

Value-Oriented English Education in Chinese Vocational Universities: A Conceptual Framework for Curriculum Integration and Student Development

Wanhua Ye

School of Foreign Languages and Business, Shenzhen Polytechnic University, Shenzhen, China

Email: 9183216@qq.com

How to cite this paper: Ye, W. H. (2026). Value-Oriented English Education in Chinese Vocational Universities: A Conceptual Framework for Curriculum Integration and Student Development. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 14, 358-377.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2026.148021>

Received: July 31, 2026

Accepted: August 15, 2026

Published: August 18, 2026

Copyright © 2026 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This study proposes a conceptual framework for value-oriented English education in Chinese vocational universities. Drawing on constructivist learning theory, intercultural communicative competence, experiential learning, and holistic education, the framework integrates language competence with professional development, cultural identity, and social responsibility. It explains how values can be embedded into curriculum objectives, teaching content, learning activities, reflection, and assessment rather than being added as separate instruction. The study provides a theoretical foundation for curriculum reform and future empirical research in vocational English education.

Keywords

Value-Oriented English Education, Vocational Universities, Curriculum Integration, Intercultural Competence, Professional Development, Values Education, English Language Teaching (ELT)

1. Introduction

The changing nature of work, technology, and international communication has expanded the responsibilities of vocational higher education. Vocational universities are expected not only to develop students' technical knowledge and practical skills but also to cultivate professional responsibility, cultural awareness, and ethical judgment. Recent international discussions similarly emphasize that education should support learners' holistic development and prepare them to contribute responsibly to their professional and social communities (UNESCO, 2021,

2023).

This broader educational mission is particularly relevant to vocational universities in China. As vocational education has expanded to the undergraduate level, these institutions are expected “incorporate effective strategies to stimulate vocational identity (Keijzer et al., 2022: p. 1272)” associated with bachelor-level education (Brockmann, Clarke, & Winch, 2008). College English, as an important component of general education, should therefore serve purposes beyond the acquisition of language skills. It should also contribute to students’ professional development, cultural identity, intercultural competence, and social responsibility (Gao, 2025).

Language education is also not entirely value-neutral. The selection of texts, classroom topics, examples, tasks, and assessment criteria exposes students to particular representations of culture, identity, work, responsibility, and social relationships. Relevant research stresses “the necessity of incorporating intercultural citizenship into education in general and specifically ELT and EAP in preparation” (Baker & Fang, 2022: p. 72), and English classrooms can provide meaningful opportunities for learners to examine cultural differences, develop critical awareness, and participate responsibly in local and international communities (Martin et al., 2021).

Johnston argues that “ELT (English Language Teaching) is a moral-laden occupation.” (Johnston, 2003: p. x). Following this moral premise of language teaching, value-oriented English education refers to the purposeful integration of language development with professional ethics, cultural identity, intercultural understanding, and social responsibility. It does not mean mechanically adding unrelated moral or ideological statements to language lessons. Instead, moral values should be embedded in “active learning environment” (Shaaban, 2005: p. 207) with meaningful communicative and professional contexts. For example, engineering students may discuss product safety and environmental responsibility, business students may examine integrity and fairness in negotiation, and healthcare students may explore empathy, privacy, and professional responsibility. Through such activities, students use English to analyze problems, express viewpoints, compare cultural perspectives, and reflect on responsible professional action.

Although previous studies have examined intercultural competence, global citizenship, vocational identity, and professional development, these areas are often treated separately. Research on English education tends to emphasize language competence and intercultural communication, whereas vocational education research mainly focuses on employability, occupational skills, and professional identity. Less attention has been given to how language learning, professional development, cultural identity, and social responsibility can be systematically connected in the English curricula of Chinese vocational universities. Existing discussions may also remain at the level of general principles without explaining how value-related objectives can be translated into curriculum content, classroom activities, and assessment.

This study therefore addresses the following question: How can value education

be systematically integrated into English curricula in Chinese vocational universities?

To answer this question, the paper develops a conceptual framework for value-oriented English education in Chinese vocational universities. The framework connects English language competence, professional development, cultural identity, intercultural understanding, and social responsibility, while explaining how these dimensions can be incorporated into curriculum objectives, teaching content, learning activities, reflective processes, and assessment. The paper aims to provide a theoretical foundation for curriculum design, teacher development, and future empirical research in vocational university English education.

In this framework, value-oriented English education is distinguished from related concepts such as moral education, character education, and intercultural citizenship education. Unlike moral education, which primarily focuses on cultivating moral judgment and personal virtues, value-oriented English education does not aim to directly transmit a fixed set of moral principles. Unlike character education, which emphasizes the formation of enduring personal traits, it focuses on how professional and social values are constructed through language learning activities. Compared with intercultural citizenship education, which highlights civic participation across cultural boundaries, value-oriented English education adopts a broader curriculum perspective by integrating linguistic competence, professional identity, cultural expression, and social responsibility within vocational contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Values Education in Language Teaching

Values education is a broad concept referring to educational efforts that help learners understand, examine, and develop values that guide individual behaviour and social participation. The importance and necessity of values education is evident, as Lovat noted, "... wider and more indispensable effects on student learning and well-being rendered by the well constructed values approach to education" (Lovat, 2011, p. 151). Several related concepts fall within this field but differ in emphasis. Moral education "aims at shaping the pupils' character and at developing their moral judgment" (Łukomska, 2026: p. 175). Character education, as outlined by McGrath (2021), centres on nurturing enduring civic, moral, self-regulatory and intellectual virtues, with an implicit priority on shaping learners' identity rather than merely imparting technical skills. Citizenship education prepares learners to participate responsibly in social and civic life, whereas intercultural citizenship education connects civic engagement with intercultural communication, critical cultural awareness, and action across cultural boundaries (Fang & Baker, 2018).

These perspectives are particularly relevant to language education because language teaching is not value-neutral. Textbooks, classroom topics, examples, communicative tasks, and teacher-student interactions inevitably represent particular understandings of culture, identity, work, success, and social relationships. English also carries symbolic power and can shape how learners understand them-

selves and position others in intercultural communication (De Costa, 2022). Therefore, values education in English teaching should not be limited to the transmission of predetermined moral statements. It should create opportunities for students to examine different perspectives, reflect on ethical and cultural issues, and communicate responsibly with people from diverse backgrounds. Intercultural citizenship education is especially useful in this respect because it links language competence with critical reflection, cultural understanding, and responsible participation (Barili & Byram, 2021).

2.2. English Education in Vocational Higher Education

English education in vocational universities must respond to both educational and occupational needs. Students require general communicative competence, but they must also learn to use English in workplace situations. Professional communication involves more than vocabulary and grammatical accuracy. It requires learners to interpret professional roles, manage interpersonal relationships, respond appropriately to cultural differences, and communicate in ways consistent with workplace expectations (Dai, 2024).

The cultivation of vocational university students should therefore include English communicative competence, workplace communication, professional ethics, cultural awareness, social responsibility, and intercultural competence. Research in vocational education indicates that students' engagement is closely associated with the development of vocational identity and their understanding of future professional roles.

Professional ethics should consequently be incorporated into vocational English education (Al-Wahaibi & Tuzlukova, 2023). Workplace English courses can engage students with issues such as integrity, product safety, patient privacy, service responsibility, environmental sustainability, and respect for cultural differences. This is consistent with the argument that higher education for future professionals should intentionally cultivate character and practical wisdom alongside technical knowledge.

2.3. Existing Approaches to Curriculum Integration

Values can be integrated into English curricula through several complementary approaches. First, content-based integration embeds professional, cultural, ethical, and social themes in reading, listening, speaking, and writing materials. Values are therefore developed through language content rather than presented as an additional or isolated component.

Second, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) prioritizes authentic pedagogical tasks that mirror real-world communicative demands, enabling learners to combine linguistic practice with contextual reasoning and decision-making (East, 2021). For vocational learners, task work bridges classroom instruction to workplace interaction scenarios they will encounter after graduation, balancing linguistic development with the practical judgment skills required in professional settings.

Third, Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) enables learners to conduct in-depth inquiries into authentic, real-world issues and deliver tangible, practice-oriented final outputs. As Garib's (2022) cross-national research confirms, this pedagogical model inherently supports collaborative student interaction, self-directed learner autonomy, and genuine meaning-centred communication, while establishing organic links between classroom language tasks and real-world practical practice. Such strengths make PBLL an ideal instructional framework for vocational education, where language teaching is required to closely align with occupational scenarios and cultivate students' practical professional communication capacities.

Finally, intercultural comparison and workplace scenarios allow students to compare different communicative conventions without presenting cultures as fixed or opposing systems. Svarstad and Risager's (2024) intercultural learning model emphasizes processes of noticing, comparison, reflection, and interaction. When combined with authentic professional scenarios, these processes can connect cultural awareness with workplace communication and responsible action.

2.4. Research Gap

The existing literature provides valuable insights into character education, intercultural citizenship, professional communication, task-based instruction, and project-based language learning. However, four limitations remain.

First, much of the available research has been conducted in general universities, school-level EFL classrooms, or individual ESP fields such as tourism. Comparatively little attention has been given specifically to undergraduate vocational universities in China. Second, Chinese tertiary EFL research often focused on teachers' experiences, emotions, and responses to curriculum reform rather than the construction of a comprehensive curriculum model (Yang & Yin, 2024). Third, language competence, vocational identity, professional ethics, cultural awareness, and social responsibility are commonly discussed as separate outcomes rather than interconnected dimensions of student development. Finally, although character and value development are increasingly emphasized, their assessment remains conceptually difficult, and there is no widely accepted evaluation framework designed for vocational university English education.

A systematic framework is therefore needed to align value-related objectives with occupational needs, language content, classroom activities, reflective learning, and assessment. Such a framework should explain not only what values should be addressed, but also how they can be embedded in English learning and how the resulting student development can be evaluated.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a conceptual research design to develop a framework for value-oriented English education in Chinese vocational universities. Unlike empirical

studies that examine the effectiveness of a particular intervention through quantitative or qualitative data, conceptual research aims to clarify theoretical relationships, integrate existing knowledge, and construct explanatory models for emerging educational issues. The purpose of this study is therefore not to empirically test the effectiveness of the proposed framework, but to establish a theoretically grounded model that explains how value education can be systematically integrated into vocational English curricula.

The framework development follows a theory-informed approach that combines insights from values education, English language teaching, vocational education, and intercultural education. Through synthesizing relevant theoretical perspectives and identifying connections among curriculum objectives, content, teaching processes, and learning outcomes, the study proposes a structured framework to guide curriculum design and future empirical investigation.

3.2. Framework Development Process

The construction of the framework involved three interconnected steps: literature synthesis, theoretical integration, and framework construction.

Step 1: Literature Synthesis

The first step involved reviewing and synthesizing key concepts and research perspectives related to four major areas: values education, intercultural competence, vocational education, and English language teaching (ELT).

Research on values education provided insights into how education can support learners' ethical awareness, social responsibility, and holistic development. Studies on intercultural competence highlighted the importance of cultural understanding, critical awareness, and responsible communication in language learning. Literature on vocational education emphasized the development of professional identity, workplace competence, and occupational responsibility. Research in ELT contributed perspectives on how language learning activities, communicative tasks, and classroom interaction can support broader learner development.

Through this synthesis, the study identified the need for an integrated framework that connects language learning with professional, cultural, and social dimensions of student development.

Step 2: Theoretical Integration

The second step involved integrating complementary educational theories to establish the theoretical foundation of the framework.

Four theoretical perspectives were incorporated to explain different dimensions of value-oriented English education:

- Constructivist learning theory explains the learning mechanism of the framework by emphasizing that students construct understanding through interaction, experience, problem-solving, and reflection rather than passively receiving knowledge.
- Intercultural communicative competence theory provides the intercultural dimension by explaining how language learning can promote cultural awareness,

critical reflection, and effective communication across cultural contexts.

- Experiential learning theory provides the pedagogical foundation by illustrating how authentic professional experiences, reflection, and practical application can connect English learning with workplace situations and ethical decision-making.
- Holistic education theory provides the overall orientation by emphasizing the integration of linguistic, professional, ethical, emotional, and social development.

Together, these theoretical perspectives establish the rationale for embedding values within English curriculum design rather than treating values education as an independent component.

Step 3: Framework Construction

Based on the literature synthesis and theoretical integration, the study constructed a five-component framework for value-oriented English education in Chinese vocational universities.

The framework organizes the relationships among educational objectives, curriculum content, teaching processes, learning outcomes, and reflective feedback mechanisms.

The first four components describe the process through which value-oriented English education is designed and implemented:

- 1) Educational objectives define the intended development of linguistic competence, professional competence, cultural identity, and social responsibility;
- 2) Curriculum content identifies professional communication, workplace ethics, Chinese cultural narratives, intercultural issues, social and technological development, and responsible use of artificial intelligence as key areas for integrating values into English learning;
- 3) Teaching processes translate curriculum objectives and content into meaningful learning experiences through scenario-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, intercultural comparison, reflective discussion, and collaborative tasks;
- 4) Learning outcomes represent the expected dimensions of student development, including English language development, professional identity, ethical awareness, cultural expression, critical thinking, and learning engagement.

In addition, the framework incorporates reflective feedback and curriculum improvement as a continuous quality-enhancement mechanism. This component emphasizes that learning outcomes should not be viewed as the final stage of curriculum implementation, but as evidence for evaluating and improving teaching practices. Through student reflection, learning evidence analysis, and instructional adjustment, teachers can refine curriculum content, learning activities, and assessment approaches to better support students' professional, cultural, and ethical development.

Therefore, the proposed framework represents not only a pathway from educational objectives to student outcomes but also a reflective mechanism that sup-

ports ongoing curriculum improvement.

4. Theoretical Foundations

The proposed curriculum framework draws on four complementary perspectives: constructivist learning theory, intercultural communicative competence, experiential learning, and holistic education. Together, they explain how students construct values through interaction, develop intercultural and professional communication abilities, connect language learning with workplace experience, and achieve integrated linguistic, ethical, and social development.

4.1. Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory regards learning as an active process in which learners develop understanding through prior experience, interaction, problem-solving, and reflection rather than simply receiving knowledge from teachers (Williams & Burden, 1997). This perspective is particularly relevant to values education because values cannot be effectively developed through the direct transmission of moral conclusions alone.

In vocational university English courses, students can explore value-related issues through discussions, case analyses, role-plays, collaborative tasks, and reflective writing. For example, workplace cases involving product safety, customer rights, honesty, or professional responsibility require students to use English while considering the ethical consequences of different decisions. The teacher acts as a facilitator who provides linguistic support, designs meaningful situations, and guides students to compare perspectives and justify their judgments. Values are therefore constructed through meaningful language use, social interaction, and reflection rather than presented as isolated slogans.

4.2. Intercultural Communicative Competence

Intercultural communicative competence connects language proficiency with cultural understanding and responsible communication. Byram (2021) identifies several important dimensions, including attitudes of openness and curiosity, knowledge of cultural practices, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. The last dimension is especially important because it enables learners to evaluate cultural practices and value positions critically rather than accepting or rejecting them without reflection.

Deardorff's (2006) process model similarly presents intercultural competence as a continuing process involving respect, openness, cultural self-awareness, knowledge, observation, interpretation, and interaction. Its aim is appropriate and effective communication across cultures.

For vocational university students, intercultural competence involves both understanding others and representing themselves. Students should recognize cultural differences in workplace communication, teamwork, hierarchy, customer service, and professional responsibility. They should also be able to use English to

explain Chinese culture, local industries, occupational practices, and social experiences. Thus, intercultural English education should move beyond one-sided introductions to English-speaking cultures and prepare students to mediate between local and international professional contexts.

4.3. Experiential Learning

Experiential learning provides a practical connection between language learning, professional experience, and value judgment. Kolb (1984) describes it as a cycle consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Students first participate in an activity, reflect on their performance, identify general principles, and then apply those principles to a new situation.

This model is well suited to vocational English education because students need to use English in realistic occupational contexts. Workplace simulations, case studies, projects, internships, and role-plays can involve activities such as handling customer complaints, presenting technical information, resolving team conflicts, or responding to safety problems.

Such activities require students to consider not only linguistic accuracy but also honesty, confidentiality, fairness, safety, environmental responsibility, and professional commitment. However, experience alone does not guarantee learning. Morris (2020) emphasizes the importance of critical reflection and the application of newly developed understanding. Therefore, experiential activities should be followed by reflective journals, discussions, self-assessment, or task revision so that students can connect language performance with professional and ethical judgment.

4.4. Holistic Education

Holistic education provides the broader orientation for the curriculum by emphasizing the development of the whole person. It challenges the separation of linguistic, cognitive, emotional, ethical, professional, and social learning. Miller (2019) identifies balance, inclusion, and connection as central principles of holistic education, stressing the relationships among knowledge, experience, individuals, communities, and the wider world.

From this perspective, vocational university English education should not be limited to examination performance or narrowly defined workplace expressions. It should promote language competence, critical thinking, emotional awareness, ethical judgment, professional identity, intercultural understanding, cooperation, and social responsibility. These dimensions can be developed through integrated activities. For example, a project on sustainable production may require students to read professional materials, explain technical processes, evaluate economic and environmental interests, cooperate with others, and present a responsible proposal in English.

Taken together, the four theories provide a coherent foundation for the pro-

posed framework. Constructivism explains how students develop value understanding; intercultural communicative competence defines the cultural and communicative abilities they need; experiential learning connects these abilities with workplace practice; and holistic education integrates language learning with professional, ethical, and social development. Values education should therefore be embedded in curriculum objectives, language materials, occupational tasks, intercultural activities, reflection, and assessment.

5. A Conceptual Framework for Value-Oriented English Education

This study proposes a four-layer conceptual framework for value-oriented English education in vocational universities (see **Figure 1**). The framework includes educational objectives, curriculum content, teaching processes, and learning outcomes. Its basic logic is: Educational context → curriculum content → learning activities → reflective engagement → student development.

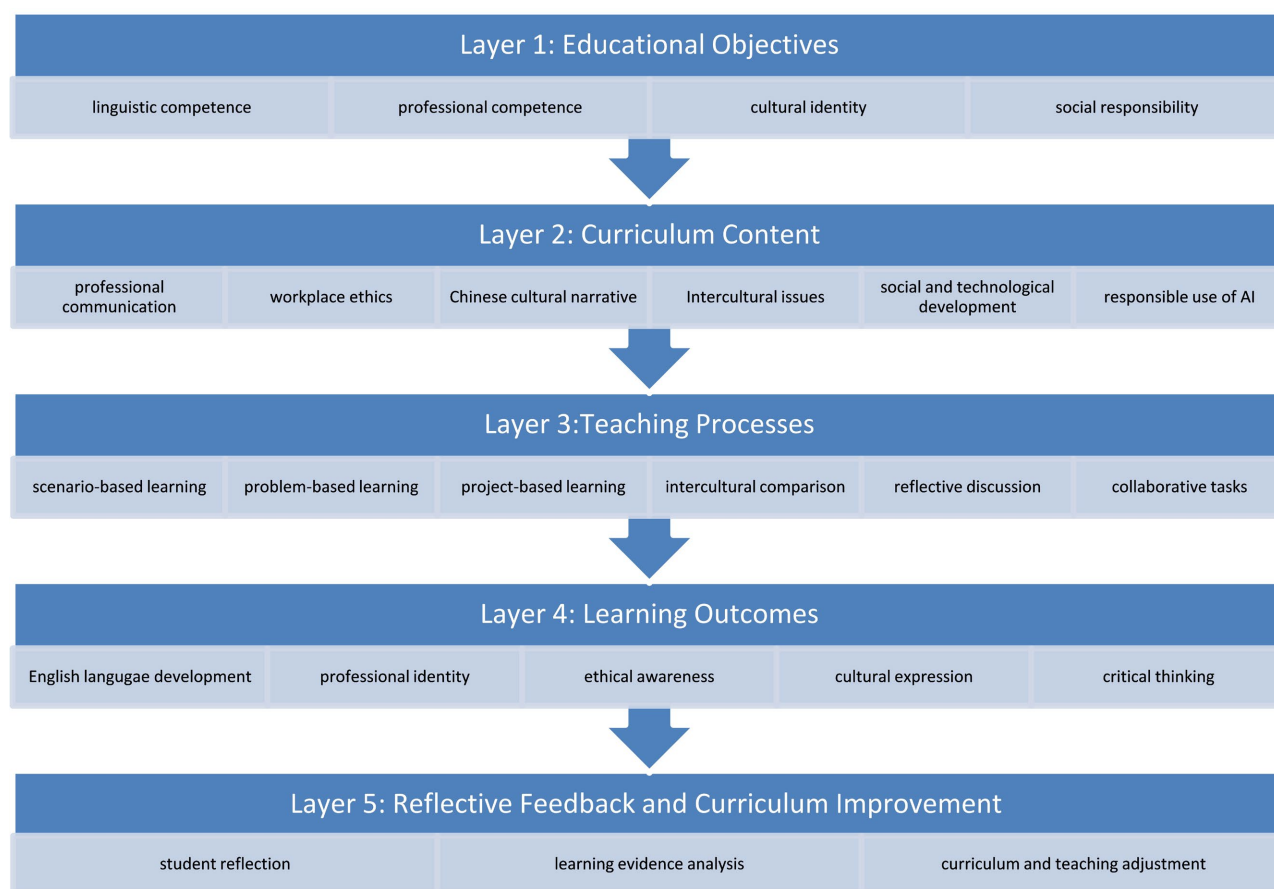


Figure 1. Value-oriented English education framework.

5.1. Educational Objectives

The first layer defines the overall educational objectives of value-oriented English education. It includes four interrelated dimensions: linguistic competence, pro-

fessional competence, cultural identity, and social responsibility.

Linguistic competence refers to students' ability to understand and use English effectively in academic, social, and occupational contexts. It includes listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, discourse competence, and communication strategies.

Professional competence concerns the ability to apply English in workplace situations. Students should be able to communicate with customers and colleagues, present professional information, solve practical problems, participate in teamwork, and respond appropriately to occupational challenges.

Cultural identity involves students' understanding of Chinese culture, local communities, occupational traditions, and contemporary social development. Students should not only understand cultural differences but also express Chinese experiences and perspectives clearly and confidently in English.

Social responsibility refers to students' awareness of the ethical and social consequences of professional action. It includes honesty, respect, fairness, cooperation, environmental awareness, professional responsibility, and responsible participation in society.

These four objectives are mutually supportive. Linguistic competence provides the means of communication, professional competence provides the context of application, cultural identity provides a basis for self-representation, and social responsibility provides ethical direction.

5.2. Curriculum Content

The second layer concerns the selection and organization of curriculum content. Value-oriented English education should retain essential language knowledge while incorporating professional, cultural, ethical, social, and technological themes.

The first content area is professional communication, including workplace conversations, business correspondence, presentations, meetings, customer service, technical explanations, and team communication. Such content connects English learning with students' future occupational needs.

The second area is workplace ethics, which may address professional honesty, product quality, occupational safety, customer rights, confidentiality, teamwork, discrimination, environmental responsibility, and conflicts of interest. These topics allow students to examine the relationship between language choices and professional conduct.

The third area is Chinese cultural narratives. Students should learn to introduce Chinese culture, local industries, regional traditions, technological achievements, community practices, and contemporary social development in English. This content strengthens cultural identity and improves students' ability to communicate Chinese perspectives internationally.

The fourth area is intercultural issues, including cultural differences in communication styles, workplace hierarchy, time orientation, privacy, teamwork, politeness, negotiation, and decision-making. The purpose is not to present fixed cul-

tural stereotypes but to help students interpret differences critically and communicate appropriately.

The fifth area is social and technological development. Topics such as digital transformation, sustainable production, intelligent manufacturing, environmental protection, public health, ageing societies, and changing employment patterns can connect English learning with current professional and social realities.

The sixth area is the responsible use of artificial intelligence. Students should learn to use generative artificial intelligence and other digital tools effectively while considering accuracy, academic integrity, privacy, bias, intellectual property, transparency, and human responsibility. Artificial intelligence should be treated not only as a learning tool but also as an ethical and professional issue.

These content areas should be selected according to students' majors, language levels, occupational needs, and local contexts. Their purpose is to create meaningful connections among English knowledge, professional practice, cultural understanding, and responsible action.

5.3. Teaching Processes

The third layer translates curriculum content into learning experiences. The framework recommends six mutually supportive teaching approaches: scenario-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, intercultural comparison, reflective discussion, and collaborative tasks.

Scenario-based learning places students in simulated occupational or social situations. Students may handle a customer complaint, respond to a safety problem, explain a technical process, or communicate with an international colleague. Such scenarios connect language performance with professional and ethical decision-making.

Problem-based learning begins with an open-ended problem rather than a pre-determined answer. Students collect information, identify competing interests, compare possible solutions, and justify their decisions in English. Problems involving product defects, workplace conflicts, environmental costs, or artificial intelligence can promote both language use and ethical reasoning.

Project-based learning enables students to complete extended tasks that produce meaningful outcomes. Projects may include designing an English-language promotional plan for a local industry, preparing a sustainability proposal, introducing regional cultural resources, or developing guidelines for responsible AI use.

Intercultural comparison encourages students to examine similarities and differences among cultural practices. Instead of simply listing cultural facts, students analyse why practices differ, how misunderstandings arise, and how communication can be adjusted without abandoning ethical judgment or cultural identity.

Reflective discussion provides opportunities for students to examine their language choices, emotional responses, assumptions, and decisions. Reflection may take the form of classroom discussion, journals, self-assessment, peer feedback, or

post-task reports. It turns activities into deeper learning by helping students connect experience with general principles.

Collaborative tasks require students to negotiate meaning, distribute responsibilities, manage disagreement, and complete tasks collectively. Collaboration develops communication skills while also fostering respect, responsibility, empathy, and accountability.

These approaches should not be used independently. A single teaching unit may begin with an occupational scenario, develop into a group problem-solving task, include intercultural comparison, and conclude with reflective discussion. Through this process, values are experienced, debated, applied, and reconsidered rather than merely explained by the teacher.

5.4. Learning Outcomes

The fourth layer identifies six expected learning outcomes: English language development, professional identity, ethical awareness, cultural expression, critical thinking, and learning engagement.

English language development includes improvement in linguistic knowledge, communicative fluency, discourse organization, and the ability to use English in varied professional and intercultural situations.

Professional identity refers to students' understanding of themselves as future practitioners. Through occupational tasks, they become more aware of professional standards, responsibilities, communication norms, and the social significance of their future work.

Ethical awareness involves the ability to recognize ethical issues, consider the interests of different stakeholders, evaluate consequences, and make reasoned decisions. It also includes awareness that communication itself can reflect honesty, respect, fairness, and responsibility.

Cultural expression refers to students' capacity to interpret cultural differences and communicate Chinese culture, local experiences, and professional practices in English. It combines intercultural openness with confidence in one's own cultural position.

Critical thinking includes questioning information, comparing perspectives, identifying assumptions, assessing evidence, and forming justified judgments. This outcome is particularly important when students encounter cultural stereotypes, workplace dilemmas, online information, or AI-generated content.

Learning engagement concerns students' participation, motivation, cooperation, reflection, and willingness to take responsibility for learning. Meaningful professional and social tasks may enhance engagement by increasing the relevance of English learning to students' professional goals; however, this assumption requires future empirical validation.

These outcomes should be assessed through multiple forms of evidence, including language performance, project products, classroom participation, reflective writing, case analysis, peer collaboration, and self-assessment. Evaluation should

therefore examine not only what students know but also how they communicate, reason, cooperate, reflect, and act (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Observable indicators of learning outcomes.

Outcome	Observable indicators	Evidence
Professional identity	explains occupational responsibilities; applies professional standards	role-play, workplace simulation
Ethical awareness	identifies ethical conflicts; considers stakeholder perspectives; justifies decisions	case analysis, reflection journal
Cultural expression	explains Chinese/local practices in English; compares cultural perspectives	presentation, project report
Critical thinking	evaluates information sources; recognizes assumptions	discussion, written tasks
Learning engagement	participation, collaboration, self-regulation	observation, peer assessment

6. Curriculum Integration Strategies

The framework can be implemented by integrating values into learning objectives, teaching materials, classroom tasks, and assessment.

6.1. Integrating Values into Learning Objectives

Course objectives should extend beyond listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They may also include professional responsibility, intercultural understanding, ethical decision-making, and cultural expression. These objectives should be linked to specific units and tasks rather than stated only at the general curriculum level.

6.2. Integrating Values into Teaching Materials

Values integration does not simply mean adding political or moral texts to textbooks. Materials should be selected around realistic professional and social issues, such as workplace integrity, customer responsibility, environmental sustainability, technological ethics, teamwork, craftsmanship, and cultural heritage. The content should also reflect students' disciplinary backgrounds. Engineering students may examine safety and technological responsibility, while business students may discuss customer rights, data privacy, or corporate responsibility.

6.3. Integrating Values into Classroom Tasks

Classroom tasks should require students to interpret situations, make choices, and explain their reasoning. Students may analyze workplace ethics cases, introduce Chinese technological or cultural projects in English, discuss integrity in AI use, simulate intercultural workplace conflicts, or complete projects for local communities and industries. In this way, values emerge from the language task itself rather than from an additional moral explanation.

6.4. Integrating Values into Assessment

Assessment may include language accuracy, professional appropriateness, ethical reasoning, intercultural awareness, reflective ability, and teamwork. Different tasks may emphasize different criteria. For example, role-plays may focus on language and professional appropriateness, while case analyses may emphasize ethical reasoning and intercultural awareness. The purpose is not to assess students' personal beliefs, but to examine whether they can communicate responsibly, consider different perspectives, justify decisions, and reflect on their performance.

Ethical assessment should focus on students' reasoning processes rather than agreement with particular value positions. Students should be evaluated according to their ability to identify ethical issues, recognize multiple stakeholder perspectives, justify decisions with evidence, and communicate responsibly.

7. Discipline-Specific Applications

The framework should be adapted to the professional contexts of different disciplines. Its core structure remains consistent, but the content, tasks, and ethical issues should reflect students' future occupations.

For engineering and technology students, English learning may focus on technical communication, product quality, workplace safety, environmental responsibility, and responsible AI use. Students may explain a production process, analyze a safety case, or present a sustainable technical solution.

For business and management students, relevant topics include customer rights, truthful advertising, data privacy, corporate responsibility, and intercultural negotiation. Tasks may involve handling customer complaints, evaluating business decisions, or developing communication plans for international markets.

For tourism and service students, the curriculum may address cultural heritage, service ethics, intercultural communication, and community responsibility. Students may introduce local cultural resources, respond to cross-cultural misunderstandings, or design English materials for tourism and community projects.

Other disciplines can follow the same principle by connecting English learning with authentic professional tasks, industry standards, and social responsibilities. This adaptability reflects the vocational orientation of the framework and ensures that value education remains relevant to students' majors and future careers.

8. Discussion

8.1. Theoretical and Practical Contributions of the Framework

The proposed framework contributes to vocational English education by reconceptualizing the role of English learning in student development. Previous reforms in college English education have often focused on improving language proficiency, communicative competence, teaching methods, or digital learning environments. While these approaches have made important contributions to language education, they have not always fully addressed how English learning can support students' professional identity, cultural understanding, ethical awareness,

and social responsibility. The present framework extends the purpose of vocational English education from language training toward the integrated development of language users, future professionals, and responsible social participants.

A key contribution of the framework is its clarification of how values can be embedded into English education without treating values education as an additional or separate instructional component. Rather than directly transmitting predetermined moral conclusions, value-oriented English education emphasizes the use of authentic professional and intercultural contexts in which students analyze problems, compare perspectives, communicate decisions, and reflect on their actions. In this approach, values are developed through meaningful language use and learning experiences. Professional scenarios, workplace cases, and project-based activities provide opportunities for students to connect English communication with issues such as professional responsibility, cultural representation, ethical decision-making, and social participation.

The framework also contributes by establishing connections among dimensions that have often been examined separately in previous research. Language competence, professional development, intercultural competence, cultural identity, and social responsibility are frequently discussed as independent educational goals. By integrating these dimensions into a single curriculum structure, the framework provides a more comprehensive perspective on vocational English education. It highlights that effective English learning in vocational universities should not only prepare students to communicate in professional environments but also enable them to understand their roles, responsibilities, and identities within broader social and intercultural contexts.

From a practical perspective, the framework offers guidance for curriculum design and teaching practice. It helps teachers align learning objectives, curriculum content, classroom activities, assessment, and reflective improvement. However, the framework is not intended to prescribe a uniform teaching model for all vocational disciplines. Instead, its principles can be adapted according to students' majors, occupational contexts, institutional conditions, and local needs. Engineering students, for example, may explore technical responsibility and sustainable development, whereas business or service students may focus on professional integrity, customer communication, and intercultural interaction. Such adaptability reflects the vocational orientation of the framework and supports its potential application across different educational contexts.

8.2. Balancing Value-Oriented Education and Standardized Testing

Despite its potential contributions, the implementation of value-oriented English education faces practical challenges within the current higher education environment. One major challenge is the tension between holistic educational goals and existing standardized assessment systems in Chinese universities. In many institutions, English teaching remains strongly influenced by high-stakes examinations, which typically emphasize vocabulary knowledge, grammatical accuracy,

reading comprehension, and examination strategies. Such assessment orientations may limit teachers' willingness to adopt project-based learning, workplace simulations, intercultural activities, and reflective tasks, particularly when teaching time and assessment requirements are highly constrained.

However, value-oriented English education should not be regarded as a replacement for examination preparation. Instead, it requires a more integrated approach in which language development and broader educational objectives are addressed simultaneously. Existing language activities can be redesigned to include professional, cultural, and ethical dimensions. For example, reading comprehension tasks can be extended through workplace ethics case discussions, allowing students to practice reading skills while examining issues such as professional responsibility, safety, integrity, and stakeholder interests. Similarly, speaking and writing activities can incorporate authentic professional situations in which students use English to explain decisions, negotiate solutions, and reflect on consequences.

Assessment practices also require careful consideration. Evaluating value-oriented learning should not involve judging whether students hold particular beliefs or agree with specific value positions. Instead, assessment should focus on observable learning processes and performance, including students' ability to identify relevant issues, consider different perspectives, provide evidence-based reasoning, communicate appropriately, and reflect on their own learning. A balanced assessment system may therefore combine linguistic accuracy with professional communication ability, ethical reasoning, intercultural awareness, and reflective capacity. The relative emphasis of these dimensions can be adjusted according to course objectives and disciplinary characteristics.

Furthermore, implementation does not require every lesson to adopt large-scale project-based learning or extensive reflective activities. For many teachers, small-scale integration may be a more realistic starting point. For example, each teaching unit may include one authentic professional task and one reflective activity alongside regular language instruction. A technical English lesson may incorporate discussion of responsible innovation, while a business English lesson may involve analyzing an ethical negotiation case. Such gradual integration enables teachers to maintain necessary preparation for standardized assessments while expanding opportunities for students to develop professional and value-related competencies.

Therefore, the relationship between standardized testing and value-oriented English education should not be viewed as a conflict between examination performance and broader student development. A more feasible approach is to redesign existing curriculum practices so that language competence, professional relevance, intercultural understanding, and responsible action can be cultivated together.

9. Conclusion

This study developed a conceptual framework for value-oriented English educa-

tion in Chinese vocational universities. Drawing on perspectives from constructivist learning theory, intercultural communicative competence, experiential learning, and holistic education, the framework explains how English education can integrate linguistic development with professional competence, cultural identity, and social responsibility.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in providing an integrated perspective on the role of English education in vocational higher education. Rather than treating values education as an additional component of language teaching, the proposed framework positions values as embedded within curriculum objectives, content selection, teaching processes, learning outcomes, and reflective improvement. It therefore offers a systematic explanation of how language learning can be connected with students' professional development and broader social participation.

At the practical level, the framework provides a structure for curriculum design and instructional practice by aligning educational objectives, curriculum content, teaching activities, assessment, and feedback mechanisms. It also allows adaptation across different vocational disciplines according to students' professional contexts and learning needs. Through authentic workplace tasks, intercultural activities, and reflective learning, vocational English education can move beyond narrow language training toward the development of competent and responsible professionals.

As a conceptual study, this framework requires further empirical examination in diverse vocational university contexts. Future research may investigate its feasibility and effectiveness through classroom interventions, teacher and student perspectives, and longitudinal studies. Such research can further clarify how value-oriented English education influences students' language development, professional identity, ethical awareness, intercultural competence, and learning engagement.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Al-Wahaibi, A. N., & Tuzlukova, V. (2023). Teacher-Perceived Views on Social Responsibility Teaching and Learning in the ESP Classroom. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 13, 599-606. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1303.08>
- Baker, W., & Fang, F. (2022). Intercultural Citizenship and the Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Role of English Language Teaching. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 11, 63-75. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jelf-2022-2067>
- Barili, A., & Byram, M. (2021). Teaching Intercultural Citizenship through Intercultural Service Learning in World Language Education. *Foreign Language Annals*, 54, 776-799. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12526>
- Brockmann, M., Clarke, L., & Winch, C. (2008). Knowledge, Skills, Competence: European Divergences in Vocational Education and Training (VET)—The English, German and Dutch Cases. *Oxford Review of Education*, 34, 547-567.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980701782098>
- Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (2nd ed.). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/BYRAM0244>
- Dai, D. W. (2024). Interactional Competence for Professional Communication in Intercultural Contexts: Epistemology, Analytic Framework and Pedagogy. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 37, 435-455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2024.2349781>
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10, 241-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
- East, M. (2021). *Foundational Principles of Task-Based Language Teaching*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003039709>
- Fang, F., & Baker, W. (2018). 'A More Inclusive Mind towards the World': English Language Teaching and Study Abroad in China from Intercultural Citizenship and English as a Lingua Franca Perspectives. *Language Teaching Research*, 22, 608-624. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168817718574>
- Gao, Y. (2025). Study on Restructuring the Content of College English Course in Vocational University Based on Occupational Demands. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 9, 85-92. <https://doi.org/10.26689/jcer.v9i7.11329>
- Garib, A. (2022). "Actually, It's Real Work": EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Technology-Assisted Project-Based Language Learning in Lebanon, Libya, and Syria. *TESOL Quarterly*, 57, 1434-1462. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3202>
- I. De Costa, P. (2022). Identity Work and the Symbolic Power of Language in the ELT Classroom: Advancing the Intercultural Citizenship and ELF Agenda. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 11, 117-124. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jelf-2022-2073>
- Johnston, B. (2003). *Values in English Language Teaching*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Keijzer, R., van Schooten, E., van der Rijst, R., & Admiraal, W. (2022). Individual Characteristics of Students in Vocational Education Moderating the Relationship between School Engagement and Vocational Identity. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 37, 1255-1283. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-021-00580-y>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice Hall.
- Lovat, T. (2011). Values Education and Holistic Learning: Updated Research Perspectives. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 50, 148-152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2011.07.009>
- Łukomska, A. (2026). "Thick" Ethical Concepts and School-Based Moral Education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 45, 175-191. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-025-10033-4>
- Martin, T. J., Esteve-Faubel, J. M., & Esteve-Faubel, R. P. (2021). Developing Intercultural Citizenship Competences in Higher Education by Using a Literary Excerpt in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Context. *Intercultural Education*, 32, 649-666. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2021.1985804>
- McGrath, R. E. (2021). Some Key Issues in the Evaluation of Character Education. *Journal of Education*, 202, 181-184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220574211025066>
- Miller, J. P. (2019). *The Holistic Curriculum* (3rd ed.). University of Toronto Press.
- Morris, T. H. (2020). Experiential Learning—A Systematic Review and Revision of Kolb's Model. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 28, 1064-1077. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1570279>

- Shaaban, K. (2005). A Proposed Framework for Incorporating Moral Education into the ESL/EFL Classroom. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 18, 201-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908310508668742>
- Svarstad, L. K., & Risager, K. (2024). A Cycle Model of Intercultural Learning: Educating the Global Citizen. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 37, 155-170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2023.2267611>
- UNESCO (2021). *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*. UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2023). *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development*. UNESCO.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yang, S., & Yin, H. (2024). 'Good Rain Nurtures Things Silently': A Longitudinal Study of EFL Teacher Emotion and Identity Learning in Curriculum Reform. *European Journal of Education*, 59, e12763. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12763>