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Exploration of Practical Approaches to Cultivating National Consciousness in College English Teaching in the New Era

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Abstract:
Under the background of the new era, the core goal of foreign language education is to cultivate high-quality international talents with patriotism, international vision and cross-cultural communication ability. College English, As the most widely taught course in foreign language education, College English has made fostering students' national consciousness a key direction in the reform of university English teaching. By analyzing the basic concept and core connotation of national consciousness, this study further expounds the importance of cultivating national consciousness in college English teaching, and puts forward the practical path of cultivating national consciousness in college English teaching, that is, expanding the interdisciplinary vision to promote the effective integration of language and culture learning and scientific ideology; Innovating teaching design to enrich and refine the ideological and political elements of national consciousness; and mobilizing multiple teaching resources and subjects and integrating modern information technology methods, to expand the depth and breadth of national consciousness cultivation into college English teaching.

Keywords:
College English Teaching; Cultivation of National Consciousness; Practical Approaches

General Secretary Xi Jinping, in his report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, put forward clear expectations for the youth of the new era, urging them to "embrace global vision and expand their international outlook" [1, p.18]. He also emphasized the importance of "vigorously promoting education on the core socialist values, deepening patriotism, collectivism, and socialism education, and striving to cultivate a new generation of young people capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation" [1, p.36]. As a crucial component of quality education aimed at broadening young students' global perspectives and enhancing their understanding of world cultures, foreign language education plays an increasingly vital role in the new era. In light of the national demand for a new generation of talent equipped with international competitiveness and cross-cultural communication competence, College English education must address the fundamental question: "Whom are we cultivating, how are we cultivating them, and for whom are we cultivating them?" The urgent task is to fully leverage the unique disciplinary strengths of College English in intercultural education and talent development, actively align with national talent strategies, and effectively serve the overarching goal of producing socialist builders and successors who are both deeply rooted in na-

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tional consciousness and possess a broad international vision. This has become a central issue in the ongoing reform of College English education.

1 The Basic Concept and Core Connotations of National Consciousness

National consciousness, as a vital embodiment of national spirit, has long been a focal point of academic discourse. Its cultivation bears significant political implications for building China into a leading power in education, with the ultimate aim of nurturing individuals who are loyal to the Party, to the nation, to the people, and to socialism. Scholars within China have carried out extensive theoretical and empirical research on the concept of national consciousness. Yu Hai (2004) conceptualizes national consciousness as the intrinsic expression of national spirit, referring to "a sense of belonging to a particular nation, community, culture, tradition, and language, and the sharing of a common history, collective emotions, shared ideas, and a unified way of life" [2]. This highlights the foundational role of national consciousness in shaping a sense of national identity and cultural affiliation. Rong Suping (2014) provides a more comprehensive structural analysis, positing that national consciousness comprises three key dimensions: national cognition, national identity, and national expectations. According to Rong, modern citizens should develop an informed understanding of their country's history, geography, political and economic systems, level of productive forces, and international relations, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and approval toward the nation, as well as forming reasonable expectations for its future [3]. Yan Guohua and He Zhen (2019) further argue that the connotation of national consciousness in the new era both inherits the essence of traditional national awareness and reflects contemporary characteristics, making it more expansive and nuanced. They identify six key components: strong awareness of national sovereignty, rational patriotism, steadfast national unity, prioritization of national interests, heightened sense of devotion to national progress, and comprehensive awareness of national security [4]. Building on these frameworks, Wang Yongyou and Meng Pengfei (2020) describe national consciousness as an organic whole comprising interconnected elements such as national sovereignty, security, development, image, and responsibility. Each element influences and reinforces the others, forming an integrated structure [5].

These evolving academic insights have greatly enriched our theoretical understanding of national consciousness and provided important guidance for practical implementation. While scholars vary in emphasis, there is broad consensus on the significance of national cognition, identity, and expectations. In the new era, the connotation of national consciousness continues to evolve through practice, reflecting the shifting demands of national development. At its core, national consciousness serves as a vital emotional bond between individuals and the nation—a deeply internalized sense of identity and expectation formed through comprehensive understanding of the country. It is not only a key spiritual force driving national development but also essential for safeguarding national security and promoting ethnic unity. As such, further research and education in national consciousness are imperative to provide strong ideological and cultural support for China's development in the new era.

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2 The Necessity of Strengthening the Cultivation of National Consciousness in College English Education

Western countries such as the United States, France, and Russia have long attached great importance to multilingual education and the cultivation of national consciousness in the context of leading or participating in globalization. This emphasis is clearly reflected in their foreign language education policies. Since the 1940s, U.S. foreign language education policy—supported by Congress, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Education—has followed a national security-oriented strategy. After the event of September 11th Attacks in 2001, the importance of foreign language education in safeguarding national security was further heightened. Language policy in the United States began to emphasize its mission in mitigating cultural conflicts and fostering multicultural inclusion [6]. Since the 1990s, France has integrated multicultural awareness into the objectives of foreign language education while simultaneously strengthening the international promotion of the French language and defending its global status [7]. In Russia, entering the 21st century, patriotism and the cultivation of national identity became central principles in its foreign language education policies, highlighting a humanistic and pluralistic approach to language learning. Despite differing national contexts, these countries share a common feature: national consciousness remains a central tenet of their language education frameworks. Moreover, the act of learning a foreign language inherently involves an acceptance of intercultural communication. This requires overcoming narrow nationalism and embracing cultural diversity as a necessary adaptation to the irreversible trend of globalization.

In China, academic interest in national consciousness education can be traced back to the early 1990s, when civic education emerged as a research focus. In the 21st century, as China's involvement in global affairs has deepened and its role in international counterterrorism and intelligence-sharing has become increasingly important, foreign language education policies must now pivot to better serve national security imperatives [8], align with national strategies, and safeguard national interests. However, for a long time, China's foreign language education policy and pedagogical practice have been marked by a lack of national consciousness, as well as a notable deficit in the global dissemination of Chinese culture. At the same time, Western theories and paradigms have dominated foreign language scholarship and talent cultivation in China. This underscores the urgent need to incorporate national consciousness into national language policy planning and the ongoing reform of foreign language education [9]. In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines for the Ideological and Political Construction of Curriculum in Higher Education Institutions, calling for the educational value of every course to be fully leveraged and for the ideological and political development of university curricula to be comprehensively promoted. National consciousness and curriculum-based ideological education in foreign language courses share an essential structural isomorphism; through cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparative education, foreign language education becomes a channel for constructing ideological narratives that internalize national consciousness as a form of social belief [10].

As the most widely taught subject within the foreign language curriculum, College English plays a particularly vital role in advancing ideological education in the current context. This course is not only a platform for teaching linguistic skills, but also serves as a crucial bridge between Chinese and foreign cultures. Through College English, students gain exposure to diverse Western cultural ideas and value systems, which offers a

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unique opportunity for the development of their global vision. Against this backdrop, reinforcing the cultivation of national consciousness in College English instruction holds multiple layers of significance. First, by incorporating content related to Chinese history, culture, and national development into the curriculum, it can enhance students' sense of national identity and belonging, motivating them to actively support the national strategy of cultural rejuvenation. Second, by facilitating comparative studies of Chinese and Western cultures and by emphasizing the distinctive appeal of Chinese civilization, students are encouraged to develop a conscious commitment to preserving and promoting outstanding traditional Chinese culture. Third, national security awareness can be fostered, helping students recognize their responsibility and role in safeguarding national interests.

Therefore, exploring effective ways to strengthen national consciousness in College English teaching is not only essential for advancing pedagogical reform but also crucial for cultivating future generations of socialist successors who possess both patriotic sentiment and international competence. In practice, this requires aligning closely with the goals and requirements of curriculum-based ideological education, and designing targeted instructional content and classroom activities to ensure the meaningful and effective integration of national consciousness cultivation into College English education.

3 Implementation Pathways for Cultivating National Consciousness in College English Teaching

In the present era, the cultivation of national consciousness through college English instruction stands at a new historical juncture, facing both unprecedented opportunities and challenges. As globalization deepens and information technology rapidly evolves, college English education is no longer confined to the development of language skills. It is now also tasked with the vital responsibility of nurturing students' national consciousness, global outlook, and cultural confidence. To meet these demands, we propose a comprehensive reform and innovation framework from the following four perspectives.

3.1 Expanding Interdisciplinary Perspectives

In fostering national consciousness, college English teaching must not only embed ideological and political (I&P) elements effectively into the curriculum, but also integrate perspectives from disciplines such as foreign language and literature, Chinese language and literature, and ideological-political education. This interdisciplinary approach ensures the organic integration of English linguistic and cultural knowledge with Chinese language and culture, and with scientific ideology, thus aligning value shaping with knowledge acquisition. The goal is to build a pedagogical framework that imparts both language competence and national identity.

As one scholar notes, "Language is like a thousand-year-old tree, deeply rooted in the soil of culture and history. Chinese students study English not to self-deprecate, but to broaden their horizons, understand themselves and others, and make Chinese culture more robust and globally resonant." Therefore, educators should encourage students to engage deeply with Chinese linguistic and cultural traditions while learning English, using comparative approaches to enhance their appreciation and pride in local culture. At the same time,

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embedding scientific ideology is essential. College English teaching must go beyond linguistic instruction to guide students in forming a correct worldview, values, and outlook on life, thus cultivating a sense of national responsibility, cultural pride, and global competitiveness.

However, a significant number of English instructors currently lack sufficient training in ideological and political literacy, which limits the effectiveness of value guidance in teaching. Educators should continuously improve their understanding of political theory and national policy, while institutions must organize regular professional development programs in ideological education. These initiatives will help teachers internalize national strategies and core values, enabling them to guide students toward stronger national cognition and identity.

Ultimately, the cultivation of national consciousness in college English instruction hinges on the instructors' political awareness and pedagogical competence. When teachers possess a solid grounding in I&P education and can integrate its principles seamlessly into language teaching, they can effectively nurture a new generation of talents who are not only proficient in English but also deeply committed to national development and rejuvenation.

3.2 Innovating Teaching Design

In terms of content, national consciousness education should be embedded into existing college English textbooks, emphasizing the core theme of "Four Confidences" (confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics), with national consciousness as the guiding thread. Teaching should target three educational goals—enhancing national cognition, identification, and expectations—and focus on five thematic areas: national sovereignty, national security, national development, national image, and national responsibility.

Take, for example, Unit 6 ("Imagination and Creativity") from the textbook New College English Integrated Course (Advanced) Volume 1. The following discussion tasks were designed for five student groups to integrate national consciousness into their output tasks:

(1)National Sovereignty and Innovation Protection

Discussion Prompt: "In the context of globalization, how can we utilize imagination and creativity to design an intellectual property protection plan that balances international cooperation with national sovereignty and security? What challenges might arise, and how can they be addressed?"

Goal: To enhance students' awareness of national sovereignty and security while fostering critical thinking on technological innovation.

(2)National Security and Cultural Creativity

Discussion Prompt: "As a cultural industry planner, how would you use local cultural resources to develop creative products (e.g., short films, games, exhibitions) that promote national characteristics and enhance national security awareness? How might these products contribute to strengthening soft power?"

Goal: To link cultural innovation with national security and inspire students to align creative thinking with

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national development.

(3)National Development and Future Urban Planning

Discussion Prompt: "Imagine that in 20 years, a Chinese city becomes a global innovation hub. Using your creativity, outline the city's layout, transportation, energy supply, and lifestyle. How can such planning support national competitiveness and sustainable development?"

Goal: To foster students' sense of national development and participation in the country's modernization.

(4)National Image and International Communication

Discussion Prompt: "In an era of advanced social media, how can creative strategies and content enhance China's global image? Propose a cross-cultural communication project and assess its potential to improve international understanding and friendship."

Goal: To enhance national pride and international communication awareness.

(5)National Responsibility and Global Challenges

Discussion Prompt: "In the face of global challenges such as climate change and public health crises, how can China—as a responsible major country—utilize innovation and technology to contribute solutions? Design an international cooperation project that demonstrates China's global responsibility."

Goal: To deepen students' understanding of global governance and China's role, encouraging a sense of mission and international cooperation.

These tasks are distributed to student groups two weeks in advance. Each group collaborates on research, content development, English writing, and oral presentation. After completion, projects are evaluated by peers and instructors based on content quality, language proficiency, and integration of national consciousness. This task-based approach aligns language output with ideological objectives, enhancing students' English skills while fostering national cognition, identification, and expectations.

3.3 Mobilizing Diverse Educational Resources and Agents

Contemporary foreign language teaching, from teachers' knowledge structures to the design of teaching materials, primarily focuses on language skills development and emphasizes the introduction of Western ideologies and cultures. Much of the content revolves around Western figures and events. The cultural and ideological values embedded in such language outputs may influence, reshape, or even undermine young students' civic identity and national consciousness [12]. Therefore, to effectively enhance students' national awareness within the College English curriculum, it is essential to mobilize a wide array of teaching resources and engage multiple educational agents, adopting multidimensional strategies to deepen the cultivation of national consciousness.

First, in terms of informational resources, a key initiative is the development of a comprehensive and in-depth digital scenario-based dialogue library for College English. This resource should encompass a wide range of language learning contexts while integrating vivid, authentic examples of China's engagement in

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international affairs—particularly cases that highlight China's positive image and significant contributions on the global stage. By simulating diverse, high-fidelity scenarios such as international conferences, business negotiations, and cultural exchanges, students not only refine their intercultural communicative competence but, more importantly, develop a deeper appreciation for the wisdom and strength of China's foreign policy and its global influence. Such immersive experiences naturally enhance national identity and foster a strong sense of patriotic pride.

Second, in terms of teaching personnel, it is necessary to establish a diverse and professional interdisciplinary instructional team. Language instructors from English departments provide core linguistic training; foreign teachers bring international perspectives and firsthand intercultural experience; and international affairs professionals offer specialized insights into China's diplomatic policies and global positioning. This interdisciplinary collaboration ensures both the richness and practicality of the curriculum. In addition, external resources should be actively utilized by inviting professionals from international trade, foreign service, and global communications to share their career experiences and national perspectives. Their presence serves not only as a source of knowledge but also as inspirational role models, guiding students to form sound values and career aspirations rooted in national development goals.

Third, the establishment of practice-based teaching platforms is a crucial mechanism for deepening national consciousness. Through collaboration with foreign affairs offices, international trade enterprises, and global media organizations, students can engage in diverse, real-world learning experiences. These practical engagements allow students to witness firsthand the strength and international influence of the Chinese state, thereby reinforcing their national identification and sense of pride.

3.4 Integrating Modern Information Technologies

In the context of College English teaching, the cultivation of national consciousness must be deeply integrated with modern information technologies—particularly through the effective use of cutting-edge tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) and database technologies. This integration not only injects new vitality into teaching practices but also embodies the student-centered pedagogical philosophy, offering promising avenues for developing innovative and effective instructional strategies.

To begin with, emphasis should be placed on developing and utilizing AI and database technologies to establish a student digital profile system. This system can conduct precise analyses of students' competencies in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, while also assessing the extent to which ideological and civic education elements have been internalized. Through big data mining and analysis, educators can gain dynamic insights into students' learning progress and practical application abilities—particularly changes in their emotional engagement with national consciousness. This level of detailed understanding enables instructors to identify students' learning preferences, individual weaknesses, and the effectiveness of ideological education efforts, thereby laying a solid foundation for personalized and precision-based teaching. Building on this foundation, the powerful analytical capabilities of big data and AI technologies can be harnessed to map each student's unique learning trajectory and interest patterns. Based on these insights, customized learning resources and individualized development pathways can be intelligently recommended. These resources extend beyond the improvement of linguistic skills to encompass in-depth content on topics such as

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China's diplomatic history, international relations, and national development strategies. Through intelligent learning guidance, students not only strengthen their foreign language proficiency but also gain a deeper understanding of and alignment with national culture, thereby fostering a robust sense of national consciousness. Furthermore, this technology-driven instructional model transforms students into active participants and key agents in their own learning processes. Empowered by data and autonomy, they can select resources and learning paths aligned with their interests and progress. For example, students can utilize online learning platforms to engage in real-time communication with peers from other countries, enhancing their intercultural communication skills. Simultaneously, they may participate in online discussions and share their perspectives on national issues, thereby deepening their sense of national identity and civic responsibility.

4 Conclusion

In an era marked by deepening globalization and accelerating transformations unseen in a century, College English—an integral component of higher education—plays a pivotal role in helping students bridge Chinese and global cultures and communicate effectively with the world. Against the backdrop of the new era, College English teaching must not only broaden students' international horizons, enhance their understanding of global affairs, and cultivate their comprehensive abilities in cross-cultural communication and collaboration, but also guide them to uphold a Chinese perspective, foster a deep sense of patriotism, and strengthen their national identity and civic responsibility.

By integrating language learning with the cultivation of national consciousness, College English education can lead young students to better understand China even as they explore the world. It can inspire them to align their personal aspirations with the broader national development agenda and to dedicate their youthful energy to the realization of the Chinese Dream and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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