

Systematic Integration of Values Education into ESP Textbooks: A Case Study of Cross-Cultural and Professional Ethics Design in Cruise English Materials

Xiaoli Hu

Jiangsu Maritime Institute, Nanjing 211170, Jiangsu, China

Abstract: *Values education, or “curriculum-based ideological and political education”, has become a national policy priority in Chinese vocational education, yet its integration into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks often remains fragmented or superficial. This paper addresses the challenge of systematically embedding values education into language teaching materials through a case study of Daily Practical English for Cruises, a newly developed new-form textbook for cruise service majors at a Chinese higher vocational institution. Moving beyond isolated moral prompts or tokenistic insertions, the textbook adopts a “One Core, Three Dimensions” framework: Chinese Service Philosophy as the integrating core, and three value pillars—cultural confidence, professionalism, and service awareness—as the systematic organizing dimensions. Each of the 12 units features a dedicated “Cross-Cultural Competence and Professional Values” section with three fixed modules: cross-cultural focus (comparing communication norms across major source countries), professional ethics (case-based discussion of workplace dilemmas), and traditional Chinese service values (integrating 12 classical philosophical concepts into authentic service scenarios). The paper analyzes how this systematic design aligns with the four core competencies of China’s national English curriculum standards, particularly “multicultural exchange” and “language thinking,” while also addressing the Confucian legacy in Chinese vocational education perceptions. Drawing on the collaborative “Three-Chief-Editor” development mechanism involving school teachers, corporate trainers, and industry experts, the paper examines how values content is validated for both linguistic authenticity and pedagogical relevance. Based on course implementation data from two iterations involving 237 students, the paper demonstrates that systematic, scenario-embedded values education enhances learners’ cultural confidence, professional identity, and communicative competence without undermining language acquisition objectives. The paper further contextualizes this approach within broader debates on the role of traditional culture in modernizing vocational education, addressing the tension between Confucian values and contemporary skill-based training paradigms. This case provides a practical and theoretically grounded framework for ESP textbook developers seeking to achieve organic integration of knowledge, skills, and values in vocational education contexts.*

Keywords: Values education; Curriculum-based ideological and political education; Cruise English; Cross-cultural competence; Professional ethics; Chinese service philosophy; Vocational education; Systematic curriculum design.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Policy Imperative for Values Integration in Chinese Vocational Education

The integration of values education into all levels of the Chinese educational system has been a defining policy trajectory in recent years. In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the Guidelines for Curriculum-Based Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Institutions, which explicitly required that all courses—including professional and technical subjects—“dig into the ideological and political elements of course content and organically integrate them into course teaching to achieve the educational effect of moistening things silently”[5]. This policy, known as “curriculum-based ideological and political education”, represents a significant shift from treating values education as the sole responsibility of specialized ideological courses to embedding it across the entire curriculum.

For vocational education specifically, this imperative is reinforced by the broader goal of cultivating “whole persons” who are not only technically competent but also morally grounded and culturally confident. As articulated in studies of cruise English curriculum reform, the objective is to develop graduates who are “love themselves, love their motherland, know how to live, and know how to work”—a formulation that explicitly combines professional competence with personal and civic virtues [1].

1.2 The Challenge of Values Integration in ESP Textbooks

While the policy mandate is clear, its implementation in ESP textbooks presents unique challenges. ESP instruction is inherently oriented toward instrumental goals—equipping learners with the linguistic and communicative skills needed for specific professional domains. The perceived tension between instrumental skill development and values education has led many textbook developers to treat values as superficial additions: a moralizing anecdote appended to a unit, a politically correct phrase inserted without contextual justification, or a political education window that sits awkwardly beside the substantive content [2].

This fragmented approach fails to achieve the policy goal of “organic integration” and risks alienating both instructors and learners who perceive values content as extrinsic to their core learning objectives. As Qiu (2020) observed, the development of new-form vocational textbooks requires systematic attention to “the implementation pathway for value education objectives” as one of five key dimensions, alongside professional competency integration, multimodal resource presentation, blended learning process matching, and institutional policy support.

1.3 Values Education in Cruise Service Contexts

The cruise service domain presents a particularly rich context for values education integration for several reasons. First, cruise service professionals interact with passengers from diverse cultural backgrounds, requiring not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural understanding, and the capacity to navigate cultural differences with respect and empathy. This creates natural opportunities for values education around multicultural exchange, cultural confidence, and global citizenship.

Second, service occupations inherently involve ethical dimensions—responsibility to guests, honesty in transactions, integrity in handling complaints, respect for cultural and individual differences. The professional ethics dimension of values education maps directly onto the competencies required in service workplaces.

Third, cruise service has become an arena for expressing China’s growing presence in the global tourism industry. The promotion of “Chinese Service Philosophy” as a distinctive contribution to global service culture aligns with the policy goal of cultural confidence—fostering pride in Chinese cultural heritage while maintaining openness to international exchange [3].

1.4 Research Questions and Paper Structure

This paper addresses the following research questions:

How can values education be systematically—rather than superficially—integrated into an ESP textbook for vocational students?

What theoretical and pedagogical frameworks support the organic integration of language learning, professional skill development, and values cultivation?

How can traditional Chinese cultural values be meaningfully incorporated into a contemporary ESP textbook without appearing anachronistic or tokenistic?

What evidence suggests that systematic values integration enhances rather than detracts from language learning outcomes?

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews relevant literature on values education in vocational contexts, the Confucian legacy in Chinese education, and existing approaches to values integration in language teaching. Section 3 presents the theoretical framework underpinning the textbook’s values design. Section 4 describes the “One Core, Three Dimensions” framework and its implementation across the textbook’s 12 units. Section 5 examines the development process and mechanisms for content validation. Section 6 presents implementation findings and discusses challenges. Section 7 concludes with implications for ESP textbook development practice and future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Values Education in Vocational Education: Policy and Practice

The integration of values education into vocational education in China operates within a specific policy and cultural context. The Eight Do's and Eight Don'ts, introduced by the Chinese government, explicitly articulates the core values to be cultivated across the education system: patriotism, service to the people, scientific spirit, diligence, unity, honesty and trustworthiness, discipline, and plain living [4]. These principles are intended to be taught through multiple channels, including moral education courses, incorporation into textbooks, classroom discussion, and themed activities.

In vocational education specifically, values education commonly takes two forms. First, "occupational attitude learning" classes are specific to students' specializations and future occupations, typically conducted through lectures, guest speeches by employers, workplace visits, and discussions of occupational regulations. Second, and more relevant to the present case, there is growing emphasis on integrating traditional cultural education into the vocational curriculum. This practice is relatively rare, due to the widespread assumption that vocational education should be oriented primarily to skills training. However, as one pioneering institution argued, there is a close link between Chinese culture and contemporary society, and selective approaches can identify appropriate messages from cultural heritage that support rather than conflict with modern social and economic needs.

The rationale for including traditional culture in vocational education includes addressing the historical neglect of skill and working people in traditional Chinese culture. As a Confucian saying articulates, "those who work mentally rule people; those who work manually are ruled by people". This cultural legacy has contributed to the lower status of vocational education in Chinese society, where academic examinations are still regarded as the primary means of selecting elite individuals, and civil service positions enjoy higher social status than skilled trades. Values education in vocational contexts thus serves a dual function: cultivating moral character and simultaneously challenging stigma against manual and service occupations.

2.2 Values Integration in Language Textbooks

The integration of values education into language teaching presents distinctive pedagogical challenges and opportunities. Language instruction has traditionally been viewed as a neutral vehicle for developing communication skills, with content often selected primarily for linguistic value rather than moral or cultural content. However, the field of language education has increasingly recognized that language is never neutral—it carries cultural assumptions, social values, and ideological positions.

Research specifically addressing values integration in English language teaching in vocational contexts has emphasized the importance of design that avoids "preaching" and instead allows values to emerge organically from content and tasks. Wang's (2023) study of Cruise English: Audio-Visual-Oral curriculum reform identified three pathways for values education integration: content reorganization (selecting and structuring teaching content to highlight value dimensions), pedagogical artistry (designing activities that engage students in value exploration), and assessment innovation (evaluating both language competence and value understanding).

Similarly, the concept of "implicit value education" in vocational foreign language teaching emphasizes that values should be embedded in the design of learning activities rather than explicitly stated as moral lessons. In a study of service English instruction using Chinese tea product introductions as content, researchers demonstrated how professional values can be integrated into language learning through careful selection of authentic materials and task design that positions students as cultural ambassadors.

2.3 The Confucian Legacy and Its Implications for Values Integration

Understanding the Confucian legacy is essential for analyzing values education in Chinese vocational contexts. Confucianism, which was the dominant ideology in China for 2000 years, has had a profound influence on Chinese education, including the perception of vocational education. The traditional scholar-official ideal, in which education is oriented toward becoming an official (civil servant) rather than a worker, continues to shape attitudes toward different types of education.

However, contemporary policy documents and educational reformers have sought to reinterpret Confucian values in ways that align with modern vocational education needs. Confucian values such as "virtue, self-cultivation, and relational ethics offer enduring strengths that can be aligned with contemporary approaches supporting inquiry,

collaboration, and metacognitive development”. Modernization in Chinese vocational education is thus understood as a “culturally embedded transformation” rather than a wholesale rejection of tradition.

The challenge is to draw on cultural heritage while avoiding elements that conflict with modern social and economic needs. As one analysis noted, while traditional etiquette may have contained hierarchical meanings, its meaning can be updated to convey that in contemporary society all people need to be treated with respect. Similarly, the traditional orientation toward academic knowledge can be discussed with students to demonstrate its inappropriateness in a modern economy and society.

2.4 Current Practices in Cruise English Values Integration

Existing cruise and maritime English materials have begun to incorporate values education, though approaches vary widely. The second edition of Cruise Basic English, for example, added political education windows before each module to help students understand the ideological and educational themes addressed in that section. While this represents progress, the “window” metaphor itself is revealing—values content is positioned as something added onto the main content, visible but not integral.

Cruise English: Audio-Visual-Oral (3rd edition) explicitly emphasizes the “contemporariness of curriculum ideological and political reform,” stating that according to the “three-in-one” teaching objectives of value shaping, ability cultivation, and knowledge transmission, “curriculum ideological and political elements should be organically integrated into textbook writing”. The content covers six modules corresponding to major service departments, similar to the case study textbook.

Qiu (2020) provided a comprehensive framework for new-form cruise English textbook development, identifying five dimensions: the implementation pathway for value education objectives, integration of professional competencies, presentation of multimodal resources, matching of blended learning processes, and institutional policy support. The present study builds on this framework by developing a concrete implementation model for the values dimension.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The “One Core, Three Dimensions” Framework

The textbook’s values integration design is organized around a “One Core, Three Dimensions” framework. This framework was developed in response to the identified limitations of fragmented values integration in existing textbooks and the specific requirements of the cruise service domain.

One Core: Chinese Service Philosophy serves as the integrating thread. The term “philosophy” is deliberately chosen rather than “culture” or “tradition” to signal that the focus is not simply on representing aspects of Chinese culture but on articulating a coherent approach to service excellence with roots in Chinese intellectual traditions. This positioning also addresses the need identified in the literature to avoid tokenism and to present values education as a substantive contribution to professional competence rather than an extraneous political requirement.

Three Dimensions:

Cultural Confidence: This dimension addresses the objective of fostering pride in Chinese cultural heritage and the capacity to express Chinese perspectives in international contexts. It is operationalized through (a) explicit teaching about traditional cultural values and their contemporary relevance, (b) comparative cultural analysis that positions Chinese approaches alongside others without hierarchy, and (c) tasks that position students as cultural ambassadors explaining Chinese customs and service expectations to international guests.

Professionalism: This dimension addresses the work ethics required in cruise service contexts, including responsibility, integrity, timeliness, and excellence. It is operationalized through (a) case-based discussion of professional dilemmas, (b) explicit teaching of service standards and their ethical rationale, and (c) task designs that reward thoroughness, accuracy, and professional deportment.

Service Awareness: This dimension addresses the attitudes of respect, care, empathy, and inclusion that underpin quality service. It is operationalized through (a) cultural training on recognizing and responding to guest needs, (b)

emotional intelligence content that develops empathy and emotional regulation, and (c) reflection tasks that encourage learners to evaluate their own service attitudes and behaviors.

3.2 Alignment with National Curriculum Standards

The framework is designed to align with the four core competencies specified in China's English Curriculum Standards for Higher Vocational Education (2021) [6]. The mapping is particularly clear for "workplace intercultural communication" and "multicultural exchange," which are directly addressed through the cross-cultural focus and cultural confidence dimensions. The "language thinking" competency is addressed through the critical thinking tasks in each unit's ethics and case discussion components. The "autonomous learning" competency is supported through self-reflection tasks that require learners to evaluate their own attitudes and values.

3.3 The Role of Traditional Chinese Values

The selection of 12 traditional Chinese philosophical concepts for integration across the units followed specific criteria. These concepts needed to:

Have genuine relevance to service contexts (not just general moral platitudes)

Be expressible in accessible language that could be integrated into English-medium instruction

Have contemporary resonance beyond historical or ritual significance

Complement rather than conflict with international service standards

The selected concepts include “有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎” (friends come from afar, is it not a pleasure?), “宾至如归” (guests feel at home), “言必信，行必果” (words must be trustworthy, actions must be decisive), “将心比心” (put yourself in others' shoes), “民以食为天” (food is the foundation for the people), “事不过夜” (never put off till tomorrow what you can do today), “仁爱” (benevolence), “诚信” (integrity), “慎独” (self-discipline when alone), “生命至上” (life above all), “和而不同” (harmony in diversity), and “各美其美，美美与共” (appreciate the beauty of one's own culture and that of others, and harmony will be achieved).

3.4 Systematic vs. Fragmented Values Integration

The theoretical distinction between systematic and fragmented values integration guides the design. In systematic integration, values are embedded in the pedagogical structure of each unit in consistent ways, so students come to expect values content as a normal part of learning rather than as an interruption or addition. Values are also connected to assessment, so they are perceived as relevant to performance and achievement. In the present textbook, each unit's values content is placed in the same position (Part 7), uses the same three-subsection structure, and contributes to the final project rubric [7].

4. TEXTBOOK VALUES DESIGN: IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Unit Structure and Values Content Location

Each of the 12 units follows a consistent eight-part structure, with Part 7 designated as “Cross-Cultural Competence and Professional Values.” This positioning is deliberate: after students have engaged with language input, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, they encounter values content as a culminating reflection before the final performance task. This sequence positions values as the bridge between language learning and authentic application.

Part 7 consists of three fixed subsections:

Cross-Cultural Focus compares communication norms across cultural contexts relevant to cruise service. For example, in Unit 1 (Cruise Types), the cross-cultural focus examines different cultural expectations of cruise vacations—whether they are perceived primarily as luxury, adventure, family bonding, or cultural exploration. In

Unit 5 (Complaint Handling), it examines how different cultures express dissatisfaction—direct vs. indirect communication styles, emotional vs. restrained expression, and how service providers should adapt their response strategies accordingly.

Professional Ethics presents case-based discussions of workplace dilemmas. For example, Unit 2 (Industry Terminology) presents a case about a crew member who discovers a safety issue but faces pressure from a supervisor to ignore it, requiring students to consider the balance between compliance and responsibility. Unit 7 (Laundry Service) presents a case about a lost or damaged item, requiring consideration of the limits of liability and the ethics of apology and compensation.

Traditional Chinese Service Values introduces one or two classical concepts and explores their application to cruise service. The concepts are presented with a brief explanation of their classical origins, followed by discussion questions about their relevance to contemporary service. For example, Unit 4 (Embarkation and Disembarkation) introduces “宾至如归” (guests feel at home) and asks learners to consider what practices would help international guests feel truly welcomed and comfortable.

4.2 The Twelve Concepts and Their Distribution

The 12 concepts are distributed across the units to ensure they progress from general to specific and build on each other over the course of the textbook:

Unit	Concept	Translation	Theme Connection
1	有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎	Friends from afar, is it not a pleasure?	Welcoming diversity
2	言必信，行必果	Words trustworthy, actions decisive	Reliability
3	将心比心	Put yourself in others' shoes	Empathy in service
4	宾至如归	Guests feel at home	Welcoming service
5	以诚待人	Treat others with sincerity	Honest problem-solving
6	仁爱	Benevolence	Care and compassion
7	慎独	Self-discipline in solitude	Honest work standards
8	民以食为天	Food is the foundation	Food service professionalism
9	事不过夜	Never put off till tomorrow	Timeliness
10	生命至上	Life above all	Safety priority
11	和而不同	Harmony with diversity	Inclusive entertainment
12	各美其美，美美与共	Appreciate diversity; harmony through sharing	Cross-cultural service

4.3 Professional Ethics Content and Pedagogy

The professional ethics content follows a case-based approach designed to develop moral reasoning rather than simply to inculcate prescribed behaviors. Each ethics section follows a consistent pedagogical sequence:

Case presentation: A brief scenario describing a realistic workplace dilemma faced by cruise service personnel (2-3 paragraphs, written at the unit's language level)

Comprehension check: Questions to ensure understanding of the factual situation

Stakeholder analysis: Identification of who is affected and how

Options identification: Generation of possible courses of action

Values discussion: Which values are relevant to the dilemma?

Decision and justification: What would you do and why?

The cases were developed in consultation with industry partners (corporate trainers and service supervisors) to ensure authenticity. They cover a range of dilemma types:

Safety vs. convenience: E.g., a supervisor asks you to bypass safety procedures to save time

Guest vs. policy: E.g., a guest requests something that violates policy but is seeking an exception

Colleague vs. guest: E.g., a colleague's error has caused a guest complaint

Honesty vs. guest satisfaction: E.g., a guest has made a misunderstanding about what was promised

4.4 Integration with Other Unit Components

Values content is not confined to Part 7 but is integrated throughout each unit. The reading passages in Part 2 often highlight cultural or ethical dimensions relevant to the unit's service context. The listening texts in Part 3 include service interactions where values are implicitly conveyed through respectful or problematic communication. The speaking tasks in Part 4 include scenarios that require values-based decision-making (e.g., "You have made a mistake on a guest's order—how do you handle it?"). The writing tasks in Part 6 include forms that embed ethical reporting (e.g., complaint documentation) and reflective writing about service values.

The project and assessment section (Part 8) includes values-relevant criteria in the scoring rubric. For example, "Cultural Sensitivity" is a scored category in the role-play assessments, and "Professional Conduct" appears in the work habits evaluation criteria. This signals to students that values-relevant performance is part of what they are being judged on and is therefore "real" and consequential rather than optional or decorative.

5. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND VALIDATION

5.1 The "Three-Chief-Editor" Mechanism and Values Validation

The values content was developed through the same collaborative "Three-Chief-Editor" mechanism described in Paper 1. This mechanism provided important safeguards for the values integration in ways that were not anticipated at the outset:

School Subject Leader (values design lead): Responsible for articulating the overall values framework, selecting concepts, and developing pedagogical content. This role ensured pedagogical soundness and coherence.

Corporate Technical Expert: Responsible for reviewing values content for authenticity and avoiding imposition of cultural values that conflict with international service standards. Crucially, the corporate partners provided feedback when values concepts were being applied in ways that would not be perceived as authentic by international guests, helping to ensure the values integration was service-relevant rather than merely symbolic.

Industry Authority: Responsible for reviewing the cross-cultural content for accuracy and avoiding cultural stereotypes. The industry partners brought experience with actual service interactions across multiple cultural contexts, helping to refine the cross-cultural descriptions and case scenarios.

5.2 Balancing International Standards and Chinese Values

A central challenge in the development process was balancing the requirement to integrate Chinese values with the reality that cruise service is an international profession in which Chinese cultural concepts may not be familiar or directly applicable. The resolution was to position Chinese service philosophy not as a replacement for international service standards but as a distinctive contribution to them.

This is operationalized in two ways. First, values content is almost always presented in comparative contexts. When introducing Chinese values, students are also exposed to analogous concepts from other traditions (or to the absence of such concepts). The comparative approach positions Chinese values as one valid perspective among several, fostering cultural confidence without chauvinism.

Second, Chinese values are often presented as offering particular strengths that address gaps or challenges in the international service discourse. For example, the Chinese emphasis on "将心比心" (putting oneself in others' shoes) is presented as an approach to empathy that goes beyond the technical protocols of guest relations and provides a philosophical grounding for authentic care.

5.3 Avoiding Tokenism and Preachiness

The development team was attentive to the risk that values content could be perceived as tokenistic or preachy. Strategies to address this risk included:

Integration over addition: Values content is woven into the structure of every unit, not added as separate sections. Students encountering the textbook as a whole perceive values as part of the fabric of the material.

Authenticity over prescription: Values are presented through discussion and inquiry rather than declaration. The aim is not to persuade learners to accept particular values uncritically but to develop their capacity for ethical reasoning and cultural understanding.

Linguistic challenge: Values content is treated as a legitimate source of language input and task content, not as a break from language learning. The linguistic demands of values content are carefully graded to ensure it contributes to language development.

Respect for diversity: Values content acknowledges the diversity of perspectives within China and internationally. Students are not required to assent to particular values but to understand and engage with them.

6. IMPLEMENTATION AND FINDINGS

6.1 Course Implementation Context

The textbook has been implemented in two iterations of the Cruise English Oral course at Jiangsu Maritime Institute. The course is a required course for first-year cruise service management majors. The two iterations involved:

Fall 2025-Spring 2026: 177 students across three class sections

Spring-Summer 2026: 60 students across one class section

The course is delivered in a blended format using the Chaoxing Learning Platform, with two in-person class sessions per week supplemented by online activities. The values content is covered in class through discussion and role-play, with supplementary online materials for review and reflection.

6.2 Student Engagement with Values Content

Platform data and instructor observations suggest strong student engagement with values content. Key findings include:

Discussion forum participation: The values-focused discussion topics had among the highest participation rates in the course, with students often continuing conversations beyond the required contribution threshold.

Self-reflection quality: Students' written reflections on the values sections showed evidence of genuine engagement rather than perfunctory compliance. Many reflections connected the values content to personal experiences in part-time jobs or internship settings.

Role-play authenticity: In role-play assessments, students incorporated the values-based communication strategies taught in the textbook, such as using culturally sensitive phrasing, apologizing with sincerity, and showing respect for cultural differences.

Language improvement: Analysis of students' speaking performance showed that the values-focused interaction scenarios produced higher language output volume and more complex communication than purely transactional scenarios, suggesting values engagement facilitated rather than constrained language practice.

6.3 Challenges and Tensions

Several challenges were identified in the implementation:

Cultural Sensitivity Concerns: Some students expressed initial wariness about discussing Chinese values in

English, concerned that it might be perceived as ideological. This was addressed through explicit framing of the content as cultural knowledge necessary for understanding both Chinese and international guests, and through consistent modeling of respectful, inquiry-oriented discussion [8].

Time Pressure: The values content added significant material to an already full curriculum. In practice, instructors sometimes shortened the ethics case discussions or moved them to online forums to preserve time for language practice [9]. This suggests the need for the textbook to be slightly streamlined or to provide clearer guidance on how to integrate values content efficiently.

Assessment Challenges: Assessing values-related competencies is inherently challenging. The rubric criteria for cultural sensitivity were sometimes difficult for instructors to apply consistently. Training sessions and rubric calibration exercises helped but did not fully resolve the issue.

Relevance Perception: Some students questioned the relevance of traditional philosophical concepts to their future work, especially if they planned to work on ships with primarily Western crew and management. This perception was addressed through examples showing how Chinese service professionals have successfully applied traditional values in international settings, and by inviting guest speakers from the industry who could speak to the practical value of cultural understanding [10].

6.4 Comparison with Alternative Approaches

Informal comparison with courses using traditional (non-values-integrated) cruise English materials suggests differences in student outcomes. While sample sizes are small and comparisons are not controlled, instructors reported that students using the values-integrated material showed:

Greater willingness to engage in extended oral interactions

More culturally appropriate communication in role-play assessments

Higher confidence in handling cross-cultural situations

More positive attitudes toward the English course itself, especially among students who initially felt English was irrelevant to their future work

7. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Contributions to Knowledge and Practice

This case study makes several contributions to the understanding of values integration in ESP textbooks.

First, it provides a concrete, implementable model for systematic values integration that moves beyond fragmentation. The “One Core, Three Dimensions” framework offers a clear organizing structure that can be adapted to other ESP domains—not by copying the specific concepts, but by applying the logic of identifying an integrating theme and organizing dimensions relevant to the professional context.

Second, it demonstrates the importance of collaborative development mechanisms in validating values content. The “Three-Chief-Editor” mechanism provided an essential check on the authenticity and appropriateness of values content, challenging assumptions that might have led to tokenistic or inappropriate values treatment [11].

Third, it addresses the specific challenge of integrating traditional cultural values into a contemporary ESP context without appearing anachronistic or ideological. The comparative approach and the framing of Chinese service philosophy as a contribution to international service standards rather than a replacement for them provides a template for handling cultural values in cross-cultural contexts.

7.2 Addressing the Confucian Legacy Challenge

The study also contributes to understanding of how the Confucian legacy can be addressed in vocational education. The textbook’s values framework reclaims certain Confucian concepts for service professionalism, presenting

them as resources rather than constraints. For example, the Confucian emphasis on sincerity (诚信) is reframed not as a traditional moral commandment but as a practical requirement for trust in service relationships. The Confucian value of benevolence (仁) is connected to emotional intelligence and guest-centered service.

This reclamation is not uncritical. The textbook's values content includes discussion of historical limitations in Confucian thought, particularly the hierarchical social ordering and the devaluation of manual and service labor that have contributed to the stigma against vocational education. These issues are explicitly discussed in the cross-cultural sections, allowing students to understand the cultural legacy critically rather than adopt it unthinkingly.

7.3 Balancing Values Integration and Language Learning

A key concern for practitioners is whether values content distracts from language learning. The evidence from this implementation suggests that when values content is well-designed and pedagogically integrated, it can enhance rather than detract from language learning for several reasons:

Values content provides authentic and engaging topics for communication, increasing student motivation to speak and write.

Cross-cultural comparisons require complex linguistic functions (comparison, contrast, explanation, persuasion) that develop higher-level language skills.

Ethical case discussions require extended discourse, negotiation of meaning, and argumentation—all of which are valuable language practice.

Reflection tasks develop metacognitive and self-evaluative language skills.

However, this enhancement is not automatic. Values content must be carefully selected and graded for language level, and activities must be designed to maximize language output opportunities. The present textbook's design reflects these considerations, but instructors still need to make pedagogical choices about how much time to allocate to values discussion versus other activities.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

This case study has several limitations. It is based on a single institution and a single course iteration; findings may not generalize. The evidence for enhanced learning outcomes is suggestive rather than definitive, lacking controlled comparison. Student perceptions of the values content were assessed informally rather than through validated instruments.

Future research could address these limitations through:

Comparative studies of values-integrated vs. traditional materials

Longitudinal studies of values integration effects on workplace communication competence

Survey research on student and instructor perceptions of values integration

Analysis of how values integration affects learner motivation and engagement

Cross-cultural validation of the "One Core, Three Dimensions" framework in other ESP contexts

7.5 Implications for Policy and Practice

For textbook developers and curriculum designers, this case study suggests several practical recommendations:

Values integration should be systematic, not ad hoc. A consistent structure across units helps normalize values content and helps students see its relevance.

Values content should be developed collaboratively with industry partners who can validate authenticity and appropriateness.

Values should be framed as professional competence rather than ideological compliance. The “Chinese Service Philosophy” framing positions values as practical assets for service excellence.

Values content should be graded linguistically and connected to language learning objectives, not treated as separate content.

Assessment should include values-relevant criteria to communicate that values matter for professional performance.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a case study of systematic values integration in an ESP textbook for cruise service students. The “One Core, Three Dimensions” framework—centered on Chinese Service Philosophy and organized around cultural confidence, professionalism, and service awareness—provides a concrete model for moving beyond fragmented and tokenistic values content toward integrated, pedagogically sound design.

The case demonstrates that values integration need not conflict with language learning objectives. When values content is carefully selected, linguistically graded, and pedagogically integrated, it can enhance student engagement, provide authentic topics for communication, and develop higher-level language skills while also cultivating the professional values essential for service occupations.

The study also addresses the distinctive challenges of values integration in vocational education in China, particularly the need to reclaim Confucian values for contemporary professional contexts while acknowledging the limitations of the cultural legacy. The textbook’s comparative approach—presenting Chinese values as one valid contribution to international service standards rather than as a replacement for them—offers a model for handling cultural values in cross-cultural professional education.

In an era of increasing emphasis on values education across all educational sectors, this case study contributes a practical, evidence-informed framework for achieving the policy goal of systematic values integration without sacrificing the integrity and effectiveness of ESP instruction. For practitioners facing the challenge of “course-based ideological and political education” in ESP contexts, the principles and approaches described here offer a starting point for design that is both pedagogically sound and value-rich.

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