



Synergizing Language and Virtue: A Project-Based “Drip-Irrigation” Ecosystem in College English Instruction

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Abstract

This study systematically elaborates on the theoretical foundation, design principles, and implementation steps of a project-based “drip-irrigation” teaching model for ideological and political education within the College English curriculum. Utilizing a series of international media dialogues by Dr. Gao Zhikai in the realm of Sino-US relations as the core teaching resource, the study focuses on four key issues and presents detailed teaching case analyses. A four-stage cyclical teaching model—“Precise Topic Selection → Layered Analysis → Situational Practice → Reflective Construction”—is constructed to guide students in deconstructing narrative differences between China and the West from a metadiscourse perspective and internalizing the logic of international discourse with Chinese characteristics.

Subject Areas

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Keywords

Project-Based Learning, Drip-Irrigation Approach, Ideological and Political Education, Metadiscourse, International Communication, College English Instruction

1. Introduction

The world today is undergoing major transformations unseen in a century, and

the competition in the international public opinion arena is becoming increasingly complex. Chen Zhengliang *et al.* (2014) proposed that “international discourse power is not only a country’s ‘right to speak’ in the world, but also refers to the ‘effectiveness and power (influence)’ of such speech. In essence, it reflects a country’s position and influence within the international power structure and constitutes an important part of its ‘soft power’.” [1] The Western discourse system, led by the United States, has long shaped and dominated the narrative framework concerning China, continuously producing statements with deep prejudice and ideological overtones. Ma Junfeng and Zhao Haiyun (2023) argue that “the discursive hegemony of Western universal values slanders, smears, and attacks the discourse of a ‘community with a shared future for mankind’ within a preset Western framework.” [2] This imbalance in discursive power distorts China’s international image and exerts a potential, far-reaching influence on the cognitive structures and value judgments of young students in China. Against this backdrop, university foreign language teachers must not only continuously improve instrumental language teaching methods but also shoulder the strategic mission of “cultivating talent for the Party and the nation”, fostering students’ patriotism, global perspective, and competence in discourse struggle. President Xi attaches great importance to the role of cultural communication in enhancing a country’s soft power, emphasizing the need to thoroughly analyze the unique value of Chinese culture. The important exposition on the “Four Clarifications” he put forward reveals a high degree of cultural consciousness, a global vision, and profound humanistic concern [3]. Ideological and political education refers, in this study, to the educational practice of organically integrating value orientation, national identity, international vision, and other educational goals into the entire process of college English teaching.

This study proposes to reconstruct the implementation path of ideological and political education in college English courses through a “project-based ‘drip-irrigation’ teaching” model. “Project-based learning” refers to using Dr. Gao Zhikai’s authentic dialogues with mainstream international media as a long-term research project, creating a sustained and in-depth inquiry context. “Drip-irrigation teaching” draws on the principle of drip irrigation in agriculture, emphasizing precision, gradual progression, and immersive learning. Through meticulously designed discourse analysis, practice, and reflection activities, it enables the precise infusion of ideological and political education elements into students’ cognitive structures and value systems. This facilitates a fundamental shift from “flood irrigation” to “drip irrigation”, and from “passive reception” to “active construction”.

This paper systematically expounds on the theoretical basis, the four-stage cyclical design, and specific application cases of this teaching model, offering a new paradigm for ideological and political education construction in university English courses—one that possesses both theoretical depth and practical operability. As Li Shu and Liu Xiang (2026) state, telling China’s stories well and articulating China’s views clearly complement and influence each other, forming the two in-

tegral aspects of effectively communicating China's voice [4]. This instructional design aims to guide students, through in-depth analysis and simulated practice using Dr. Gao Zhikai's exemplary dialogues, to simultaneously enhance their narrative ability to "tell China's stories" and their argumentative skills to "articulate China's viewpoints" in English, achieving an organic integration of the two.

Although existing studies have explored the integration of ideological and political education with project-based learning, few have approached it from the perspective of metadiscourse to systematically transform authentic discourse encounters in international communication into actionable classroom teaching procedures. This study is the first to integrate metadiscourse analysis with project-based learning through the concept of "drip-irrigation teaching", constructing a four-stage cyclical model of "precise topic selection—layered analysis—contextualized practice—reflective construction", thereby offering a new paradigm for ideological and political education in college English courses that is both theoretically grounded and practically operational.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Tripartite Integration of Metadiscourse Theory, Drip-Irrigation Teaching, and Project-Based Learning

2.1. Metadiscourse Theory

Jiang Hui (2020) posits that audience metadiscourse constitutes "the pragmatic traces left by the speaker at the communicative level, reflecting their metapragmatic awareness concerning the audience" [5]. From the audience's perspective, it embodies the speaker's metapragmatic awareness regarding the "audience's existence, role, conceptions, intentions, expectations, wishes, thoughts, emotions, attitudes, knowledge, and abilities". International communication is fundamentally a competition of metadiscourse, where parties vie for the power to define events, interpret values, and mobilize audiences through specific discursive frameworks, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement strategies. In international communication practice, Dr. Gao Zhikai's dialogic language precisely employs various audience-oriented metadiscourse resources to effectively manage Western audiences' cognitive processes and emotional responses. This metadiscursive competence is precisely what this instructional design aims for students to acquire through "drip-irrigation" analysis.

For China, constructing international discourse power commensurate with its comprehensive national strength necessitates developing a metadiscourse system capable of clearly expressing its core interests and values while effectively communicating with the external world. This system should avoid rigid political slogans, manifesting instead in specific discursive strategies.

Introducing metadiscourse analysis into university English classrooms helps students transcend superficial vocabulary and grammar, delving into the different worldviews, interests, and persuasive strategies underlying Chinese and Western narratives. This enables students to achieve deep-seated cultural understanding

and value discernment. Wang Lina and Peng Juhua (2006) note from a temporal perspective that Chinese news narrative is deeply influenced by a cyclical view of time, presenting a “cyclical, circular” deep structure; whereas Western societies, emphasizing linear time, favor a more “direct” narrative prioritizing efficiency and directness [6]. This cognitive difference is vividly illustrated in dialogues between Dr. Gao Zhikai and Western hosts: Chinese discourse often emphasizes overall background, historical continuity, and relational groundwork, while Western questions tend to cut directly to the point, often with presupposed stances. The “drip-irrigation” teaching in this study precisely guides students to perceive and navigate these deep-seated differences within concrete discursive practices.

2.2. “Drip-Irrigation” Teaching Method:

Implementing “drip-irrigation” in college English ideological and political education requires teachers to transition from “content lecturers” to “designers of discursive situations” and “guides of thought”. Ma Han (2016) points out that enhancing international discourse power relies not only on discursive foundation and communication capacity but also on constructing an original discourse system with Chinese characteristics [7]. This aligns closely with the “drip-irrigation” teaching philosophy advocated in this study—namely, helping students gradually establish a “solid discursive foundation” and “effective modes of discourse” through meticulous discourse analysis and practice, thereby achieving the internalization and enhancement of metadiscursive competence.

2.3. Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning provides an ideal organizational form for “drip-irrigation” teaching. Employing a complete, authentic, and complex project—“Analysis of Dr. Gao Zhikai’s International Dialogues”—throughout the teaching process effectively integrates language skills training (listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating), critical thinking cultivation (analysis, evaluation, creation), and value shaping (identity, confidence, responsibility). In completing the project chain—“Material Collection → Discourse Decoding → Strategy Induction → Simulation Application → Reflective Report”—students achieve synchronous improvement in knowledge, ability, and competence, making ideological and political education the “core engine” driving language learning, rather than an “external decoration”.

In summary, the theoretical framework of this study integrates the analytical tool of metadiscourse, the educational philosophy of “drip-irrigation” teaching, and the integrative platform of project-based learning. The ultimate goal of this tripartite framework, as Chen Xianhong and Song Fazhi (2020) suggest, is to guide students in systematically grasping the “‘China concept’, ‘story concept’, and ‘communication concept’” essential for “telling China’s stories well” [8]. Through project-based “drip-irrigation” teaching, students can deeply understand China’s national stance, acquire effective discursive strategies, and comprehend precise communication strategies by studying Dr. Gao Zhikai’s exemplary international

dialogues, thereby achieving the organic integration of knowledge transmission, ability cultivation, and value shaping.

2.4. Implementation Context

This teaching model is designed for first-year undergraduate non-English majors at Chinese universities, implemented within the “Comprehensive College English Course” with a class size of 45 students. The teaching cycle spans one semester (16 weeks). The “precise topic selection” phase occupies 2 weeks, the “layered analysis” phase occupies 6 weeks, the “contextualized practice” phase occupies 6 weeks, and the “reflective construction” phase occupies 2 weeks. The specific class hour allocation for the four stages is: 2 credit hours for the first stage, 12 credit hours for the second stage, 12 credit hours for the third stage, and 4 credit hours for the fourth stage, totaling 30 credit hours. Instructors may flexibly adjust the allocation of class hours for each stage based on actual teaching progress.

3. Instructional Design: Construction and Operation of the “Drip-Irrigation” Four-Stage Cyclical Model

3.1. Stage One: Precise Topic Selection—Anchoring the Core Discourse Field of Sino-US Relations

From Dr. Gao Zhikai’s extensive international dialogues, select the most representative, thought-provoking, and pedagogically feasible excerpts to form four core teaching themes:

Sino-US Security Perceptions and Discursive Conflicts

Major Power Roles and Discourse Power in a Multipolar World

The Sino-US Tariff War

Direct Confrontation between China’s Core Interests and Western Hegemony of Discourse

Case Selection and Teaching Preparation

The four dialogue cases featuring Dr. Gao Zhikai used in this teaching model are all sourced from complete dialogue videos publicly available on the domestic mainstream video platform Bilibili (<https://www.bilibili.com/>). The criteria for case inclusion are: 1) topical representativeness, meaning the dialogues involve core areas of discourse confrontation such as Sino-US relations, international order, and economic and trade frictions; 2) discursive richness, meaning the dialogues fully demonstrate the diverse use of metadiscourse strategies; 3) teaching feasibility, meaning the dialogues are controlled within 15 - 30 minutes, with language difficulty appropriate for undergraduate-level analysis. Before class, the instructor edits the original videos, retaining core debate turns, and produces English subtitles along with transcriptions of key turns for students to use in class for annotation. Students use the instructor-produced transcripts and edited video clips for in-class analysis and may watch the complete videos after class to gain broader contextual

understanding.

3.2. Stage Two: Layered Analysis—A Three-Dimensional Analytical Framework for Metadiscourse Structure

We construct a “Language - Logic - Value” three-dimensional analytical framework:

3.2.1. Language Dimension

Building upon Hyland’s metadiscourse classification, which broadly categorizes resources into “interactive” and “interactional” types [9]. Teachers guide students to annotate transcribed texts (Table 1).

Table 1. Interactive and interactional metadiscourse categories.

Interactive Metadiscourse	How to organize discourse (e.g., “first”, “in conclusion”)	Guide the reader	Establish textual coherence
Interactional Metadiscourse	How to express attitude (e.g., “unfortunately”, “importantly”)	Establish speaker authority (e.g., “research shows”)	Build reader engagement (e.g., “note that”, “imagine”)

Annotation Procedure Description: Before class, the instructor distributes the dialogue transcripts to student groups. In-class annotation follows three steps: First, students independently annotate the interactive metadiscourse (e.g., transition markers, frame markers) and interactional metadiscourse (e.g., attitude markers, self-mentions, engagement markers) in the text, using different colors to distinguish the two categories. Second, within their groups, students exchange annotated results, discuss differences, and reach a preliminary consensus. Finally, the instructor selects representative turns for whole-class demonstration, guiding students to start from specific linguistic markers, asking questions such as “What kind of logical progression does this marker serve?” and “What value position of the speaker does it reflect?”, thereby facilitating a natural transition from the linguistic dimension to the logical and value dimensions.

3.2.2. Logic Dimension

Move beyond the sentence level to analyze the argumentation structure of entire turns:

Evidence Type: Relies on data, cases, historical analogies, or authoritative citations?

Reasoning Mode: Deductive, inductive, or analogical? Are there logical fallacies?

Narrative Frame: What kind of “story” is used to package the facts? (e.g., “victim” narrative, “rise” narrative, “partner” narrative)

3.2.3. Value Dimension: Uncovering Ideological and Ethical Premises

Teachers guide students to question:

What worldview is presupposed by the discourse (e.g., zero-sum game vs.

shared future)?

What ethical principles are advocated (e.g., absolute sovereignty vs. common responsibility)?

What national identities and relational imaginations are constructed (e.g., “competitor”, “partner”, “leader”)?

Through three-dimensional analysis, students clearly see how Western hosts’ questions presuppose critical stances through specific metadiscourse, and how Dr. Gao Zhikai’s responses skillfully redirect the dialogue towards constructive directions through discursive reconstruction.

3.3. Stage Three: Situational Practice—From Discourse Analysis to Discourse Creation

This stage designs multi-level, high-fidelity discourse output tasks (structured debates, role-plays and simulated interviews, new media discourse creation, position paper writing) to prompt students to transform analytical insights into communication skills.

3.4. Stage Four: Reflective Construction—Metacognitive Development and Value Internalization

Reflective construction includes: self-assessment reports on metadiscourse use, reflective journals on cognitive processes, value position statements, peer evaluation, and collective seminars.

4. Detailed Teaching Practice Plans

4.1. Teaching Case Design 1: Based on Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Security Dialogue with US Experts [10]

4.1.1. Stage One: Sino-US Security Perceptions and Discursive Conflicts

Topic Selection Rationale: The video centers on a heated debate between China and the US surrounding the concept of “security”. The US expert’s discourse reflects the “threat perception”, “alliance system”, and “position of strength” prevalent in the mainstream US security perspective, while Dr. Gao Zhikai’s responses systematically articulate China’s advocated concepts of “common security” and “comprehensive security”, powerfully deconstructing the US discursive logic.

4.1.2. Stage Two: Layered Analysis

Language Dimension:

US Expert’s Strategy: Frequent use of high-modality verbs and nouns like “threat”, “challenge”, “deterrence” to create urgency about a “looming danger”; citing “allied concerns”, “international rules” (intertextual markers) to frame a specific stance as international consensus; using “we” to refer to “the US and its allies”, constructing exclusive identity.

Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Response Strategy: Extensive use of contrastive markers (e.g., “On the one hand..., on the other hand...”) to reveal issue complexity; using clarification markers (e.g., “Let me be clear...”) to directly refute false accusations; fre-

quently employing evidence markers (e.g., citing historical facts, international law provisions, or economic data) to solidify arguments; when referring to China, using more culturally resonant self-mentions like “the Chinese people” or “the Chinese nation”, creating a subtle contrast with the other’s “state actor” discourse.

Logic Dimension:

US Logical Presupposition: Follows a linear causal chain: “China’s military modernization (action) → leads to regional power imbalance (consequence) → threatens US and allies’ security (characterization) → therefore US must strengthen military deployment/alliances (response).” This reflects classic realist power politics logic.

Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Rebuttal Logic: Fundamentally deconstructs the opponent’s causal chain. The logic is: “US accuses China (Point A) → but ignores NATO expansion/US military presence in Asia-Pacific (omitted background B) → factually, China’s development contributes to world peace (Fact C) → the real security dilemma stems from one country pursuing absolute security (Essential Analysis D) → therefore, a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security is needed (Alternative Proposal E).” This transforms a linear causal chain into a dialectical logic of systemic structural analysis.

Value Dimension: Clash of Deep-Seated Concepts

Values Embedded in US Discourse: Implies presuppositions like “zero-sum game”, “hegemonic stability theory”, and a “rules-based order (defined by oneself)”. As Cheng Manli (2023) points out, the existing discourse system of Western countries is precisely built on the “logical basis driven by colonial expansion, great power rivalry, and national interests” [11].

Values Manifested in Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Discourse: Clearly conveys Chinese-proposed global governance visions and international relations ethics such as the “harmony culture”, “community with a shared future for mankind”, “democratization of international relations”, and “common security”, demonstrating a value logic distinct from the West’s. Through debate, students intuitively appreciate the inclusiveness and constructiveness of Chinese values in addressing global security dilemmas.

4.1.3. Stage Three: Situational Practice—From Classroom Debate to Simulated Forum

Task 1: Simulating a Follow-up Conversation

Scenario: Assume that after the debate, in the forum lounge, a somewhat less friendly Western journalist stops Dr. Gao Zhikai and asks: “You said China does not seek hegemony, but how do you explain China’s ‘militarization’ in the South China Sea?”

Requirement: Students work in pairs, one playing the journalist (asking sharply but professionally), the other playing Dr. Gao Zhikai (responding with sound reasoning and unwavering firmness, incorporating logic and strategies learned from the video). Focus on adaptability and precise reiteration of core arguments.

Task 2: Writing a Policy Brief

Scenario: Assume students are junior researchers at a ministry or think tank, needing to write a 300-500-word English policy brief based on this debate, titled: “Key Takeaways from Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Debate on China-US Security Perceptions.”

Requirement: The brief must concisely summarize the core arguments of both sides and clearly explain the rationality and superiority of the Chinese security perspective. Focus on summarizing, generalizing, and formal written expression.

Evaluation Criteria: The evaluation of the above tasks is based on four dimensions: 1) use of evidence, i.e., the ability to accurately cite original dialogue excerpts, historical facts, international law provisions, or data to support arguments; 2) analytical quality, i.e., the ability to clearly identify presuppositions and logical chains in the opposing discourse and to effectively deconstruct or reconstruct them; 3) discourse strategy, i.e., the ability to consciously employ metadiscourse resources (such as clarification markers, contrast markers, frame markers) to enhance persuasiveness; 4) language performance, i.e., accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness of language expression. The evaluation focuses on students’ discourse operation skills and thinking quality, rather than whether their viewpoints align completely with predetermined positions.

4.1.4. Stage Four: Reflective Construction—Towards Discourse Consciousness and Value Identification

Guiding Questions:

Metacognitive Level: Before watching and analyzing this debate, what narrative framework primarily shaped your understanding of “Sino-US security conflicts” (Western, Chinese, or vague)? How exactly has your view changed after analysis? Which specific argument or piece of evidence touched you?

Value Internalization Level: How does the concept of “common security” conveyed by Dr. Gao Zhikai resonate with your personal vision of a future world security order? What do you see as the biggest challenge to promoting this concept in reality?

Subjectivity Construction Level: If you were to become an international affairs professional, journalist, or staff member in an international organization in the future, how would you practice “not only telling China’s stories well, but also articulating China’s principles clearly” in your own field?

Outcome Form: Students submit a reflective learning report of no less than 800 words, requiring citation of specific discourse from the video as a starting point for analysis, demonstrating the process of cognitive change and depth of thought.

Evaluation Criteria for Reflective Tasks: The evaluation of reflective reports is based on: 1) whether specific discourse excerpts are used as the starting point for analysis; 2) whether the process of cognitive change and the key triggers are clearly presented; 3) whether discourse analysis is connected to personal value construction or future practice; 4) depth of reflection and logical coherence. The evaluation does not presuppose a single “correct conclusion”, focusing instead on assessing

students' critical thinking and the integrity of their self-construction.

4.2. Teaching Case Design 2: Based on Dr. Gao Zhikai's Dialogue at the Arab Strategic Forum [12]

4.2.1. Stage One: Precise Topic Selection—Focusing on “Major Power Roles and Discourse Power in a Multipolar World”

Topic Selection Rationale: The video features a dialogue between senior figures from China and the US at a high-level forum in the Middle East, discussing major power roles, international order, regional security, etc. Former US Ambassador Carla Sands represents the perspective of traditional US diplomatic elites, while Dr. Gao Zhikai systematically articulates China's understanding and propositions regarding a multipolar world. This scenario offers an excellent window to analyze how China and the US construct their own images and vie for understanding and support from a “third party” (the Middle East).

Teaching Theme Anchor: In a multipolar world, how do major powers narrate their roles?—A discourse competition targeting the “Global South”.

4.2.2. Stage Two: Layered Analysis

Language Dimension:

Carla Sands' Strategy: Frequent use of core vocabulary from the NATO/Western discourse system (terminology markers) like “rules-based order”, “allies and partners”, “deterrence and defense” to establish the narrative's legitimacy and authority; emphasizing “our shared values”, “community of democracies” (engagement markers) to frame the US stance as a broader consensus among “like-minded” nations.

Dr. Gao Zhikai's Response Strategy: Extensive use of inclusive self-mentions and engagement markers like “developing countries”, “Global South”, “common development”, contrasting sharply with US discourse to connect with the Middle Eastern audience; employing evidence markers like “history proves”, “the fact is” to substantiate arguments with historical facts and development data; using clear clarification and negation markers (e.g., “I must clarify”, “this is inconsistent with the facts”) for forceful yet graceful rebuttals when facing unfair accusations.

Logic Dimension: Clash of Argumentative Frameworks

US Logical Presupposition: Follows logic: “US presence ensures regional security (premise) → a certain major power's behavior undermines stability (accusation) → therefore, regional states should support US and its allies' deployments (conclusion).” This reflects traditional hegemonic stability theory and geopolitical logic.

Dr. Gao Zhikai's Rebuttal Logic: Fundamentally shifts the discussion framework. Logic might be: “The root of Middle East turmoil lies in development deficits and governance dilemmas (redefining the problem) → China promotes stability through cooperation and investment (positive exposition) → true security should be in the hands of regional states, not reliant on external powers (alternative proposition) → therefore, what's needed is development cooperation, not mil-

itary confrontation (conclusion).” This is a skillful logical shift from security issues to development issues.

Value Dimension: Dialogue of Deep-Seated Concepts

Values Embedded in US Discourse: Implies presuppositions like “position of strength”, “alliance primacy”, and the “democracy versus authoritarianism” binary.

Values Manifested in Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Discourse: Clearly conveys Chinese-proposed global governance visions: “mutual respect”, “fairness and justice”, “win-win cooperation”, “diversity of civilizations”, and the “community with a shared future for mankind”. Through this dialogue, students profoundly grasp the affinity and moral appeal of Chinese values in winning the hearts and minds of the “Global South”.

4.2.3. Stage Three: Situational Practice

Task 1: Simulating a “For the Global South” Position Statement

Scenario: Assume you are a young diplomat from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs about to speak at a forum for African countries on “China and the World: Partners in Common Development”. Draft a 3-minute English speech based on the discursive logic of Dr. Gao Zhikai in the video.

Requirement: The speech must consciously use metadiscourse strategies derived from the video (e.g., inclusive self-mentions, development-oriented framing, win-win cooperation attitude markers), aiming to convey sincerity and shared interests to the audience.

Task 2: Multilateral Dialogue Role-Play

Scenario: Divide the class into three groups representing Dr. Gao Zhikai, Carla Sands, and a Middle Eastern think tank scholar. Conduct a simulated forum dialogue on “The Future of the Middle East: What Can Major Powers Do?”

Requirement: The group representing the Middle Eastern scholar should prepare questions reflecting regional perspectives (e.g., development, security, autonomy). All three parties should flexibly use typical discursive strategies of their respective camps while attempting to find potential common ground.

4.2.4. Stage Four: Reflective Construction

Guiding Questions:

Metacognitive Level: Before analyzing this dialogue, were you aware that speeches by major power representatives at international forums are often carefully crafted “discursive performances”? What impressions of China and the US did the expressions of Dr. Gao Zhikai and Ms. Carla Sands respectively leave on you? Which specific expression or logical point influenced your judgment?

Value Internalization Level: Does Dr. Gao Zhikai’s emphasis that “development is the key to solving all problems” align with your understanding of international relations from other sources? Why do you think this concept appeals to Middle Eastern countries and the “Global South”?

Subjectivity Construction Level: This dialogue took place in the Arab world,

with a primarily Middle Eastern audience. This reminds us that “telling China’s stories well” requires considering the “listener”. If you were to explain China’s role in international affairs to a friend from Europe or Latin America, how would your discursive strategy differ from Dr. Gao Zhikai’s at this forum?

Outcome Form: Students submit a reflective learning report of no less than 800 words, requiring citation of specific discourse or logic from the video as a starting point and attempting to envision the discursive strategies they might employ in future cross-cultural communication.

4.3. Teaching Case Design 3: Based on Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Bloomberg Debate with US Scholar [13]

4.3.1. Stage One: Precise Topic Selection

Topic Selection Rationale: The video centers on a direct debate between China and the US over tariffs. The US scholar questions based on US domestic political and economic logic, while Dr. Gao Zhikai’s responses systematically articulate the Chinese perspective on trade imbalances, tariff impacts, global industrial chains, etc. This topic provides the most direct and conflictual entry point for understanding current Sino-US economic and trade relations.

4.3.2. Stage Two: Layered Analysis—Three-Dimensional Deep Dive into the Debate Text

Language Dimension:

US Scholar/Host’s Strategy: Frequent use of standardized terms (label markers) used by US officials and media when describing China’s economic and trade policies, such as “unfair trade practices”, “subsidies”, “overcapacity”, “coercion”, thereby framing the discussion’s premise; extensive citation of US domestic economic data (e.g., unemployment rates, trade deficit figures) as evidence markers to construct the “US victim” narrative; using leading questions with presuppositions, like “Don’t you think...” or “The fact is...”.

Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Response Strategy: Employing contrastive markers (e.g., “The US says..., but in reality...”) to directly dismantle logical fractures in the opponent’s discourse; using frame markers like “According to WTO rules”, “From the perspective of global industrial chains” to redirect the discussion to broader, more universal international rules and economic principles; using strong clarification markers like “I must correct you”, “This is completely inconsistent with the facts” when facing false accusations, with firm attitude but professional tone; when elaborating China’s position, repeatedly using attitude markers such as “common interests”, “mutual benefit and win-win”, “global economic stability” to construct a constructive rather than confrontational speaker image.

Logic Dimension: Intense Collision of Argumentative Frameworks

US Logical Presupposition: Follows a classic protectionist logical closed loop: “China’s unfair practices (e.g., government subsidies) → lead to US manufacturing loss and trade deficit → therefore the US must impose tariffs to ‘correct’ this and protect domestic industries and jobs.” This reflects zero-sum game and domestic

political priority logic.

Dr. Gao Zhikai's Rebuttal Logic: Systematically refutes from multiple levels. Logic may be as follows:

1) Deconstruct the premise: Points out that the "unfair trade" accusation ignores the complementarity of Sino-US economic structures, the low US savings rate, the hegemonic status of the US dollar, and US export restrictions on high-tech products to China—fundamental causes of the trade deficit.

2) Analyze the real cost of tariffs: Argues that tariffs are mostly borne by US importers and consumers, exacerbating US inflation and harming the global competitiveness of US companies themselves.

3) Propose an alternative framework: Redirects the discussion towards "the real solution lies in resolving differences through dialogue and WTO reform, jointly safeguarding the multilateral trading system, rather than unilateralism and protectionism". This reconstructs the opponent's linear causal chain into a complex system analysis involving multiple variables and dimensions.

Value Dimension: Deep Divergence in Economic Ethics and Development Philosophy

Values Embedded in US Discourse: The discourse often implies value tendencies like "America First", "absolute sovereignty", "trade as a zero-sum game", and the securitization and politicization of economic issues.

Values Manifested in Dr. Gao Zhikai's Discourse: Clearly conveys values such as "market principles", "comparative advantage", "interdependence", "rule supremacy", and seeking common development through cooperation. Through the debate, students clearly see that Sino-US economic and trade friction is not just a conflict of interests, but also a contest of discourse power between two economic philosophies and development concepts.

4.3.3. Stage Three: Situational Practice

Task 1: Simulating a Bloomberg Follow-up

Scenario: Assume Bloomberg holds another connect on the same topic, this time inviting you (the student) as a young Chinese economist. The host asks a sharp question: "Dr. Gao emphasized in the previous debate that tariffs are borne by US consumers, but many Americans feel China took their jobs. How do you respond to this widespread sentiment?"

Requirement: Students prepare a 2-minute response. The goal is to practice gently deconstructing misperceptions with data and logic while respecting the other's feelings, and steering the conversation towards constructive directions (e.g., industrial upgrading, jointly creating new jobs).

Task 2: Simulating a Statement at a WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism Meeting

Scenario: At a WTO meeting, debate the legality of US tariffs on China. Students represent the Chinese delegation and deliver a 3-minute opening statement.

Requirement: The statement must strictly be based on WTO rules and legal principles (evidence markers), refute US defenses like "national security excep-

tions” (rebuttal markers), and appeal to uphold the authority of the multilateral trading system (value elevation).

4.3.4. Stage Four: Reflective Construction

Guiding Questions:

Metacognitive Level: Before watching this debate, from what sources (domestic media, social media, or indirect understanding) did your understanding of the Sino-US “tariff war” primarily come? Which specific point in Dr. Gao Zhikai’s debate most effectively updated or deepened your understanding?

Value Internalization Level: Facing sharp accusations based on US domestic narratives, what do you think is the source of strength and credibility in Dr. Gao Zhikai’s consistently “rules-based” and “professionally rational” debate style? How does this inspire you when participating in discussions on international controversies?

Subjectivity Construction Level: This debate took place on Bloomberg, a top-tier global financial media platform. This reminds us that China’s views need to be heard in every corner of the world. If you work in international trade, finance, or international law in the future, how will you clearly and rationally convey China’s propositions to international colleagues in your professional field, promoting cooperation rather than misunderstanding?

Outcome Form: Students submit a reflective learning report of no less than 800 words, requiring citation of specific debate discourse from the video as a starting point, and connecting to their own major or future plans, elaborating on the discursive attitude and communication principles they should uphold in international economic exchanges.

4.4. Teaching Case Design 4: Based on Dr. Gao Zhikai’s In-Depth TV Debate on Western Media Concerning China’s Core Interests [14]

4.4.1. Stage One: Precise Topic Selection

Topic Selection Rationale: The video features a high-intensity TV debate where the Western host presupposes a clear agenda (e.g., China’s military intentions, Taiwan region question), and Dr. Gao Zhikai responds with systematic rebuttals. This scene encapsulates the discourse power game between China and the West on fundamental issues like sovereignty security, war and peace, and international order. The key debate climax mentioned in the video description—“comparing the Taiwan region question to the US Civil War”—provides an excellent model for analyzing how to use historical logic understandable to the West to deconstruct its current political biases.

4.4.2. Stage Two: Layered Analysis—Three-Dimensional Deep Dive into the Debate Text

Language Dimension: Metadiscourse Game in Crisis Discourse

Western Host/Questioner’s Strategy: Use of numerous presuppositional questions (e.g., “Don’t you think China’s military expansion is threatening regional

stability?”), packaging unsubstantiated accusations as discussion premises. Frequent use of high-modality verbs and nouns like “threat”, “expansion”, “intervention”. On the Taiwan region question, deliberate use of terms like “democratic Taiwan region,” “self-defense” that imply Taiwan region as an independent political entity.

Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Response Strategy:

Clarification and Definition Markers: Facing presuppositional accusations, first use strong clarification markers like “I must first correct your wording”, “This is inconsistent with the facts” to break the opponent’s discursive framework.

Historical Analogy and Frame Markers: Use of the core analogy mentioned in the video description—“the US Civil War”—an extremely skillful frame-shifting strategy. It shifts the Taiwan region question from the opponent’s “democracy versus authoritarianism” ideological framework to a political and legal framework with high legitimacy in Western history: “preserving national unity, opposing secession.” By using analogy markers like “Just as the US fought a war to preserve the Union...”, it forces the opponent to be unable to refute their own historical logic.

Inclusive and Exclusive Self-mentions: When addressing China’s core interests, firmly using “China”, “the Chinese people”, “the Chinese government” to demonstrate national will unity and resolve. When discussing peaceful intentions, using “we” to refer to all humanity, constructing a sense of common destiny.

Logic Dimension: From “Siege of Questions” to “Logical Reversal”

Western Logical Presupposition: The interview follows a composite “siege” logic: ① Accuse China of military intentions (threat theory) → ② Question China’s role in the Ukraine crisis (responsibility theory) → ③ Frame the Taiwan region question as an international conflict of “democracy versus autocracy” (values framework) → ④ Ultimately point to the core anxiety: “Does China seek to change the status quo and challenge the order?” This reflects a single narrative framework fitting all Chinese actions into the “revisionist state” challenging the “rules-based international order.”

Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Rebuttal and Reconstruction Logic:

1) Deconstruct Premise: First refutes the “threat theory,” pointing out China’s defensive national defense policy and asking, “Who has the most military bases worldwide?”

2) Rhetorical Question and Reduction to Absurdity: Regarding Ukraine, asks, “Who is fueling the fire by sending weapons?”, redirecting the issue to the roots of conflict and forces for peace.

3) Core Analogy for a Fundamental Solution: On Taiwan region, introduces the “Civil War analogy”. The power of this logic lies in: “The US fought its bloodiest war to prevent the South from seceding and preserve national unity, an act regarded by the US itself and history as just for safeguarding national sovereignty. So why should China, seeking to preserve national unity through necessary measures, be accused with double standards?” This logic does not defend directly but evokes the opponent’s historical memory and value consensus to fundamen-

tally deconstruct their double standard, forcing logical consistency.

4) Return to Meta-narrative: Finally elevates the debate to the meta-stance: “China does not want war, but is not afraid of it either”, clearly expressing peaceful intentions and firm resolve to safeguard core interests, transcending specific issue debates.

Value Dimension: Collision of Sovereignty Principle, Historical Justice, and Shared Human Values.

Values Embedded in Western Discourse: On the surface, it’s “democracy, freedom, rules”, but on core interest issues, it reveals power politics, double standards, and hegemony.

Values Manifested in Dr. Gao Zhikai’s Discourse:

National Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity as Core Values: Non-negotiable, unambiguous.

Historical Justice and Political Wisdom: By invoking the opponent’s history, demonstrates profound understanding of world history and converts it into moral resources for defending one’s own stance.

The Cost and Resolve for Peace: Conveys a dialectical view of peace: “detering war by preparing for war” is not desired but sometimes necessary. This expression, based on historical lessons and rational reality, is far more persuasive than empty slogans of peace.

4.4.3. Stage Three: Situational Practice

Task 1: Simulating a “Follow-up Press Question”

Scenario: Assume after the debate, outside the studio, a journalist from a different Western media outlet continues probing: “Dr. Gao, your analogy comparing Taiwan region to the US Civil War is very sharp, but many will refute that today’s China is not the North of that era, and Taiwan region is not the South. How would you further respond to such challenge?”

Requirement: Students prepare a 2-minute response. The goal is to practice defending and deepening a core analogy, perhaps elaborating “the consistency of core principles versus the specificity of historical circumstances”, emphasizing that “whether in 19th-century America or 21st-century China, the central government’s resolve and right to preserve national unity are unquestionable—this is a fundamental norm of international relations. The specific methods naturally vary with the times, but the principle is eternal.”

Task 2: Writing a Commentary Article “Targeting the Western Public”

Scenario: Assume students are writing for a Chinese youth international exchange organization, needing to post a short commentary on Western social media platforms sparked by this debate, to clarify China’s stance on the Taiwan region question and explain the rationality of the “Civil War analogy.”

Requirement: The article must be concise, logically clear, with a calm yet firm tone. The goal is to win understanding from middle-ground audiences who have not yet formed fixed positions, avoiding propaganda slogans, communicating based on history, law, and common sense.

4.4.4. Stage Four: Reflective Construction—From Discourse Confrontation to Strategic Communication Literacy

“Strategic communication literacy” refers to an individual’s comprehensive ability, in cross-cultural and cross-ideological communication contexts, to deeply understand the strategic nature of communication, accurately grasp national stances and core interests, and flexibly employ discourse strategies for effective communication, persuasion, and advocacy. This stage aims to guide students in extracting strategic communication wisdom from specific discourse confrontations, achieving an elevation from discourse skills to strategic thinking.

Guiding Questions:

Metacognitive Level: Before watching this debate, did you ever think that discourse defending national core interests could be so “Western”, i.e., using the opponent’s historical classics and cultural symbols for debate? What are the strengths and potential risks of this “fighting fire with fire” discursive strategy?

Value Internalization Level: Dr. Gao Zhikai demonstrated both “firmness” and “rationality” in the debate. What inspiration does this demeanor give you? When facing questioning involving national positions, do you think emotional patriotic expression or professional, rational analysis is more likely to win respect and gain understanding?

Subjectivity Construction Level: This debate took place on a global media platform, reminding us that international communication involves not just “telling China’s stories well”, but also “articulating China’s principles clearly” and “refuting fallacies”. If you find yourself in an internationalized study or work environment facing misunderstandings or biases on issues like Taiwan region, what discursive preparation and communicative mindset lessons will you draw from this debate?

Outcome Form: Students submit a reflective learning report of no less than 800 words, requiring citation of specific debate discourse from the video (e.g., the “Civil War” analogy, responses on military intentions) as a starting point, and connecting to themselves, elaborating on how to enhance their own “strategic communication literacy” in future cross-cultural communication.

5. Conclusions

This teaching model, utilizing metadiscourse theory as a sharp analytical lens, Dr. Gao Zhikai’s vivid practice as lively teaching material, and the scientific pathway of “Precise Topic Selection → Layered Analysis → Situational Practice → Reflective Construction”, successfully breaks down the grand objectives of ideological and political education into operable, observable, and evaluable classroom activities. It enables students, through deep engagement with and immersive practice in the collision of Chinese and Western discourse, not only to learn “how to speak”, but also to understand “why speak this way”, ultimately pointing to the subjective construction of “how I should speak”. This truly achieves the trinity of value shaping, ability cultivation, and knowledge transmission. Through such meticulous

and immersive discourse cultivation, seeds of cultural confidence will surely be sown in students' hearts, weapons for discourse struggle sharpened, ultimately gathering into a powerful youthful force capable of presenting a true, multidimensional, and comprehensive China to the world.

It should be noted that this model has certain limitations in its application. Firstly, the model is highly dependent on the dialogue cases of Dr. Gao Zhikai as a specific speaker; his discursive style, thematic focus, and expression strategies possess individual uniqueness. Future research could attempt to incorporate dialogue texts from more Chinese and international public figures to test the model's generalizability. Secondly, the four core themes focus on Sino-US relations and related areas, with insufficient coverage of other discursive fields such as China-Europe relations or China-Global South relations. Subsequent efforts could expand to a broader cluster of themes. Finally, the model imposes relatively high demands on instructors' discourse analysis capabilities during the "layered analysis" phase. The depth of the instructor's guided interpretation directly affects teaching outcomes. Future developments could include supporting teacher training manuals and teaching aids to lower implementation barriers and enhance replicability.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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