

# A Study on the Construction of College English Teachers' Pragmatic Identity under Curriculum Ideology and Politics

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**Abstract:** Identity construction has become an important topic in contemporary pragmatics. In different communicative contexts and out of different communicative needs, college English teachers will construct different pragmatic identities in their teaching activities, and these pragmatic identities are constructed through various discourse strategies, and finally achieve different communicative effects. Specifically, college English teachers explore the core concepts of pragmatic identities by using different types of language behaviors and social styles, creating communicative contexts and adopting various discourse strategies, to improve the effectiveness of college English classroom teaching.

**Key words:** curriculum ideology and politics; College English; Pragmatic identity construction

At present, pragmatics research presents multiple characteristics and involves a lot of cross-fusion of knowledge. Social psychology researchers pay more attention to identity construction, which is also the key in the research field. Pragmatics for identity research mostly focuses on the different identities of the communicators in the communication environment, such as ethnic identity, national identity, professional identity and so on. With the development of the theory of pragmatic identity, it has become a trend to explore the identity of communicators in different communication environments. With the passage of time, most of the researches on teacher identity at home and abroad focus on the aspects of identity identification and change, while the researches on the pragmatic identity of college English teachers are relatively insufficient. The current problem facing college English is how to organically integrate ideological and political elements into the course and build the course into a high-quality course that college students really like and benefit from throughout their life, so as to better meet the needs of college students to cultivate their attitudes, receive high-quality and diversified college English knowledge, and adapt to the talent training of economic and social development. In the process of solving this problem, college English teachers play an important role. Only when English teachers clearly identify and construct their own ideological, political and pragmatic identity in and out of class can they build high-quality English courses and achieve the fundamental task of cultivating morality and educating their college students. On the basis of the above, this study mainly explores the strategies in pragmatic identity of college English teachers in depth, and considers measures such as language use and context construction, which helps to expand the exploration of pragmatic identity, actively promote the development of college English teachers' identity, and provide a solid foundation for college English teaching.

## I. An overview of pragmatic identity and its construction

In the field of pragmatics, the exploration of different types of identities pays more attention to applied context and dynamics. The selection of pragmatic identities is a process of dynamic selection. Tracy believes that dialogue is to complete identity work and also to do face projects, and the communicator lets the participant or the spectator know who is communicating. On the one hand, the way communicators speak will construct their identity; On the other hand, the identity of the speaker determines the form of the conversation to some extent. Chen Xinren proposes that Pragmatic identity refers to the actual embodiment, use or even fiction of a communicator's "specific social identity" (individual identity/interpersonal identity/group identity) in the context of linguistic communication, that is, the specific (one or more) identities chosen by the speaker or author when sending out a specific discourse, and the specific identities chosen by the listener or reader when understanding a specific discourse. Pragmatic identity has dynamic and changeable characteristics, that is, pragmatic identity will change with the change of language environment in the process of actual communication. Based on Tracy's theory, speakers can choose simple words and behaviors, or they can construct their identities by mastering more complex forms such as discourse forms, interaction structures and directness. Based on the theoretical study and practical observation, the paper proposes that strategies related to the construction of pragmatic identity for college English teachers in multimedia classroom language environments should include different types of language behaviors, rational use of communicative styles, and creation of multiple contexts.

## II. The necessity and current situation of integrating curriculum ideological and political ideas into college English teaching

### 1. The necessity of integrating curriculum ideological and political ideas into college English teaching

Ideological and political education has always been an important and difficult point in the implementation stage of college education. In most colleges and universities, full-time ideological and political teachers teach theoretical knowledge for four hours a week. With insufficient teaching time and a wide range of teaching content, many of the teaching cannot meet the expected teaching objectives, not to mention enhancing students' interest for active participation. These courses alone are not enough to influence students' mainstream ideology and value orientation, or cultivate students' core literacy level, while teachers of other disciplines focus on the teaching of professional knowledge, ignoring ideological and political education in their courses. This phenomenon leads to the absence of many professional teachers in the ideological and political education, making the ideological and political education in universities unable to form a closed

loop. To put it simply, the basic nature of ideological education determines its extensiveness, permanence and sustainability. Teachers of all disciplines in colleges and universities are involved in it, and English is no exception. In the process of college English classroom teaching, students will be exposed to not only to the use of the English language but also to the ideological trends and cultural values from the western world, which will have a profound impact on their social psychology, ideological status and ideology. Facing this phenomenon, English teachers should analyze the culture and humanistic spirit conveyed behind the language through the surface of the language, make use of English as a bridge to profoundly and objectively compare the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures, take the essence from the dross and set up their own correct ideas and identities first so as to adopt various pragmatic strategies to impart the knowledge and ideas to students and improve students' ability of critical thinking.

#### 2. The current situation of integrating curriculum ideological and political ideas into college English teaching

College English, as a language subject, has its own teaching characteristics and unique advantages in the course of ideological and political education. First of all, college English courses are designed to enable contemporary college students to have a better understanding of the language and culture of Western countries, and increase their understanding of different countries and cultures while getting in touch with diversified ideological values, which also lays a solid foundation for cultivating contemporary college students' cross-cultural communication ability. Secondly, College English has a certain humanistic and speculative nature, as well as a wealth of moral education resources and ideological and political education materials. It can be found that a lot of content in the teaching course of College English involves cross-cultural awareness, which can not only effectively guide students to view cultures of different countries from a fair, just, scientific and reasonable perspective, but also guide students to develop correct three-outlook perspectives, especially for ideological and political education in the course. Thirdly, as a compulsive course, the teaching of College English itself has its natural advantage. No matter what major or subject students are in, they all have to learn the course of College English. Besides, College English not only covers a wide range of courses, but also has a long course duration and a large content span, and its teaching content is very extensive and comprehensive, thus College English teachers can make full use of this advantage, and cooperate with ideological and political teachers to make up for the deficiency of ideological and political teaching time. It is certain that the teaching of College English is not only an effective way of ideological and political education, but also a platform for colleges and universities to realize the goal of educating people by virtue.

### III. Discourse construction of teachers' pragmatic identity in College English ideological and political curriculum

#### 1. The macro level

First, the selection of code helps to establish the identity construction. The code proposed here refers to the language (such as English, Chinese), dialect (such as Northeast Chinese), and specific code chosen by the communicator to indicate the identity of himself or the other party. In a demonstration lesson, the teacher said "And if we will look in to our traditional Chinese culture... you may have heard about the Chinese saying "穷则独善其身，达则兼济天下" (A gentleman should keep personal virtues when in distress and benefit the public when in power)". When speaking this ancient Chinese saying, the teacher changed the code from English to Chinese. The teacher constructed his pragmatic identity as a college English teacher by speaking English, but when speaking about this famous saying related to wealth and poverty in traditional Chinese philosophy, he said it in Chinese, so that the students could understand its content and meaning more clearly. Switching between English and Chinese codes like this is a common phenomenon in college English courses, which can strengthen students' understanding of traditional culture.

Second, the transformation of language style contributes to the identity construction. In the actual communication process, communicators often choose between formal or informal language styles to construct their identity. The formal style contains a higher proportion of formal words, long sentences, and complex sentence patterns, etc., while the informal style has a higher proportion of small words and short sentences, and its sentence structure is relatively simple. For example, a teacher used a long parallel sentence "Being rich and successful... not just for... not just for... it is also about... and thereby we can..." to emphasize the ultimate purpose of gaining wealth. The teacher here wanted to conduct direct ideological and political education, and using sentences like this can help convey meaning and thereby strengthen the tone well. Besides, the adverbial clauses in the sentence pattern makes it a complex sentence with formal style characteristics, which helps to construct the pragmatic identity of teachers in ideological and political teaching in English curriculum.

Thirdly, specific communicative context assists the identity construction. In a given context, the communication content, such as the form of greeting, the topic chosen and ways of content expounding, can indicate one's identity. Take the following statement as an example. "Hello everyone, welcome to the demo class. The topic for today is stereotype... Let's first... And then if... We will try to understand the text... Then we will go to text B... Then we will...". The teacher's discourse of introducing the course teaching content constructs a specific context, that is, the course orientation, and thus constructs the pragmatic identity of the college English teacher. The teacher first aroused students' attention by addressing "Hello everyone, welcome to demo class"; later, through "the topic for today is..." he introduced the teaching content; by explaining the definition "So, what are stereotypes? Stereotypes are..." he showed the teaching content in a simple way; then he used key words "be independent, establish identity, and global citizen" to guide students to reflect on the text, thus he integrated ideological and political elements into his class while established his English teacher identity.

#### 2. The micro level

College English teachers can construct pragmatic identity not only from the macro aspects of code, style and context, but also from the micro aspects of language behavior, vocabulary selection and pronunciation.

First, appropriate choice of language behavior facilitates identity construction. Some language behaviors can bring the speaker closer to the other party in the right context. For example, a teacher said in his demo class, “All right, thank you guys, Now let’s try to answer the following questions: 1. When did Sam... ? 2. What did he...? 3. Can you figure out... ?” In these sentences, “guys” is the appellation to students. It can shorten the distance between teacher and students and create a sense of intimacy, which is conducive to creating a relaxed teaching atmosphere. It also constructs a pragmatic identity that teachers are close to students from the aspect of language behavior.

Second, the choice of personal pronouns helps to build pragmatic identity. In a teacher’s curriculum ideological and political demonstration lesson, there are the following expressions: “Thank you for your cooperation... I have four questions for you”. In these sentences, the personal pronoun “I” refers to the teacher and “you” refers to the student. Through the use of the above two personal pronouns, the pragmatic identity of the teacher and the student is constructed, and the next part of the teaching content is naturally transitioned.

Third, choose appropriate pragmatic identities based on phonological features. In a given context, speech patterns, such as pitch, speed, tone quality, accent, can reveal the identity of the communicator. A teacher in a demonstration class said, “Wow,... ? Chao, and it does not sound an American name, right? From his face,... That’s right, maybe he is... And therefore, why do those people have preconceptions... ?” When the word “Wow” is said, the teacher’s pitch is raised, the speed of the speech is slowed down, and the short pause is used to let the students pay attention to the person’s last name, and the voice is also raised and stressed when the three words “American”, “maybe”, and “is” are said, emphasizing the overseas person’s Chinese identity. The phonological characteristics of such words make the teaching content attract students’ attention to their identity, and students unconsciously follow the teacher’s thinking and think about the text content. The second half of the article compares the Chinese people’s expectations before coming to China with the real situation they saw after coming to China, showing the great changes and rapid development of China from the perspective of the overseas Chinese, which shows the strength of China’s vigorous development and helps to increase students’ patriotic feelings.

#### IV. Conclusion

College English teachers should make clear their professional identity, social identity and dual cultural identity in language teaching, and pay attention to the dynamic construction of teacher identity. This kind of construction process is dynamic and constantly changing, and teachers’ age, personality and personal professional quality, pronunciation, vocabulary selection, correctness and appropriateness of teaching language, teaching attitude, emotional control and expression will all have a profound impact on the construction of teacher’s identity. Besides, the actual performance of students in the classroom is also constantly changing. Teachers should choose appropriate discourse forms according to the changing context while paying attention to the construction of their own pragmatic identity. At the same time, teachers should focus on cultivating students’ value concepts and value orientation, and effectively improve students’ communication ability and critical thinking ability in the classroom context.

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**Fund project:** This paper is the phased research result of the general research project of Philosophy and social sciences in Jiangsu Universities in 2022, “A Study on Pragmatic Identity Construction of College English Teachers in applied Universities under Curriculum Ideology and Politics” (Project number: 2022SJYB0728).

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