

Exploring Differentiated Approaches to CIPE in Vocational College Foreign Language Courses Empowered by AI: A Cross-Disciplinary POA Practices

Zhao Hangfei

*Department of General Education, Tourism College of Zhejiang, Hangzhou, 311231, China
zhaohangfei@tourzj.edu.cn*

Keywords: POA; CIPE; Vocational English Teaching; AI; Grounded Theory; Cross-Disciplinary Language Tasks

Abstract: This study explores how Production-Oriented Approach (POA)-based English instruction, supported by AI tools, can facilitate differentiated curriculum ideological and political education (CIPE) in vocational college settings. Focusing on four majors—Hotel Management, Flight Services, Tourism Management, and Convention & Exhibition Planning—the study adopts grounded theory to analyze student-generated posters, reflections, and platform feedback from a shared output task. Findings reveal that students' value expressions were shaped by their professional contexts, with Artificial intelligence (AI) tools like DeepSeek assisting in refining discipline-relevant moral language. The combination of POA task design on the Chaoxing platform, student agency, and teacher feedback enabled effective CIPE engagement across majors. The study highlights the potential of output-driven, AI-supported instruction in promoting moral awareness and language competence without requiring complex technological integration or quantitative analysis.

1. Introduction

China's higher education reform has highlighted the importance of integrating values education into all the curriculum through an initiative known as curriculum ideological and political education (CIPE)[1]. This pedagogical approach aims to move beyond the separation of moral instruction from professional courses by embedding moral, civic, and ethical values—such as responsibility, integrity, dedication, and cultural identity—into subject-specific teaching. In vocational colleges, where English courses serve diverse majors such as Hotel Management, Flight Services, Tourism Management, and Convention & Exhibition Planning, the challenge lies in tailoring value education to fit students' professional contexts and language needs.

Existing models of CIPE integration in English education tend to be generalized, lacking differentiation across majors[2]. Meanwhile, traditional language pedagogy often separates linguistic skill development from value cultivation. In addition, the growing availability of AI-

assisted writing tools introduces new opportunities for individualized expression—yet little research has examined how such tools might support differentiated CIPE in real classroom contexts[3]. Meanwhile, the rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI) tools offers opportunities to personalize learning and stimulate student engagement[4]. This study investigates how AI-supported English teaching, guided by the Production-Oriented Approach (POA)[5], can enhance CIPE in a cross-disciplinary vocational setting. Based on grounded theory[6] analysis of student interactions on the Chaoxing Learning Platform, this research seeks to identify differentiated pathways for integrating moral education into English instruction across different majors. To guide this inquiry, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do students from different vocational majors interpret and express ideological-political values during POA-based English output tasks?

RQ2: In what ways do external AI tools support or shape students' moral and professional language expression?

RQ3: What patterns emerge in students' reflections that can inform differentiated CIPE practices in vocational English education?

2. Theoretical and Practical Background

As outlined in the *Guidelines for Curriculum Ideological and Political Construction in Higher Education Institutions*^[1], every course—regardless of discipline—is now expected to serve moral cultivation goals and contribute to the broader mandate of “all-round education for all students by all staff.” Within this context, vocational English education is tasked with not only equipping students with practical language skills for their future professions but also instilling core socialist values, such as integrity, responsibility, service orientation, and cultural confidence.

However, the implementation of cipec in vocational English classrooms remains complex[7]. English courses in vocational colleges often serve students from multiple disciplines. These students possess distinct professional identities, language needs, and career expectations. A one-size-fits-all ideological narrative thus fails to resonate meaningfully with all learners. Furthermore, the predominant instructional models still rely heavily on textbook-driven, teacher-centered approaches, which often treat value education as a superficial or add-on component rather than as a deeply integrated process[8].

Poa structures classroom teaching into three progressive stages—motivating, enabling, and assessing—each of which provides opportunities for students to engage in meaningful language use while simultaneously reflecting on personal and professional values[5]. Instead of treating ideological content as an external addition, poa embeds it organically within task-based language production, allowing learners to explore ethical and civic dimensions in authentic communicative contexts[9]. For vocational english learners, this means constructing value-informed messages that align with their future professions, such as conveying hospitality ethics, promoting cultural heritage, or expressing professional integrity.

In the context of vocational english instruction, where students come from diverse professional backgrounds, AI tools allow for personalized language refinement[10]. Students can adapt generic expressions into discipline-specific discourse, thus aligning their language output with both communicative goals and the values emphasized in CIPE. For example, a student in hotel management may use AI to rephrase “good service” into “attentive and culturally respectful service,” while a student in flight services might revise “we care” to “we uphold safety with professionalism.”

Given the exploratory nature of this study and the diversity of student experiences across

vocational disciplines, constructivist grounded theory[6] was adopted to analyze how learners internalize and express ideological values through English output tasks. Rather than imposing predefined categories, this method allowed the researcher to derive emergent themes from students' own reflections, poster content, and interaction data collected via the Chaoxing platform.

3. Methodology

Grounded theory emphasizes that meaning is co-constructed between researcher and participants, and that knowledge emerges from close engagement with context-specific data[6][11]. This perspective aligned well with the study's goals: to capture students' situated reflections on value expression shaped by their disciplinary identity, language task, and personal experience. The iterative process began with open coding of student reflections, followed by focused coding to identify recurring themes, and theoretical coding to conceptualize relationships across professional contexts. Throughout, memo writing and constant comparison guided the emergence of analytical categories grounded in the students' own language.

The task, framed within the POA, required each group to collaboratively design an English-language recruitment poster representing a specific industry context (e.g., international hotel group, tourism company, airline, or event planning association). Students were encouraged to apply both linguistic knowledge (vocabulary, grammar, formatting) and professional values (such as service ethos, teamwork, responsibility, or cultural promotion) in the task. Classroom reflections collected from students indicate clear differences in how professional identity and disciplinary culture influenced their value interpretation and output.

This study adopted a qualitative data collection strategy rooted in constructivist grounded theory[6], emphasizing the co-construction of meaning through learners' reflections and interactions. The data were sourced from four intact classes across different majors—Hotel Management and Digital Operations, Tourism Management, Flight Services, and Convention & Exhibition Planning and Management—who all participated in a shared English instructional task: designing a recruitment poster for a simulated international industry club. The task was implemented during a regular College English class and embedded within a larger instructional unit guided by the POA. To capture the authentic voices and situated experiences of students, the primary data consisted of student-generated reflective messages posted on the Chaoxing Learning Platform immediately following the task completion. These reflections were prompted by an open-ended post-class activity requiring students to describe (1) what they learned in the task, (2) challenges encountered, and (3) personal insights or value-related takeaways. The platform ensured consistency in data format while allowing freedom in expression, with students choosing to write in either English or bilingual Chinese-English forms.

A total of 138 reflective posts were collected across the four majors:

- (1) Hotel Management ($n = 33$)
- (2) Flight Services ($n = 36$)
- (3) Tourism Management ($n = 35$)
- (4) Convention & Exhibition Planning ($n = 34$)

These posts were anonymized and exported into text documents for coding. Careful attention was paid to preserve contextual markers such as emotion, profession-specific terms, and references to classroom interactions, which are essential for grounded analysis[12]. All reflections were written independently by students with the help of AI in English grammar checking, not as part of a summative assessment, which reduced the performative bias and encouraged sincerity and

variability in expression.

To triangulate the data and ensure a more robust understanding of instructional dynamics, the following supplementary materials were also collected:

(1) The teacher's instructional plan and poa-based task design framework for the activity.

(2) Instructor-generated feedback records and student submission logs retrieved from the chaoxing platform, including teacher comments on uploaded posters and timestamped viewing of student reflections. In addition, some students reported using external AI tools (e.g., deepseek) to refine their english expressions prior to submission, though these interactions were not traceable within the chaoxing platform itself.

(3) Exemplars of completed student posters (photographed with permission) to contextualize the reflective content

(4) The teacher's reflective journal recording classroom observations, student engagement, and post-task impressions

Ethical considerations were strictly followed. All participants were informed of the research purpose and provided consent for the anonymized use of their reflections in academic analysis. No personally identifiable information was retained in the coding or presentation of data.

The data analysis followed the methodological principles of constructivist grounded theory[6], which emphasizes interpretive understanding, iterative coding, and the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants. The goal was to identify emergent patterns in how students from different vocational majors experienced and expressed CIPE within the context of a shared, AI-enhanced English task. This recursive interaction forms the foundation for constructing differentiated CIPE pathways that are both context-sensitive and pedagogically scalable in vocational English education.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Theme 1: Students' Moral Awareness Development through AI Tasks

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the data was the development of students' moral awareness through engagement in the AI-supported poster design task. Although the activity was ostensibly a language-focused exercise aimed at reinforcing vocabulary, sentence structure, and genre knowledge, many students used the opportunity to explore and articulate values that resonate with their professional identity and civic responsibility.

Across all four majors, reflections revealed that students gradually began to perceive value-laden dimensions in task content, such as teamwork, cultural representation, discipline, and social contribution. This indicates that moral meaning was not merely "embedded" in the task by design, but rather co-constructed by students as they navigated the linguistic and professional dimensions of the activity.

(1) Language as a Medium of Value Internalization

Students frequently commented on how the act of choosing words, slogans, or club descriptions made them reflect on what their profession stands for, and how that could be expressed meaningfully in English. For instance, one Hotel Management student wrote: "Our group used 'hospitality with heart' as a slogan. I think this represents not just service, but how we should care about people." Another student from Flight Services stated: "When I write about safety and our image, I feel I'm representing China. So I must be careful with my words."

These excerpts demonstrate that the language production process—particularly when guided by authentic, output-oriented tasks—can facilitate values clarification and professional moral reflection,

especially when learners must translate culturally embedded concepts into another language.

(2) AI -enhanced self-editing and value expression support

Although the Chaoxing platform itself does not provide automated language prompts or AI-driven feedback, a number of students reported using external AI tools such as DeepSeek to improve their English expressions prior to submitting their poster content. These tools were primarily employed to check grammar, refine sentence structure, and—importantly—explore more appropriate vocabulary when describing values or professional ethics.

For instance, students described replacing vague descriptors such as “good service” or “nice club” with more targeted and ideologically resonant phrases like “respectful communication”, “inclusive team culture”, or “serving with sincerity”, often after receiving phrasing suggestions from AI chat assistants. In several cases, such improved expressions appeared in their final posters, suggesting that AI played a modest but meaningful role in helping students explore how to articulate values more effectively in English.

This finding aligns with emerging scholarship on AI-assisted language learning, which emphasizes the potential of generative tools to support personalization, especially when learners proactively seek language that aligns with professional and ethical contexts[13].

(3) Reflection and Self-Positioning through the POA Output Stage

The structured POA stages—especially the output and assessment stages—encouraged students to pause and reflect on the social meanings embedded in their linguistic choices. Several students noted a shift in mindset from merely completing a task to considering what message their poster conveyed about their field or personal values. A Tourism student commented: “I didn’t realize before that promoting Chinese culture could be part of English learning. After this activity, I think I have more pride and want to share more things about our culture in the future.”

Such reflections indicate a deepening awareness of ideological content through scaffolded task design. Students not only demonstrated the ability to reproduce learned values but also reinterpreted them through a professional lens, linking personal character with future occupational expectations. This theme reveals that AI-assisted, POA-structured tasks can catalyze moral development not through didactic instruction, but through meaningful engagement, language mediation, and reflective personalization. In the context of vocational education, where students often prioritize utility and pragmatism, this approach offers a promising avenue to embed civic and ethical learning within professionally relevant content.

4.2 Theme 2: Professional Contexts Shape Students’ Value Reflections Differently

A second major theme emerging from the data is that students’ interpretation and articulation of values were shaped significantly by their professional disciplinary context. Although all students engaged with the similar instructional design, their value reflections were filtered through the lens of their professional orientations, demonstrating both convergence and divergence across majors.

A common thread is that students in all four programs linked the poster task to values central to their prospective careers, yet the emphases varied in ways that illuminate how professional identity mediates CIPE engagement. Hotel Management students foregrounded interpersonal ethics such as hospitality, cooperation, and guest-centered responsibility, illustrating a relational moral orientation rooted in service culture. Flight Services students, by contrast, emphasized discipline, safety, and national representation, reflecting the symbolic visibility and regulatory rigor of aviation professions. Tourism Management students highlighted cultural confidence and global storytelling, situating their moral reflections in the promotion of Chinese heritage and intercultural dialogue.

Meanwhile, Convention and Exhibition Planning students directed attention to integrity, clarity, and procedural precision, signaling a concern for communicative ethics and professional accountability.

Taken together, these differentiated emphases suggest that while the shared pedagogy created a unified framework, the moral content of students' reflections was shaped decisively by their imagined professional futures. This underscores the need for contextualized CIPE pathways that both affirm disciplinary identities and harness AI-supported POA tasks to flexibly adapt moral learning to diverse vocational trajectories

4.3 Theme 3: Role of AI in Supporting Personalized Learning and Value Expression

The third emergent theme highlights the supplementary role of external AI tools in supporting students' individualized expression and enhancing the articulation of value-laden content during the English poster design task. Although the Chaoxing Platform itself does not contain embedded AI functionalities such as automated feedback or intelligent prompting, students were encouraged to refine their English output using a range of available resources. Among these, external generative AI tools—particularly deepseek—were frequently employed by more autonomous learners to enhance both linguistic accuracy and semantic depth.

(1) AI-Assisted Language Polishing and Expressive Enhancement

Students reported that AI tools helped them refine their English expressions, particularly when attempting to articulate abstract concepts such as professionalism, responsibility, or cultural confidence. For instance, vague phrases such as “we are good at serving people” were revised with AI support into more nuanced forms like “we provide respectful and personalized service.” This shift in register and tone contributed to a more authentic integration of ideological and ethical values in the final poster texts.

Although these tools were used outside the formal instructional framework, they served as on-demand linguistic scaffolds, enabling students to align their English production more closely with their intended values and professional identities.

(2) Informal AI use and learner autonomy

Importantly, the use of AI tools was not required or structured by the instructor, but instead reflected varying levels of learner initiative and digital fluency. Students who were more digitally literate and intrinsically motivated tended to benefit more from AI -based revision, while others either underutilized these tools or remained unaware of their potential value.

This variation reveals both the empowering and uneven effects of optional AI access. For some learners, external AI support enhanced personalization and agency; for others, the absence of structured guidance led to limited or superficial engagement.

(3) Teacher feedback on the platform

While AI tools were used externally, teacher feedback remained the primary channel of formative guidance within the chaoxing platform. After students submitted their poster drafts and reflective responses, the instructor provided individualized comments, corrections, and scores. This manual feedback loop reinforced key values and encouraged students to revise with greater attention to both linguistic precision and ideological substance.

Together, the informal use of AI and the structured teacher feedback created a hybrid model of support—blending student-driven technological exploration with educator-led moral scaffolding. However, the lack of integration between these two domains also revealed a limitation: without explicit pedagogical framing, AI tools risk becoming isolated or underleveraged assets, accessible primarily to self-directed students.

4.4 Theme 4: Challenges Faced

While the integration of AI tools and POA-based instructional design brought clear pedagogical benefits, student reflections also surfaced a number of challenges that hindered deeper engagement with CIPE. These challenges—ranging from technological misunderstandings to cognitive overload and motivational inconsistencies—highlight the limits of current implementations and the importance of context-sensitive instructional strategies.

(1) Misuse or Underuse of AI Features

Several students, particularly those from less digitally proficient backgrounds, reported difficulties in navigating AI features on the Chaoxing platform. Some admitted to bypassing system-generated feedback or using it only for surface-level corrections (e.g., spelling), without engaging with higher-level semantic or pragmatic guidance.

These responses reflect what could be termed instrumental overreliance—using AI as a shortcut to completion rather than a tool for exploration and growth. In such cases, the potential for value internalization is diminished, as learners disengage from the interpretive and reflective processes central to CIPE.

(2) Superficial Value Integration

Despite being prompted to incorporate values into their posters, some students treated the ideological content as decorative rather than substantive, inserting value-laden terms (e.g., “responsibility,” “confidence”) without contextual elaboration or reflection. This phenomenon, common in lower-performing groups, suggests the risk of “tokenistic” CIPE when students are not adequately scaffolded in moral reasoning or personal connection.

This superficiality points to the limits of output-driven tasks when affective or cognitive readiness is low, reaffirming that true moral engagement requires more than completion—it requires internal negotiation, cultural articulation, and personal relevance.

In summary, while AI and POA frameworks offer promising infrastructures for differentiated CIPE in vocational English education, their success is conditional upon learner preparedness, teacher facilitation, and system adaptability. These findings reinforce the need for hybrid pedagogies that integrate technological affordances with human-centered instructional design, ensuring both access and depth in the moral cultivation process.

5. Cross-case Synthesis

The four disciplinary cases collectively reveal how a standardized POA-based instructional design was interpreted and enacted differently depending on students’ vocational identities. Although all students engaged in the same poster task, their reflections and outputs demonstrated that value learning was not uniform but mediated by disciplinary culture, occupational expectations, and professional imagination.

Service-oriented majors such as Hotel Management and Flight Services highlighted interpersonal ethics and collective responsibility. Hotel students repeatedly emphasized “smile with sincerity” and “hospitality as responsibility”, aligning their reflections with relational values inherent in guest-centered service. Flight Services students, however, attached stronger symbolic meaning to their work, associating the task with “discipline”, “safety”, and “the image of the nation.” Their choice of slogans like “safe sky, warm heart” and reflections on being “guardians of the country in the air” illustrate how professional training in aviation framed value expression around national pride and regulatory rigor.

By contrast, communication-oriented majors such as Tourism Management and Convention &

Exhibition Planning foregrounded cultural advocacy and procedural ethics. Tourism students saw the task as an opportunity for cultural storytelling, embedding elements like the Great Wall and pandas alongside slogans such as “Bridging Cultures, Sharing China.” Their reflections revealed a sense of pride in using English to narrate national traditions for international audiences, suggesting that cultural confidence emerged as a moral anchor for this group. In comparison, Convention and Exhibition Planning students approached the same activity with an orientation toward accuracy and professional credibility. Their poster slogans such as “Integrity in every detail” reflected values of honesty, precision, and communicative clarity, consistent with the ethical norms of event management.

Despite these differences, several cross-cutting patterns became evident. In all majors, students reported that the requirement to translate professional values into English deepened their reflection: service students reframed routine behaviors (smiling, discipline) as moral choices, while tourism and exhibition students reimagined cultural or procedural norms as ethical commitments. Across cases, teacher feedback on both linguistic accuracy and moral resonance served as a stabilizing factor, guiding students to refine value-laden expressions beyond superficial slogans. Likewise, AI tools such as deepseek played a supplementary role; students across majors used them selectively to polish phrasing—transforming, for example, “we are good at serving” into “we uphold service excellence with dignity.” However, the intensity of AI use varied, with tourism and exhibition students employing it more for stylistic refinement, while hotel and flight services students relied more heavily on peer discussion and instructor prompts.

In sum, the cross-case comparison demonstrates that while a common pedagogical framework ensured a baseline of linguistic and ethical engagement, the substance of students’ value reflections was decisively filtered through their disciplinary contexts. Service-oriented majors articulated values of care and responsibility, whereas communication-oriented majors emphasized cultural advocacy and professional integrity. The synthesis underscores that effective CIPE in vocational English must be both shared and differentiated: shared in its reliance on POA scaffolding, teacher mediation, and technology support, yet differentiated in its tailoring to disciplinary identities that shape students’ emerging professional values.

6. Discussion

6.1 How AI Supports Differentiated CIPE Based on Professional Backgrounds

This study found that although AI was not embedded in the Chaoxing platform, students’ voluntary use of external tools like deepseek played a modest yet meaningful role in supporting differentiated CIPE across disciplines. These tools acted as linguistic enhancers, allowing students from different majors to express professional values more clearly and appropriately in English.

For example, hotel management students used AI to polish expressions of service and empathy, while flight services students emphasized safety and national representation. Tourism students used AI to refine narratives about Chinese culture, and event planning students focused on integrity and professionalism. In each case, AI-assisted rewording helped students move from vague phrasing (e.g., “good service”) to value-rich expressions (e.g., “serving with sincerity”). Importantly, this use of AI reflected discipline-specific moral cognition, enabling students to align CIPE goals with their professional identity. However, disparities in digital literacy meant that some students benefited more than others—highlighting the need for scaffolded support and teacher guidance.

6.2 The Effectiveness of POA Combined with AI in Enhancing Engagement

The integration of the POA with selective AI tool use proved effective in enhancing student engagement with CIPE. POA's structured sequence—motivating, enabling, assessing—provided a clear learning path, while AI tools such as deepseek, used voluntarily by students, offered timely support for language refinement and value articulation.

The POA task's authenticity (e.g., designing a club poster relevant to the students' future profession) encouraged learners to internalize and express core values—such as service ethics, cultural confidence, or professional integrity—in a context they found meaningful. Students actively engaged in shaping both content and moral message, especially in the output stage, where many revised slogans and descriptions to better reflect their values.

In short, combining POA with external AI use offered a flexible, scalable model for embedding CIPE into vocational English classrooms—promoting both language competence and moral development.

6.3 Methodological Reflection: Feasibility of Grounded Theory in Vocational Classroom Research

This study employed constructivist grounded theory to analyze student reflections across multiple vocational majors. The method proved to be feasible, flexible, and well-suited to the dynamic, learner-centered nature of CIPE implementation in vocational English classrooms.

By collecting and coding 138 post-task reflections, the study captured emergent patterns in how students interpreted, internalized, and expressed values during a shared language task. Grounded theory enabled the researcher to stay close to the data, allowing students' voices to shape the thematic structure and reveal discipline-specific pathways of moral engagement.

The method also supported cross-major comparison, identifying both common themes (e.g., moral awareness through output tasks) and contextual differences (e.g., variation in value expression based on professional identity). This helped construct a differentiated model of CIPE grounded in real student experiences. However, the method has limits. As a qualitative and interpretive approach, it relies on the richness and sincerity of student input, which can be uneven. Additionally, it requires time-intensive coding and memo writing, which may be challenging in large-scale or mixed-methods studies.

Overall, grounded theory proved highly applicable for exploring complex, value-laden learning processes in vocational settings—especially where learner reflection, professional context, and moral development intersect.

6.4 Implications for English Teachers

In light of the findings, several practical strategies can help vocational English teachers apply AI-enhanced, POA-based CIPE in multi-major teaching environments.

First, it is essential to anchor tasks in authentic professional contexts. Designing output-oriented activities—such as poster design, service dialogues, or cultural briefings—allows students to connect language use with the ethical demands of their future occupations. Second, while not all students may access or fully understand AI tools, teachers can offer guided suggestions for responsible AI use, such as checking sentence tone, vocabulary accuracy, or cultural appropriateness. Encouraging reflective use of tools like DeepSeek helps students become more intentional in expressing values. Third, teachers should provide moral language scaffolds tailored to

different majors. Phrases like “serve with dignity” (hospitality), “represent the nation” (aviation), or “communicate with integrity” (event planning) help students build discipline-relevant expressions without forcing uniformity. Furthermore, incorporating short reflective prompts after output tasks—submitted via platforms like Chaoxing—can deepen students’ understanding of how language and values intersect, while offering teachers insight into moral learning without relying on complex analytics. Ultimately, the combination of task authenticity, teacher mediation, and AI-supported autonomy can empower teachers to promote CIPE in diverse classrooms—practically, meaningfully, and sustainably.

Future studies on AI-assisted CIPE in vocational foreign language education can be longitudinal studies tracking students’ moral awareness and professional identity development over multiple semesters could provide deeper insights into the sustained impact of CIPE-infused POA instruction.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by 2025 Pedagogical Research Project of Tourism College of Zhejiang, Exploring Differentiated Approaches to CIPE in Vocational College Foreign Language Courses Empowered by AI: A Cross-Disciplinary POA Practices (Grant No. 2025SZ05).

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