



Construction of the Progressive Moral Education System for College English from The Perspective of The Classification of Educational Objectives in The Affective Domain

Shan Ge

Beijing Institute of Petrochemical Technology

ABSTRACT: The core of moral education in the course of College English lies in achieving the organic unity of language competence cultivation and value guidance. An effective moral education system is the key to attaining this goal. Based on the five-level classification of educational objectives in the affective domain proposed by D. R. Krathwohl and B. S. Bloom, namely the "affective continuum" theory, this paper explores the construction and implementation path of the progressive education system for moral education in College English. By deeply integrating the five-level affective education objectives with the three-stage teaching process (pre-class, in-class, and post-class), the paper clarifies the affective education goals and corresponding teaching measures for each stage: in the pre-class stage, it leverages the "MOOC + SPOC + micro-course" cloud classroom to create moral educational scenarios, guiding students to focus on value stimuli and respond actively; in the in-class stage, it facilitates students in completing value evaluation and value system organization through group discussions and the establishment of learning communities; in the post-class stage, it assists students in internalizing values and moving towards the characterization level by means of task-driven learning and practical extension. This progressive education system aligns with the law of emotional development and the characteristics of college English teaching, thereby providing reference for improving moral education in College English.

Corresponding Author:

Shan Ge

Published Online:

April 14, 2026

License:

This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license:

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

KEYWORDS:

affective continuum, affective-domain classification of educational objectives, progressive moral education system, College English

Cite the Article: Ge, S. (2026). Construction of the Progressive Moral Education System for College English from The Perspective of The Classification of Educational Objectives in The Affective Domain. *International Journal of Human Research and Social Science Studies*, 3(4),246-252. <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijhrsss/05-2026-Vol03I04>

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, the world is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century. There is an urgent need to guide young students to establish a correct worldview, outlook on life and values, and enhance their sense of identity with the country and nation as well as their confidence in their own culture. Therefore, deepening and innovating the reform of moral education in college courses and effectively improving the effectiveness of education are essential for higher education in the new era to meet the needs of national development.

Foreign language education involves cultural, educational, ethical and political dimensions (Guilherme, 2002) and carries distinct political elements. Language learning influences learners' understanding of national identity and constitutes an integral part of national security (Byram, 2008). As a core general education course most widely offered in China, College English is not only an organic component of the new liberal arts, but also a strong support for the construction of new engineering, new agriculture and new medicine (Xiang Mingyou, 2020). It undertakes the important mission of fostering morality and strengthening convictions. Accordingly, comprehensively promoting moral education in College English is of great significance to cultivating young students' virtues and moral integrity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH ON MORAL EDUCATION IN COLLEGE ENGLISH

Since the Ministry of Education of China issued the guidelines for moral education in college courses in 2020, the practice and research of moral education have been rapidly carried out in colleges and universities nationwide. The research on moral education in College English covers different levels.

At the macro level, some scholars have deeply analyzed the connotations of moral education and the practical significance and approaches of implementing virtue cultivation through moral education (Cai Jigang, 2021; He Lianzhen, 2022). They have proposed the connotation and implementation framework of moral education in college foreign language courses (Wen Qiufang, 2021), and explored the main contents of moral education in foreign language courses from six aspects: guiding principles, objectives, teaching staff, textbooks, classroom teaching, and assessment (Xiao Qiong & Huang Guowen, 2020).

At the meso level, existing studies cover the moral enrichment of teaching materials (Xu Jinfen, 2021), textbook compilation to enhance moral education (Liu Zhengguang et al., 2021; Wang Shouren, 2021; Sun Youzhong, 2020), and the framework of College English teachers' teaching competence in implementing curriculum-based moral education (Gao Yulei & Zhang Zhiyi, 2022). Some scholars have also proposed a practical framework for moral education in foreign language curriculum. This framework takes "telling China's stories in foreign languages" as the core moral educational element, with embedded modules in foreign language courses, authentic cross-cultural practical activities and diversified evaluation as its main components (Yang Hua, 2021a).

At the micro level, most research focuses on detailed instructional design and explores specific teaching models for moral education in College English. Representative studies include the logic and pathways of curriculum-based moral instruction enabled by blended learning (Zhai Zheng & Wang Wenli, 2021; Yue Manman & Liu Zhengguang, 2020; Li Wenjie & Wang Xiaofang, 2021), the principles and implementation of value-oriented teaching task design in the moral education of foreign language curriculum (Zhang Jingyuan & Wang Na, 2021), and the optimization of College English teaching content and classroom design to better tell China's stories globally (Yue Hao & Zhuang Enping, 2022). In addition, four strategies have been put forward to systematically optimize instructional design for the moral education in foreign language curriculum: precise teaching objectives, systematic content organization, progressive procedural design, and integrated evaluation and feedback (Hu Jiehui, 2021).

Existing studies cover both the top-level theoretical framework for the development of moral education in College English and specific instructional design and practical implementation, offering valuable explorations into how value cultivation can be organically integrated into knowledge transmission and competency building. Nevertheless, value shaping cannot be accomplished overnight; instead, it represents a gradual process "from external emotional perception to the formation of an internally consistent value system" (Yang Hua, 2021b). Most current research focuses on how moral elements can be embedded into disciplinary knowledge during classroom teaching, with an emphasis on providing instructional strategies to strengthen value guidance. However, such studies overlook the fact that value cultivation is a continuously developing emotional continuum, paying insufficient attention to the verification, expansion, and adjustment of students' emotions, attitudes, and values.

3. THE CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES IN THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

D. R. Krathwohl and B. S. Bloom (1964) classified educational objectives into three major domains: the cognitive domain, the affective domain, and the psychomotor domain. Among them, the affective domain involves objectives which emphasize a feeling tone, an emotion, or a degree of acceptance or rejection, varying from "simple attention to selected phenomena to complex but internally consistent qualities of character and conscience" (Krathwohl & Bloom, 1964: 7).

Based on an analysis of the unique characteristics of different affective objectives, they proposed the “affective continuum” theory. They presumed that, like the cognitive domain, the affective domain “would be structured in a hierarchical order such that each category of behavior would assume achievement of the behaviors categorized below it.” (Krathwohl & Bloom, 1964: 24) The entire process of affective internalization begins with an individual’s awareness of certain phenomena, traits or values, and culminates in the formation of a value complex that guides personal conduct, which covers five hierarchical categories:

- ① Receiving/Attending: The learner becomes aware of the presence of certain phenomena and stimuli.
- ② Responding: The learner is sufficiently motivated and develops active attention to the phenomena.
- ③ Valuing: The learner makes value judgments about the phenomena and demonstrates attitudinal preferences.
- ④ Organization: The learner integrates various values into a system, defines their interrelationships, and establishes dominant and universal values.
- ⑤ Characterization by a value or value complex: The learner forms an internally consistent value system and responds consistently to value-laden situations.

As shown in Figure 1, each of the five levels of the affective continuum contains distinct subcategories, which depict the continuous developmental stages of value internalization. To be specific, learners progress from perceiving and willingly attending to a stimulus, to generating regular responses, then embracing relevant values, comparing and prioritizing values during continuous internalization, and ultimately forming a holistic outlook on life to regulate their behaviors by such value criteria. The internalization continuum is a process from simplicity to complexity and from concreteness to abstraction, as well as a transition from external control to internal control and from consciousness to unconsciousness (Krathwohl & Bloom, 1964: 31).



Figure 1. Five-level Classification of Educational Objectives in the Affective Domain (Krathwohl & Bloom, 1964)

The “affective continuum” theory holds that value shaping is a gradual internalization process in which a certain value goes through five stages for individuals: receiving/attending, responding, valuing, organization, and characterization. It emphasizes the continuous development, revision and deepening of learners’ emotions, attitudes and values, thereby providing theoretical guidance for achieving and evaluating the goals of moral education in College English.

The highest level of educational objectives in the affective domain is to form “complex but internally consistent qualities of character and conscience”, making value criteria an important and stable part of learners’ personality to guide their behaviors consistently. This is highly consistent with the value cultivation goal of moral education in College English.

Based on the five-level classification of educational objectives in the affective domain and the hierarchical development of value internalization, this paper explores a progressive educational model for moral education in College English. By constructing a complete and effective teaching system, it aims to realize the goals of moral education, so as to offer references for the innovative reform of moral education in College English.

4. CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROGRESSIVE MORAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN COLLEGE ENGLISH BASED ON THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Instructional design serves as a practical cornerstone for effective moral education in foreign language courses (Hu Jiehui, 2021). Moral education in College English should create an effective teaching system for learners and arrange all teaching elements in an orderly manner. In this way, learners can gradually achieve personality development and value cultivation through subtle and immersive language learning. A well-structured teaching system is crucial for promoting learning outcomes and fulfilling moral education goals. The classic three-stage framework for analyzing the instructional process—encompassing pre-class independent learning, in-class collaborative learning, and post-class consolidation and application—provides a holistic and interconnected perspective on teaching design. Following this widely recognized structure, this paper categorizes the affective education objectives to be achieved in each stage, as well as the corresponding teaching measures adopted to reach those objectives.

4.1 Pre-class: Attending to a Certain Value (Stimulus) and Responding to It

The first level of the affective continuum—Receiving/Attending. In the pre-class independent learning stage, teachers draw on the implicit moral educational elements embedded in each teaching unit and adopt an online cloud classroom model integrating MOOCs, SPOCs and micro-lessons. On digital teaching platforms, situational tasks concerning real social issues are presented via micro-videos, short clips or written materials. Students are organized to participate in online preliminary discussions on the moral educational themes reflected in the texts. This enables them to notice the phenomena and values embedded in such situational settings and become aware of the stimuli that may trigger their affective responses. At this stage, the real-life scenarios designed around unit-based value themes should effectively capture students' attention, arouse their interest, and encourage appropriate responses, thereby paving the way for the second-level learning objectives.

The second level of the affective continuum—Responding. During online pre-discussions, students engage actively with the provided scenarios, show willingness to read relevant books and articles, raise thoughtful questions, or share related information, so as to contribute constructive ideas to the subsequent in-class group discussions.

4.2 In-class: Accepting and Preferring a Value

The third level of the affective continuum—Valuing. In the in-class collaborative learning phase, teachers further refine the value-oriented scenarios based on problems identified in pre-class learning and online discussions, and arrange group discussions together with peer evaluation activities. At this stage, students begin to attach personal values to specific phenomena, behaviors and objects within the given scenarios. Through questioning, exchanging ideas and in-depth communication, they form a learning community. In continuous ideological exchanges, students revise, expand and deepen their understanding of relevant issues. Their cognition evolves from a tentative state of belief—where opinions remain flexible and open to re-evaluation—to an emotional acceptance of a proposition or doctrine recognized as reasonably grounded (Krathwohl & Bloom, 1964: 181), and ultimately to stable personal beliefs and consistent attitudes toward related phenomena.

Behavioral objectives at this level include identifying oneself as a member of a community addressing shared issues, developing a sense of responsibility for listening to and participating in open discussions, encouraging reticent members of a group to engage in conversation, and examining controversial viewpoints deliberately to form independent opinions (Krathwohl & Bloom, 1964: 145).

4.3 Post-class: Conceptualizing a Value and Organizing a Value System

The fourth level of the affective continuum—Organization. During the continuous internalization of values, students encounter various situations reflecting diverse values. They need to analyze and distinguish different values, and eventually integrate them into a harmonious value system in which dominant values are established. The prerequisite for forming such a system is the abstraction and conceptualization of values, so that learners can perceive how a given value connects with existing ones or emerging new values.

In the in-class collaborative learning stage, when students actively justify and verbally defend their viewpoints, their commitment to certain values is usually accompanied by value conceptualization, namely the formation of evaluative judgments toward valued objects or phenomena. Therefore, in the post-class consolidation stage, guided by the progressive developmental

goals of the affective continuum, teachers should further consolidate and internalize such value beliefs through individualized or group tasks. Examples include writing assignments, situational role-play, and reflective journals based on classroom discussions. These tasks integrate linguistic learning objectives with moral educational goals. While completing the tasks, students analyze and compare relationships among different values, incorporate newly acquired values into their existing frameworks, and organize them into a structured value complex—distinguishing core dominant values from peripheral ones.

The fifth level of the affective continuum—Characterization by a Value or Value Complex. At this highest level of value internalization, a certain value occupies a stable position within the student’s hierarchical value structure and forms an internally consistent system that governs personal behavior. Through previous online and offline instructional activities, students may have absorbed new values and updated their value systems; nevertheless, such values may not yet be deeply internalized enough to guide their actions consistently.

Krathwohl and Bloom (1964: 165) argue that the maturity and personal integration required at this level generally cannot be fully achieved through formal schooling alone. It often takes years after formal education, through the interplay of time, experience, affective learning, and cognitive development. Even so, teachers can extend curriculum moral education beyond the classroom by designing themed cultural activities, such as telling Chinese stories in English or creating bilingual picture books that reflect mainstream values. Such practices encourage students to act in accordance with gradually internalized social values, generalize such guidance across daily behaviors, and ultimately develop a sound and holistic philosophy of life and worldview.

Overall, the progressive moral education system for College English advances step by step based on five hierarchical affective objectives. The teaching design at each level focuses on achieving the affective objectives of that specific stage, laying a solid foundation for teaching at the next level. Through progressively arranged teaching activities, students can gradually deepen their internalization of values until they fully embrace such values and respond consistently to relevant objects and phenomena.

Furthermore, as Han Zhen (2017) pointed out, "Values can only be internalized in the mind through behavioral experience; the ultimate purpose and inherent worth of values lie in being put into practice through concrete actions." In constructing this progressive moral education system for College English, online platforms can be fully utilized to gradually promote cloud-based moral educational classrooms featuring MOOCs, SPOCs, and micro-lessons, as well as extracurricular practical activities. Guided by cultural immersion, unique learning experiences can be created to form a mechanism integrating in-class teaching, online learning, and practical activities. This effectively extends the reach of curriculum-based moral education and appropriately broadens its scope, deepens its connotation, and enhances its humanistic warmth.

5. CONCLUSION

The “affective continuum” theory focuses not only on learners’ positive attitudes toward academic learning, but also on whether teaching reshapes their personal value frameworks and guides their decisions and behavioral choices—in other words, how students respond to, interpret, and evaluate learning content. This naturally aligns with the value-shaping goals of curriculum-based moral education.

Divided into five developmental stages of emotional growth, the affective continuum tracks the gradual refinement of learners’ feelings, attitudes and values. It not only lends greater scientific rigor to moral education practices, but also offers clear operational guidance for achieving moral education objectives step by step, making the instruction more evidence-based and operable.

Language carries culture and serves as a bridge for value communication. The core mission of moral education in College English is to help students master linguistic skills while fostering a sound worldview, outlook on life, and set of values, and to strengthen their cultural confidence and value judgment in cross-cultural communication. The progressive moral education system for college English built on the affective continuum provides a viable path to fulfill this mission.

Nevertheless, curriculum-based moral education is a long-term systematic project requiring ongoing practical improvement. Future efforts may include: refining evaluation criteria for tiered affective objectives according to the cognitive characteristics and needs of students from different majors; further exploring moral educational elements in teaching materials to enrich contextual design and practical activities; and leveraging digital technology to better integrate online cloud classrooms with offline instruction. These measures will enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the progressive moral education system.

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the publication of this article.

Funding Statement

This research received grant from the Beijing Office for Education Sciences Planning project entitled "Construction and Practice of a Progressive Moral Education System in College English Instruction Under the Guidance of Taxonomy of Educational Objectives in the Affective Domain" (Grant No.CDDB24254).

REFERENCES

1. Byram, M. (2008). *From Foreign Language Education to Education for International Citizenship*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
2. Cai Jigang. (2021) A Study of Ideological and Political Education and Moral Education in College English. *Foreign Languages Research*, 38(03): 52-57.
3. Gao Yulei, & Zhang Zhiyi. (2022). Toward a Structural Model of College English Teachers' Teaching Competence in Curriculum-Based Political and Virtuous Awareness. *Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education*, 44(01):8-14.
4. Guilherme, M. (2002). *Critical Citizens for an International World: Foreign Language Education as Cultural Politics*. Clevedon: Cromwell Press.
5. He Lianzhen. (2022). Principles and Practices of Integrating Moral Education into College Foreign Language Teaching. *Foreign Languages in China*, 19(04): 1+12-14.
6. Hu Jiehui. (2021). Foreign Language Instructional Design from the Ideological-Political Perspective. *Foreign Languages in China*, 18(02): 53-59.
7. Krathwohl, D. R., & Bloom, B. S. (1964). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: the Classification of Educational Goals Handbook II: Affective Domain*. New York & London: Longman
8. Li Wenjie, & Wang Xiaofang. (2021). Research on Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities Enabled by Blended Teaching. *China Educational Technology*, 42(12): 131-138.
9. Liu Zhengguang, Xu Zhe, & He Lan. (2021). *Lide Shuren* vs the Principles and Approaches for College English Materials Development. *Foreign Languages in China*, 18(02): 25-32.
10. Sun Youzhong. (2020). The Design of College Foreign Language Textbooks from the Perspective of Curriculum-Based Political and Virtuous Awareness. *Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education*, 42(06): 46-51.
11. Wang Shouren. (2021). On "Illuminating Bright Virtue" to Foreign Language Courses: With Views on Compiling New Era Mingde College English. *Foreign Languages in China*, 18(02): 4-9.
12. Wen Qiufang. (2021). A Framework of Integrating Moral Education into College Foreign Language Teaching. *Foreign Languages in China*, 18(2): 47-522.
13. Xiang Mingyou. (2020). The Curriculum System Construction of College English in the New Era. *Foreign Language World*, 41(04): 28-34.
14. Xiao Qiong, & Huang Guowen. (2020). On the Ideological-Political Construction of Foreign Language Courses. *Foreign Languages in China*, 17(05): 1, 10-14.
15. Xu Jinfen. (2021). The development of Teaching Materials for Morality Cultivation in University English Courses. *Foreign Language World*, 42(02):18-24.
16. Yang Hua. (2021a). The Practical Implementation of Moral Education in Foreign Language Curriculum: A Focus on "Telling China's Stories in Foreign Languages". *Foreign Language World*, 42(02): 10-17.
17. Yang Hua. (2021b). Digital Storytelling in Foreign Languages: A New Approach to Moral Education in Foreign Language Curriculum. *Foreign Language Education in China*, 4(04): 10-17.
18. Yue Hao, & Zhuang Enping. (2022). Practical Paths for Ideological and Political Education in College English Courses: Telling China's Stories in a Intercultural Way. *Foreign Language Education*, 43(05): 55-59.

19. Yue Manman, & Liu Zhengguang. (2020). Integrating Blended Learning into Morality Cultivation in Foreign Language Courses: Concepts and Paths. *Foreign Language Education*, 41(06): 15-18.
20. Zhai Zheng, & Wang Wenli. (2021). Nurturing Curriculum-Based Political and Virtuous Awareness through Blended Teaching: A Case Study. *Technology Enhanced Foreign Language Education*, 43(06): 63-67.
21. Zhang Jingyuan, & Wang Na. (2021). Value Shaping-Based Teaching Task Design in the Ideological-Political Construction of Foreign Language Courses. *Foreign Languages in China*, 18 (02): 33-38.