

Application of the ICT-Based Blended Teaching Model for Ideological and Political Education: A Case Study of Two Consecutive Interpreting Classes

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Abstract—The traditional interpreting teaching model has long been plagued by the problem of insufficient teaching time, which brings great challenges to the integration of ideological and political education (IPE) into the classroom. This empirical study established a special blended teaching model based on the ICT-powered online education ecosystem and examined its application to and effect for conducting ideological and political education in the consecutive interpreting course. A contrastive experiment was performed among two classes of English majors, which were taught under two different models respectively: the traditional offline model and the ICT-based blended model. A questionnaire and SPSS were employed to collect and process the data. The results showed that the application of the ICT-based blended model was effective in integrating IPE into the course and improving the students' consecutive interpreting competence. A sample of teaching design was also demonstrated to exemplify the application of the ICT features in the action research.

Keywords—ICT; blended teaching; ideological and political education; consecutive interpreting teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of “integrating ideological and political education (IPE) into the curriculum” was first put forward by the educational authorities in Shanghai, China, and then implemented as a teaching reform program at the local colleges and universities in Shanghai before it was promoted across the country [1]. In 2020, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China issued the *Guidelines for Ideological and Political Construction of University Courses*, which requires that each course should play a role in comprehensively developing IPE in university curriculums [2]. “Ideological and political education” (IPE) has become one of the research focuses in the Chinese academia ever since.

At present, studies of IPE in courses for English majors mainly delve into four aspects: core connotations and significance, implementation pathways, teaching practice, and educators [3].

Given the fact that English majors, compared with others, are more frequently exposed to international media and thus are more likely to be influenced by a wide range of ideologies and political narratives, the importance of IPE can never be overemphasized. However, it is “a big challenge to strive for the compatibility and balance between IPE and the teaching of the major courses for English majors” (Liu and Feng, 2022) [4]. In particular, many interpreting teachers have been struggling to solve the problem of insufficient teaching time in the traditional interpreting class in China [5] while having to take into account the integration of IPE into their tight course schedules. Scholars have demonstrated the possibility of constructing such models as “flipped classroom+” [5][6] and “Internet+” [7] for incorporating IPE in courses. However, there is insufficient empirical research on the application and effect of blended teaching powered by information and communication technology (ICT) for IPE in the consecutive interpreting course. At present, the practice of IPE integration into interpreting classrooms basically only considers adding the ideological and political elements but fails to address the long existing headache of teaching time scarcity and weak practicality in the course.

Consecutive Interpreting (CI), as a practice-oriented course in the curriculum of Guangzhou Xinhua University (GXU), echoes the University’s target of cultivating practical and versatile talents, and attempts to meet the need of integrating IPE into the teaching schedule. To achieve this end, this paper carries out action research on the application of ICT to establishing a blended teaching model for IPE integration into the CI course, which involves two dimensions (online and offline), three links (before, during and after class), and three aspects (educational objectives, teaching contents and teaching methods). Such an ICT-based model hopefully can not only fit IPE into the tight course schedule, but tackle with the shortcomings of traditional interpreting teaching.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1. Research Questions

The following two research questions will be answered in this study.

- 1) How will the ICT-based blended teaching model for IPE influence the students’ CI competence?
- 2) Will the ICT-based blended teaching model effectively serve the purpose of IPE in the CI course?

2.2. Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that the ICT-based blended teaching model for IPE will exert a positive influence on student interpreters’ consecutive interpreting competence probably as a result of lengthened learning time, more mutual learning opportunities and greater learning motivations. Meanwhile, IPE is likely to be well integrated into the whole process of the course with the help of the ICT-based blended teaching model.

2.3. Research Tools and Subjects

SPSS is employed to analyze the scores of the students in the final test of CI as an indicator of their CI competence.

An online questionnaire is also distributed to the students to collect their evaluation of and comments on the effect of the IPE in the course under the traditional teaching model and the ICT-aided blended teaching model respectively.

The research subjects of this study comprise 70 third-year English majors from GXU, who are complete beginners of CI. They are divided evenly into two groups: the experimental group and the control group.

2.4. Research Procedures

1) *Pre-teaching preparation*: In the first session of the course, all the students in the experimental group are required to join the ICT-based online learning ecosystem that consists of the online teaching and learning management tool Xuexitong, the online learning community Xiaodaka and the MOOC platform on icourse163.org.

2) *Application of the teaching models*: The traditional teaching model is implemented in the control group where 35 students are taught entirely in the virtual classroom without any online learning activities organized for them. In comparison, the experimental group learn both online and offline under the ICT-based blended teaching model, which requires them to watch MOOC videos on icourse163 for self-learning, share their learning records on Xiaodaka for mutual learning, and participate in all other learning activities on Xuexitong where they can sign in, discuss, comment and submit assignments, etc. Both groups will be taught by the same teacher with the same teaching contents and teaching materials for 18 weeks throughout the fall semester of the 2022-2023 academic year.

3) *Opinion polls via a questionnaire*: An online questionnaire created on wxj.cn will be sent to the 70 students in both groups to collect their evaluation and comments on IPE in the course under two different teaching models.

4) *The final test*: By the end of the course, the same final test will be carried out among both groups to assess their CI competence, with two experienced conference interpreters marking their interpretations based on three assessment parameters: content, delivery and communication. SPSS will be used to process the data.

3. THE ICT-BASED IPE INTEGRATION MODEL FOR CI

3.1. The Goals of IPE

The development of IPE in the curriculum needs to take into consideration the characteristics of the school and the curriculum [1]. CI is a highly practice-oriented course in line with of GXU's positioning as an application-oriented university. The course centers around skill training, with thematic interpreting practice and IPE as its two pillars. This means students in this course will first acquire some basic interpreting skills and then use various thematic materials to practice

to consolidate their skills. At the same time, IPE is incorporated into the course schedule, aiming to foster students' all-round qualities of professionalism, work ethics, logical and critical thinking, legal awareness, sense of social responsibility, patriotism, a holistic outlook on history, cultural confidence, scientific spirit, etc. Overall, the course is designed to train and produce interpreters for the purposes of spreading the voice of China, promoting exchanges between China and the rest of the world, and serving the regional economy.

3.2. The IPE Elements of Teaching Contents

“The content link is the starting point for foreign language teachers to implement IPE in their courses, and also the main ‘handle’ of IPE in the curriculum... Whether they are provided in textbooks or selected by teachers, teaching materials are the major source of IPE in a course” [8]. In the CI course, the materials specially chosen for interpreting training are diverse, covering not only common and regular topics, but also closely echoing industrial trends and current affairs. Therefore, it enables students to broaden their horizons and enrich their industrial and encyclopedic knowledge through interpreting for speeches and interviews from all walks of life in exercises and at mock conferences. In addition, the diversified training materials make it possible and convenient to fit IPE into the tight teaching schedule. IPE goals should be based on the teaching text or teaching material [9]. Therefore, the teachers, according to the IPE goals that the course intends to achieve, carefully select the training materials to ensure that the contents are positive and healthy for conducting IPE imperceptibly in the process of interpreting training.

The teaching contents of the CI course is divided into two parts: basic skills and thematic interpreting, intertwined with IPE. Basic skills are the mainstay, including listening comprehension, short-term memory, note-taking, language conversion, figure interpreting, public speaking, work ethics and pre-task preparation. While self-studying interpreting skills from a theoretical perspective online, students can simultaneously receive IPE and improve their professional qualities and work ethics, such as the abilities of distinguishing priorities, logical thinking, confident delivery, dress codes, a meticulous and rigorous work attitude, and a sustainable learning awareness. Thematic interpreting training with diversely themed materials not only consolidate the basic skills, but also provides the themes for IPE, such as environmental protection, artificial intelligence, the Chinese culture, politics, diplomacy, epidemic prevention and control, and feminism. The topics are deliberately selected for cultivating students' professionalism, work ethics, logical and critical thinking, life-long learning awareness, sense of social responsibility, patriotism, cultural confidence, to name just few, in a comprehensive manner as shown in Figure 1.

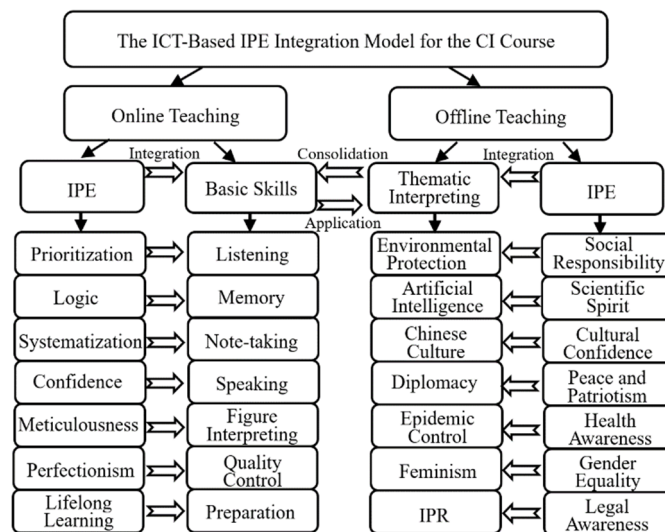


Figure 1. The ICT-Based IPE Integration Model/Blended Teaching Model for the CI Course

Under the ICT-based IPE Integration Model (see Figure 1), which is also the blended teaching model, the CI teaching involves both the online and offline dimensions. Before class, the teacher uploads learning guidance videos on the the ICT-powered teaching management platform Xuexitong and ask the students to watch them online before they start their compulsory virtual learning of CI skills on the MOOC platform icourse163. Through self-study, the students master the theoretical knowledge about CI skills, and participate in discussions in the virtual learning community built on Xuexitong. In the offline classroom, the teacher does not have to repeat the theoretical teaching of interpreting skills, but instead they can spend more time organizing practical training activities. For example, group discussion, role play, presentation, public speaking, and mock conferences, a variety of hands-on activities are available based on the theme of the training material to encourage students to apply what they learned online before class. The design of online and offline teaching links highlights student-centeredness, which not only enables the students to consolidate their interpreting skills in diverse classroom activities, but also proactively explore and understand IPE.

3.3. Integrated Teaching Methods for IPE Integration

Based on the blended teaching model (see Figure 1), an ICT-based mixture of main teaching methods will be adopted for the IPE integration into the course, as shown in (but not limited to) Figure 2.

1) *The self-learning-based method:* The teacher encourages and requires the students to teach themselves theoretical knowledge about interpreting skills by watching MOOC videos and resolving their puzzles with the question-and-answer approach with the necessary support from the teacher via Xuexitong or Xiaodaka, where ICT-powered instant communications are enabled.

2) *The discussion-based method*: Under the guidance of the teacher, the students will be grouped to discuss or debate on topics for IPE purposes both in the virtual and physical classrooms to express their own opinions and cultivate their independent and critical thinking.

3) *The task-driven method*: The teacher will assign the students exploratory learning tasks before class according to the theme of each lesson, and the students have to do extensive and targeted reading so that they can be equipped with necessary background knowledge before they can participate in discussions on related topics. In the physical classroom, the students will complete role play and other hands-on tasks, such as mock conferences, to consolidate their CI skills and receive IPE in the process at the same time.

4) *The practice-oriented method*: The teacher selects training materials according to the IPE goals of each class, and use them for in-class training and after-class practice, so as to imperceptibly instill IPE into the process of interpreting training.

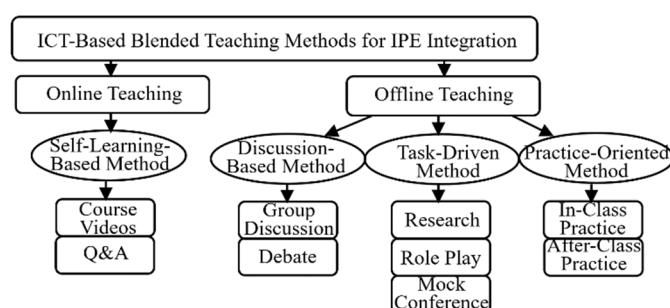


Figure 2. ICT-Based Blended Teaching Methods for IPE Integration

4. A SAMPLE TEACHING DESIGN

In this section, a sample teaching design for the lesson “Figure Interpretating” will be presented to show how to integrate IPE into the teaching sessions before, in and after class based on the ICT-aided blended teaching model.

4.1. Teaching Objectives

1) *Knowledge and skill objectives*: This lesson aims at helping the students to understand the English and Chinese number recording methods, to master number conversion skills between the two languages, to flexibly use diversified expressions to describe trends and changes in statistics, and to get familiar with the process and procedures of conference interpreting.

2) *IPE Objectives*: This lesson is designed to enable the students: a) to cultivate a careful and rigorous working attitude in the process of figure conversion exercise; b) to think deeply about the epidemic mentioned in the training material so that they can cherish life, value health, and respect the law of nature; c) to recognize China’s successful experience and the concerted efforts of the whole nation in the battle against the epidemic, and thus to strengthen their pride in and love for their motherland.

4.2.Pre-Diagnosis of Learning Difficulties

There are great differences between the English and Chinese ways of expression of numbers, and it is not uncommon that there are multiple numbers occurring in speeches. Therefore, numbers are one of the biggest headaches in Chinese-English interpreting especially for student interpreters. In addition, the vast majority of the students are relatively insensitive to numbers, thus facing major challenges in understanding, recording and conversing numbers between the two languages.

4.3.Teaching Prediction

Most of the students should be able to achieve the teaching objectives through practice before, during and after class. However, the following situations may also occur: 1) some students might feel discouraged because they could not quickly or accurately converse the figures into the other language, therefore, they should be encouraged to improve their response to and accuracy of figure conversion through plenty of exercises after class; 2) some students might fail to master the expressions of trends and changes with figures or realize the importance of diversifying expressions in interpreting, so the teacher should draw their attention to accumulating related expressions with numbers through reading; 3) a small number of students might find it difficult to express their views on epidemic control measures in English, and the teacher should try to make students feel the elements of IPE so as to achieve the desired effect of IPE.

4.4.Teaching Methods

This lesson adopts an online and offline blended teaching model which combines such approaches as video watching, group discussion, public speaking, and interpreting practice to achieve the IPE goals imperceptibly. Classroom teaching methods include the autonomous learning method, task-driven method, communicative teaching method, situation-based method, case analysis method, retrospection and summary methods.

4.5.Teaching Procedures

Before the class, the students are required to watch the MOOC videos on icourse163.org and micro videos on Xuexitong, learn the skills of bilingual number conversion and raise their puzzles if they have any. In the physical classroom, the teacher makes full use of the limited teaching time of 90 minutes in total and concentrates on strengthening the students' interpreting skills through practice. At the same time, a mock conference will be held in class to provide the students a simulated working environment to apply their interpreting skills. After class, the students will practice independently or in a study group. Throughout the whole process of teaching, the teacher will strictly supervise the IPE elements to ensure they are soundly and appropriately delivered. Specific teaching procedures, methods and materials for IPE are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. TEACHING PROCEDURES AND IPE INTEGRATION BASED ON THE BLENDED TEACHING MODEL

Teaching Sessions	Teaching Methods	Teaching Materials	Integration of IPE Elements
Before Class (60 min)	Autonomous Learning (60 min)	Learning instruction videos on Xuexitong; MOOC videos on icourse163.org: <i>Conversion of Numbers & Contextualizing of Number</i>	The students develop the ability of independent learning by studying the number conversion skills by themselves and become more meticulous and rigorous as an interpreter.
In Class (90 min)	Lead-in (1 min)	A photo with incorrect English translation of the sales volume of a famous Chinese e-commerce platform during the Double 11 Shopping Festival	The students are expected to correct the translation errors in the photo and realize the importance of carefulness and preciseness in interpreting.
	Communicative Teaching (5 min)	The students' questions, puzzles or feedback concerning the online course before class	The teacher answers the students' questions and addresses their puzzles interactively so as to cultivate their independent thinking and critical thinking.
	Practice-Oriented Method (4 min)	English-Chinese conversion exercise of two challenging numbers	The exercise is designed to test the students' mastery of and response to number recording and conversion, and to improve their concentration and carefulness at work.
	Practice-Oriented Method + Task-Driven Method + Case Analysis (25 min)	Two recording segments on the topic of Covid-19 for interpreting exercise and discussion: 1) the WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris' comment on the deaths caused by Covid-19; 2) a news report on China's measures for and achievements of epidemic control	The exercise and discussion hopefully can raise the students' awareness of the importance of health and protection against diseases, boost their pride in the unity and contributions of the whole nation in epidemic control as well as foster patriotism in them.
	Situation-Based Teaching + Role Play (40 min)	A mock conference organized by the students with the theme of epidemic control	The mock conference aims at creating a simulated interpreting setting for the student interpreters to apply their skills, improve their professionalism and deepen their understanding of the work ethics of professional interpreters.
	Retrospection and Summary (5 min)	Comments on the in-class practice materials and the students' performance	Through retrospection and summary, the students are guided to reinforce their recognition of the importance of national unity, health, professionalism and work ethics.
After Class (60 min)	Autonomous Practice (60 min)	Four segments of recording about the impact of Covid-19	The exercise is designed to help the students consolidate their interpreting skills and further enhance their health awareness.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ICT-based blended teaching model for IPE integration into the CI course was implemented in the experimental group (a class of 35 English majors) for 18 weeks throughout the fall semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, with the control group of another 35 students taught under the traditional teaching model which is merely an offline mode. At the end of the course, the teacher conducted a final test and sent an online questionnaire to collect all the 70 subjects' quantified performance under and qualitative reviews on the two different teaching models. The test and the questionnaire both obtained 70 valid copies of data from the two groups respectively.

According to the final test results, the experimental group outperformed the control group in interpreting competence. As shown in Table 2, the *t* value for content is 5.188, with the *p* value being 0.000, which indicates a significant difference between the ICT-based blended teaching model and the traditional offline teaching model. However, when it comes to delivery and communication, there is no significant difference between the two models, with the *p* value being 0.177 for delivery and 0.682 for communication, but the mean scores of the students trained under the ICT-based blended model in these two parameters were much higher than those under the traditional model.

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND *T*-TEST RESULTS OF THE FINAL TEST

Groups	Number of Subjects	Content				Delivery				Communication			
		Description		T-test		Description		T-test		Description		T-test	
		mean	sd	t	p	mean	sd	t	p	mean	sd	t	p
Experimental	35	52.40	4.03	5.188	0.000	14.66	2.87	6.778	0.177	14.57	14.57	0.552	0.682
Control	35	44.46	8.11			9.31	3.68			6.89	14.20		

The reasons why the experimental group had a better performance overall in the test might be found in the top four features of the blended teaching model, which were chosen and ranked by the students through the questionnaire according to their helpfulness to interpreting competence improvement, i.e. longer learning time, mutual learning, autonomous learning and peer pressure, garnering 34, 31, 29 and 25 out of 35 votes respectively (see Figure 3).

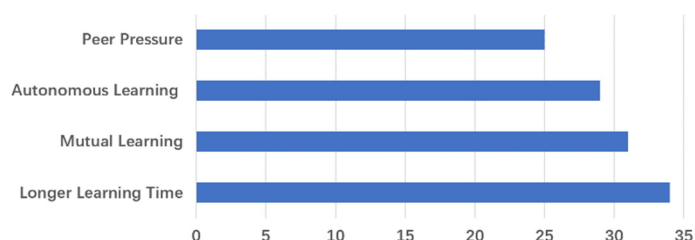


Figure 3. The Vote for the Top 4 Features of the ICT-Based Blended Teaching Model for CI Competence Improvement

Firstly, the experimental group spent more time on learning per capita on average than the control group, with the former totaling 3456 minutes while the latter, 1620 minutes only (see Figure 4). The average per capita learning time spent in the physical classroom by both groups was almost equal, standing at around 1620 minutes, since they all had attended the course offline for 18 consecutive weeks, 90 minutes per week. However, the experimental group, according to their learning records on icourse163 and Xuexitong, spent an average of 1836 minutes on virtual learning per person while the control group never learned online for the course because they were not required to do so under the purely offline teaching model.

Secondly, the experimental group had more chances of mutual learning. The ICT-powered mini program Xiaodaka was utilized to build a virtual community for mutual learning, where the students share their learning records with each other within a period of 21 days, with 29 of them (around 82.86%) posting their learning records for 19 to 20 days and 31 of them (around 88.57%) generating 19 to 21 posts (see Figure 5). In contrast, the control group basically learned and practiced individually and privately before and after class, lacking the opportunity of mutual learning and communication.

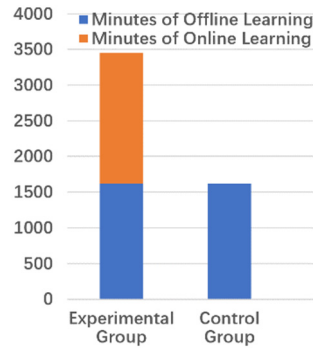


Figure 4. Minutes of Offline and Online Learning by Groups

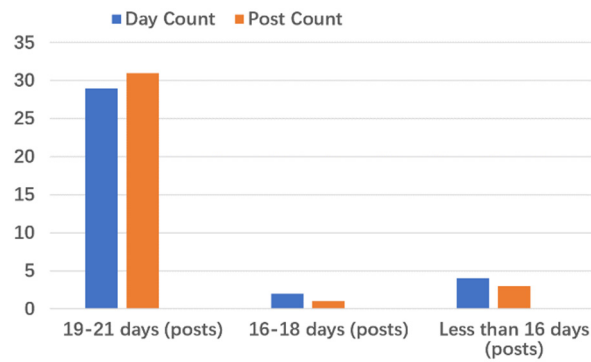


Figure 5. Number of Students by Day and Post Counts of CI Practice in the Online Learning Community

Thirdly, the ICT-based blended teaching model was conducive to enhancing the students autonomous learning ability. With the help of the ICT-powered platforms icourse163, Xuexitong and Xiaodaka, the experimental group was able to learn by themselves some theoretical knowledge about CI from the abundant online learning resources, and review and practice the skills they acquired in the physical classroom with great convenience enabled by ICT.

Fourthly, the experimental group was much more motivated due to peer pressure. In the virtual community, the students could share their learning records on a daily basis. Those less diligent would thus be inspired to work harder when they saw their peers kept learning and practicing CI skills.

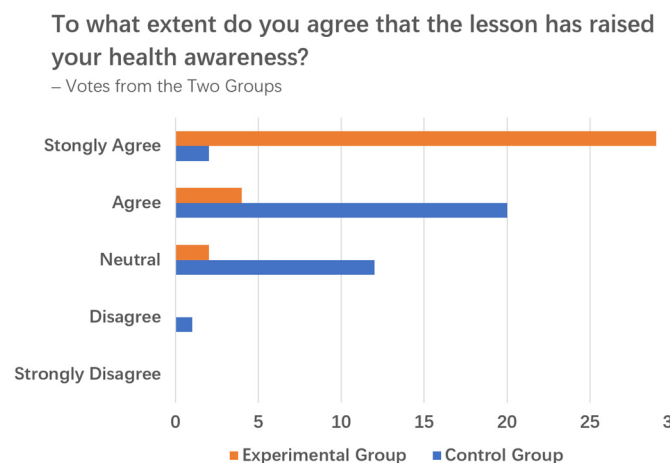


Figure 6. The Two Groups' Attitudes Towards the Efficacy of the Lesson in Health Awareness Enhancement

Besides, the questionnaire investigated IPE integration into the course under the two different teaching models. Taking the “Figure Interpreting” lesson as an example, both the experimental and control groups were asked to what extent the lesson had enhanced their health awareness (see Figure 6). In the experimental group, 33 out of 35 (about 94.29%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their health awareness had been raised after taking the lesson, with 29 voting for “strongly agree”, 4, “agree”, 2, “neutral”, and none, “disagree” or “strongly disagree”. In the control group, however, only 22 out of 35 (about 62.86%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed”, with 2 strongly agreeing, 20 agreeing, 1 disagreeing, none of them strongly disagreeing and 12 staying neutral. Obviously, the ICT-based blended teaching model played a more effective role than the traditional one in IPE integration, with a difference of 31.43% in the integration rate. This probably can be explained by the fact that the former took a more student-centered approach, encouraging the students to play a major role in IPE exploration and allowing more learning time for conducting in-depth IPE activities.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the experiment and questionnaire show that the ICT-based blended teaching model, compared with the traditional one, can effectively improve the students' CI competence probably because it lengthens learning time, provides more mutual learning opportunities, encourages autonomous learning and motivates the learners with peer pressure.

In addition, the ICT-based model can better facilitate IPE integration into the CI course probably as a result of its student-centeredness and lengthened learning time, which allows students to proactively conduct deeper exploration of the ideological and political elements in the teaching materials.

Therefore, it is advisable to make full use of ICT-based approaches in the CI course, such as online course videos, online teaching management platforms and virtual learning communities, to establish an ICT-powered online education system, based on which blended teaching can be conveniently implemented to not only improve students' CI competence but also more effectively integrate IPE into the course.

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