-based moral education in language teaching. This framework offers teachers a systematic, theory-informed approach to textual analysis that enables organic realization of educational objectives.

3. Implementation Strategies for the Three-Dimensional Discourse-Based Ideological and Political Study Reading Path

This article takes the reading discourse in Unit 3 "On the Move" of the second volume of the General High School Textbook English published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press as an example. Centering on the three progressive teaching procedures of exploring connotations through discourse analysis, extracting values based on textual connotations, and permeating ideological and political education around core values, this paper practices discourse-based teaching and illustrates how to integrate educational values in a natural manner to achieve classroom ideological and political teaching objectives.

3.1. Studying the Discourse to Explore the Connotation: Textual Study Analysis at the "What" Level of the Curriculum Standard

This dimension corresponds to the "What" level of discourse study in the curriculum standard and serves as the starting point for ideological and political education [8]. Thorough understanding and comprehension of the discourse are essential to ensure that subsequent value extraction and ideological integration remain grounded in the text, avoiding disconnection or abstract preaching. Consequently, this step constitutes a

rigorous implementation of the curriculum standard's "What" requirements and functions as a prerequisite for effective ideological and political education. Teachers are expected to identify stylistic features, communicative relationships, and contextual parameters of the discourse, while also analyzing the rationale behind specific linguistic choices—thereby establishing a robust foundation for interpreting discourse intention and language strategies.

This step follows a three-dimensional textual analysis framework centered on theme meaning, core content, and textual features. Teachers are encouraged to support students in organizing and integrating thematic information, fostering structured knowledge, building logical connections among concepts, and strengthening the interrelationship between knowledge and language—thus facilitating internalization and coherent expression. First, regarding theme meaning, the discourse centers on football culture, encompassing its historical evolution and global influence. It traces the development of football from ancient origins to modern practice, analyzes three intrinsic factors contributing to its worldwide appeal, and ultimately foregrounds the humanistic spirit and universal values embodied in the sport. Situated within the broader domain of human and societal development, the theme intersects literature, art, and sports. Theme meaning is regarded as the conceptual core of the discourse—the pivotal nexus linking linguistic form with deeper value connotations. Rather than treating football solely as a physical activity, the text reveals layered cultural, historical, and ethical dimensions, including themes of peace, unity, and cross-cultural exchange, thereby providing fertile ground for ideological and political exploration.

Second, concerning core content, the text unfolds logically through the sequence of history, causal analysis, and humanistic significance. It begins by identifying ancient Chinese cuju as an early antecedent of football, then outlines the emergence of modern football in the United Kingdom. Subsequently, it examines three key drivers of football's global popularity: its accessibility as a participatory sport, the innovative design of stadiums, and its powerful role in communication and social connection. Each factor is substantiated using distinct argumentative approaches [9]. The exposition concludes with quotations from prominent figures and a reflective closing, elevating the discussion to emphasize football's broader civilizational resonance. While the surface-level information is explicit and well-organized, the text embeds rich cultural implications—particularly in its treatment of cuju, which directly engages China's intangible heritage in traditional sports and offers a substantive entry point for ideological and political education.

Finally, the text exemplifies an explanatory-argumentative genre, characterized by concise, precise language and a transparent logical architecture. It employs a range of rhetorical devices—including illustrative examples, authoritative quotations, and factual evidence—to substantiate claims about football's global reach and humanistic significance. Historical records, documented cases, and widely recognized sayings collectively reinforce the central arguments. In summary, a comprehensive examination of thematic orientation, substantive content, and discursive structure enables deep engagement with the text's intellectual core—providing essential groundwork for identifying embedded ideological and political elements and designing purposeful educational activities.

3.2. Focusing on the Connotation, Extracting Value: Deepening the Educational Significance at the "Why" Level of the Curriculum Standard

This section focuses on the core logical framework of the football-themed argumentative text at the "Why" level, emphasizing "digging out the deep meaning of the text, the author's writing intention, and the value orientation". It concentrates on the thesis, evidence, and argumentation logic of this argumentative text, providing theoretical guidance for students to interpret the deep value of the text and extract ideological education points. It has been emphasized that teachers should guide students to analyze, critique, and evaluate the values conveyed by the text and their underlying meanings based on the theme, thereby generating new cognition and attitudes towards the theme. This viewpoint provides practical guidance for the teacher in this case to guide students

to explore the ideological content and achieve the educational goals through perspectives such as the history of Cuju, the spirit of sports, and cross-cultural connections. Based on analysis of texts in English teaching materials, it has been proposed that any discourse—including classroom discourse—carries a value orientation, suggesting the need to examine classroom discourse from a linguistic perspective. The value concepts such as cultural confidence, sports spirit, and harmonious unity implicitly contained in this football-themed text are a vivid manifestation of this principle. However, values are not always directly presented in the text but are often implicitly embedded within lexical choices, syntactic structures, and rhetorical patterns, and maintain potential connections with specific textual features. Their mode of expression also varies according to genre, context, and purpose. This requires teachers to conduct in-depth thematic analysis of the text, accurately grasp its implicit, multi-dimensional ideological values, and lay a foundation for guiding students to extract core ideological education points and achieve the deep integration of language teaching and ideological education. By analyzing the text, students can extract four core ideological education points. The first is the dimension of cultural confidence, where the text uses historical facts as evidence to point out that football originated from ancient Chinese Cuju, challenging the misconception that football originated solely in the West. During the process of analyzing the historical evidence in the text, teachers should guide students to trace back to traditional Chinese sports culture, perceive the historical depth of Chinese culture, and enhance national cultural identity and pride, establishing firm cultural confidence. At the same time, teachers can use this point to promote reading and writing, allowing students to understand traditional Chinese sports and articulate Chinese culture using the structural framework of the text. The second is the dimension of sports spirit and healthy personality, where the text argues the reasons for the global popularity of football through sub-arguments, stating that football has low participation barriers and is full of creativity and competitive passion on the field. When students read and analyze the sub-arguments and examples, they will perceive the sports spirit of perseverance, love for sports, and resilience, guiding students to establish a healthy life concept and shape a positive and upward personality. In the reading teaching process, teachers can use the examples of notable figures in the text to extend naturally and introduce outstanding representatives of Chinese sports, deeply exploring the persistence, competitive drive, and dedication in them that align with the sports spirit conveyed by the text. Using realistic sports role models close to students' cognition as carriers, the abstract sports spirit becomes concrete, helping students deepen their understanding and appreciation of the sports spirit and internalize and elevate their value recognition. The third is the dimension of humanistic connection, where the text uses a documented historical episode involving football during an international ceasefire as factual evidence to argue that football possesses significant potential for cross-cultural communication and fostering mutual understanding. Students, through in-depth reading of such historical cases, will experience the power of football to transcend linguistic, geographical, and social barriers, and perceive values of peace, unity, inclusiveness, and friendship, cultivating cross-cultural understanding awareness and reinforcing shared human values. Teachers can build on this historical case and expand to contemporary examples of sports exchanges between China and other countries, such as international football competitions and friendly matches, to guide students to compare how sports have connected people across time and space. This enables students to understand the practical significance of sports as a cultural bridge that promotes international exchanges and fosters mutual respect, and deepens their recognition of shared human aspirations. Fourth, from the perspective of a global outlook, the text demonstrates the influence of football as the world's most widely played sport, reflecting the integration and coexistence of diverse cultures around the world. In the reading and reflection stage, teachers can guide students to view Chinese and foreign sports cultures with an open and inclusive perspective, dialectically understand cultural exchanges, and broaden their international perspective. Teachers can organize students to engage in group reflection and discussion, comparing the inheritance of Cuju culture and the global development of modern football, to guide

students to rationally view the differences between Chinese and foreign sports cultures and respect cultural diversity. Through this exchange and reflection, students can establish a global perspective characterized by inclusiveness, tolerance, and mutual learning.

3.3. Focus on Values, Integrate Ideological Education: Innovative Curriculum Standards on the "How" Level Integration Path

This section follows the core logic of the "How" level in text analysis for English teaching, which emphasizes identifying textual organizational features, exploring the interrelationship between linguistic forms and thematic meanings, and achieving deep integration of language instruction with broader educational objectives. Guided by the pedagogical aims of senior high school English reading courses, the study embeds four core value orientations—cultural confidence, integrity and fairness, global citizenship, and forward-looking international awareness—across all phases of language instruction. By systematically considering the linguistic properties, rhetorical structure, and compositional conventions of argumentative texts, ideological elements are seamlessly incorporated into instructional design, thereby advancing students' language proficiency and ethical reasoning in parallel, and establishing a functional linkage between language acquisition and values cultivation.

3.4. Based on the Foundation of the Text, Solidly Lay the Teaching Foundation

This level focuses on foundational text interpretation, integrating language knowledge acquisition with value-oriented guidance to prepare students for subsequent in-depth exploration [10, 11]. The core of the basic reading layer is to guide students in interpreting the text's surface-level information. First, students are guided to conduct an overall reading of the text, identifying its "general-detailed-general" expository structure, clarifying the central claim, supporting points, and corresponding evidence—including historical references to Kua Jū, illustrative cases, and documented developments from early global sporting history—thereby establishing a logical framework for further analysis and reflection. Next, focusing on the supporting point "football matches are full of creativity and competitive spirit", students select and analyze relevant examples, clarify the argumentative pattern of "claim-example", and engage in sentence-pattern imitation exercises based on key structures in the text, thereby strengthening English expression skills while fostering initial recognition of football's core values: diligence, innovation, and fair competition. Finally, through close reading of the sentence "The history of the game goes back over two thousand years to Ancient China. It was then known as Cuju (kick ball), a game using a ball of animal skins with hair inside.", students identify and highlight key elements—such as "two thousand years", "Ancient China", and "Cuju"—systematically trace textual evidence positioning Cuju as the historical antecedent of football culture, participate in collaborative inquiry and presentation, and draw upon prior knowledge to enrich understanding of Cuju's historical context, thus cultivating awareness of the deep roots of traditional Chinese sports culture and affirming the cognitive foundation that football's origins include the ancient Chinese practice of Cuju.

3.5. Deeply Explore the Connotation of the Text and Implement Ideological and Political Education

This level focuses on in-depth interpretation of the text, integrating close textual analysis with exploration of ideological and moral dimensions to promote internalization of core values and achieve organic integration of language learning and ideological education. The core objective is to guide students to uncover the humanistic and ethical significance embedded in the text. Firstly, it draws upon the historical episode of a spontaneous football match during a period of armed conflict, analyzing the symbolic resonance of expressions such as "break down barriers" and "lay down arms" to help students appreciate how sport can foster mutual understanding and collective harmony. At the same time, by examining the author's use of verifiable historical instances to substantiate central claims, students engage in structured discussion on how evidence-

based reasoning strengthens textual credibility — thereby deepening their appreciation of universal values including peace, solidarity, and inclusiveness, aligned with the vision of a shared future for humanity. Subsequently, building upon foundational reading, the unit incorporates exemplary figures from the text and introduces outstanding Chinese athletes such as Su Bingtian and Wu Dajing, facilitating comparative analysis of shared character traits—including resilience, dedication, and unwavering commitment—across cultural contexts. Through guided thematic reflection, students articulate their personal understanding of the sporting spirit, connecting it to lived experience, thus supporting holistic personality development and positive value formation [12].

3.6. Combine the Research Results and Promote Output Transformation

This level leverages the textual research findings to design targeted practical output tasks, enabling students to transform internalized ideological and political understanding into applied language competencies, thereby realizing the pedagogical objective of 'advancing learning through reading and reinforcing practice through writing'. The core of this practical output stage is the deep integration of ideological and political awareness with language application. First, using the thematic exploration 'Football has a Chinese root — Cuju', students are guided to revisit the text's argumentative structure—thesis, evidence, and conclusion—and engage in English writing exercises modeled on this logical framework. The writing prompt centers on 'The contemporary responsibility of youth in inheriting traditional Chinese sports', requiring students to draw upon Cuju-related cultural knowledge to articulate the roles, responsibilities, and pathways for young people to preserve and promote traditional Chinese sports culture globally — thus converting culturally grounded comprehension gained from reading into coherent written expression and advancing the educational aim of fostering cultural confidence. Second, drawing on historical content from the text and contemporary examples of Sino-foreign sports exchanges—including international football competitions and bilateral friendly matches—students undertake short English essay assignments exploring 'How sports contribute to global solidarity', simultaneously strengthening linguistic proficiency and reinforcing understanding of shared human values [12].

4. Conclusion

Text analysis has revitalized the integration of ideological education into the high school English curriculum, facilitating a pedagogical shift from prioritizing linguistic form to foregrounding thematic significance and educational value. This approach encourages deep engagement with textual connotation and systematic extraction of its underlying values, supporting students' gradual development of ideological and political literacy through language learning. Contemporary curriculum standards increasingly emphasize the principle of embedding ideological education within textual study, offering robust theoretical grounding for classroom practice. Teachers are encouraged to conduct rigorous textual analysis, thoughtfully integrate ideological dimensions, and align textual content with students' lived experiences — thereby guiding learners to uncover ideological and political meaning while cultivating logical reasoning and cultural awareness during interpretation. This study contributes practical, actionable strategies and illustrative teaching cases to support high school English educators in implementing text-based ideological education. It aims to foster conceptual shifts in pedagogy and strengthen teachers' professional competencies in both textual analysis and value-integrated instruction. Limitations include a narrow focus on single-topic texts and a restricted scope of textual diversity. Future work may broaden the range of textual genres and thematic categories examined, and further investigate how three-dimensional analytical strategies can be adapted across varied reading contexts.

Moving forward, advancing ideological education in high school English instruction must continue to treat text analysis as its foundational methodological anchor, grounded in the principle of conveying values through language and nurturing character through literature. Sustained innovation in the synergistic design of textual inquiry and ideological

engagement remains essential. It is anticipated that this research will offer pragmatic insights for classroom implementation, support the alignment of language development with holistic moral formation, and contribute to the cultivation of well-rounded learners equipped with linguistic proficiency, cultural competence, and sound ethical judgment—consistent with broader goals of educational advancement.

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