

The Current Status, Hotspots, and Trends in Research on Ideological and Political Education in Foreign Language Courses — A Bibliometric Analysis Based on CiteSpace

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts a systematic review of academic research on ideological and political education in foreign language courses in China over the past two decades. Utilizing CiteSpace for visual bibliometric analysis, the researchers examine publication trends, disciplinary distribution, and collaboration patterns among authors and institutions. Through co-occurrence mapping, cluster analysis, and burst keyword chronology, the researchers identify evolving research priorities and activity levels across different phases of the field's development, while projecting future research trajectories. Current limitations are critically examined, and evidence-based recommendations are proposed to inform subsequent scholarship.

Keywords: Ideological and political education, Foreign language courses, CiteSpace, Visualization analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the status of ideological and political education has been significantly elevated within China's education system. The Party and the state have continuously optimized educational quality through various reforms and policies. On May 28, 2020, the Ministry of Education (MOE) issued the Guidelines for Integrating Ideological and Political Education into University Curricula, explicitly stating that the purpose of education extends beyond knowledge transmission to encompass the cultivation of students' values. On November 3, 2020, the MOE emphasized the critical importance of ideological and political education during the National Conference on New Liberal Arts Construction. It underscored the need to strengthen the cultivation of students' ideological, moral, and ethical standards within the context of new liberal arts development, enhancing their sense of social responsibility and national consciousness.

Foreign language teaching provides students with a vital platform for understanding foreign cultures and ideologies, simultaneously serving as a crucial channel for ideological and political education. It plays a core role in guiding students' value formation. English teaching, in particular, acts as a bridge connecting Chinese and Western cultures, exerting a profound influence on students' worldviews and values. Integrating ideological and political education into foreign language curricula not only encourages students to critically absorb foreign cultures but also helps them establish values aligned with Chinese characteristics, thereby strengthening cultural confidence. On March 23, 2024, Professor He Lianzhen, Chair of the National Advisory Board for College Foreign Language Teaching under the MOE, proposed at the 8th National High-Level Forum on Foreign Language Education Reform and Development in Higher Education that the distinctive features and advantages of college foreign language courses should be fully leveraged. Teaching should aim to achieve values shaping, knowledge imparting, and ability developing, helping students form correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, while

simultaneously reinforcing their cultural confidence and patriotic sentiments. The integration of ideological and political education into foreign language courses has garnered significant scholarly attention due to its profound educational significance. Against this backdrop, the importance of ideological and political construction within foreign language curricula has become increasingly prominent, its inherent educational implications more profound, consequently attracting extensive academic interest.

To comprehensively and objectively assess the research landscape of ideological and political education in foreign language teaching, this study employs the CiteSpace data analysis tool to conduct a visual analysis of relevant academic literature published domestically in China. Through this approach, the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the current state of research on ideological and political education in foreign language teaching in China, clarify core issues and development trends within the field, and systematically organize the research themes.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Research Questions

This study primarily addresses the following questions:

- What are the research hotspots and current status concerning studies on "Ideological and Political Education in Foreign Languages courses"?
- How can the keyword co-occurrence maps and burst term detection tables generated by CiteSpace be used to forecast future research directions?
- What implications does this research hold for the future development of the field of ideological and political education in foreign languages courses?

2.2 Data Sources and Processing

This study employed the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, restricting sources to journals indexed in both the Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI) and Peking University Core Journals. Our literature retrieval spanned publications from 2004 to 2024. Search parameters utilized the subject terms "foreign language ideological-political education", with "foreign language" truncated to include "English" and "ideological-political education" expanded to cover "ideological and political education". The initial search yielded 558 relevant publications (as of April 3, 2024).

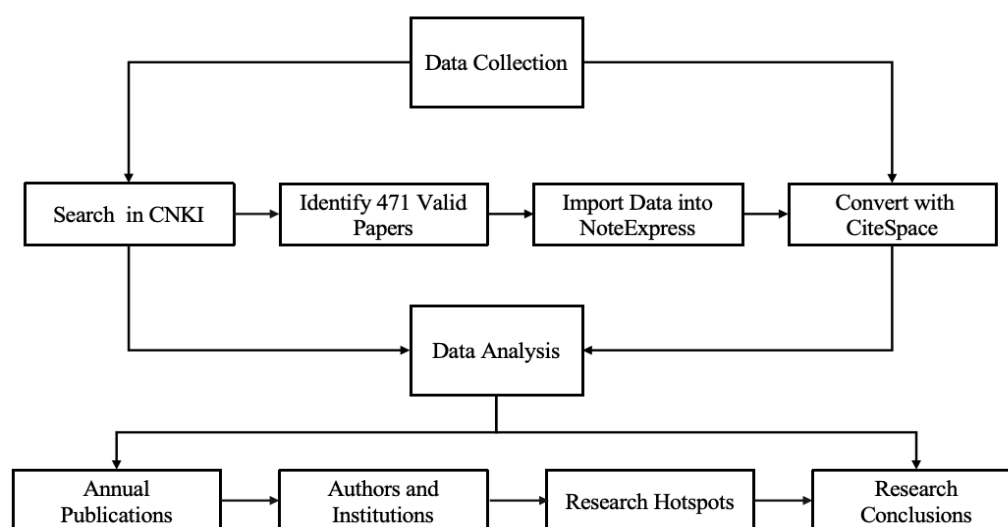


Figure 1 Visual Analysis Workflow.

To ensure thematic relevance, results were ranked by relevance (highest to lowest); The researchers manually excluded extraneous materials including: Journal announcements, Conference

proceedings, Call-for-paper notices, The final curated corpus comprised 471 qualifying articles. This study employs CiteSpace 6.3.R1 (64-bit) as the analytical tool for visualizing the relevant

literature. CiteSpace is a Java-based bibliometric and analysis software designed by Dr. Chaomei Chen. Renowned for its powerful capabilities, it can graphically represent bibliographic data through visualizations including keyword co-occurrence maps, highly cited reference networks, author collaboration networks, timeline views, etc. These visualizations enable researchers to intuitively grasp research hotspots, the relationships between publications, and developmental trends, making it a vital auxiliary tool for scientific research and academic communication. The main steps involved in applying CiteSpace software for analysis in this paper are illustrated in "Figure 1".

3. ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Overview of Ideological and Political Education in Foreign Language Curriculum Studies

From 2004 to 2023, scholarly output on "Foreign Language Ideological-Political Education" evolved through three distinct phases: stability, gradual growth, and rapid expansion.

During the initial phase (2004–2015), annual publications remained consistently low, rarely exceeding five papers. This reflects limited academic engagement with the field during this period.

A shift occurred after 2016, when publication numbers began rising steadily. This upturn was spurred by the National Conference on Ideological-Political Work in Higher Education (2016), which elevated the status of ideological education and mandated its integration throughout curricula. Subsequently, the Implementation Outline for Improving Ideological-Political Work Quality in Higher Education (December 2017) provided operational standards, further stimulating research interest.

The trend accelerated significantly following the 2019 National Forum on Ideological-Political Theory Teaching, which emphasized virtue cultivation as education's fundamental mission. Concurrently, the Ministry of Education's New Liberal Arts Construction Declaration (2020) formally positioned ideological-political education within disciplinary reform frameworks. These developments catalyzed exponential growth, with publications peaking in 2021.

Though 2022–2023 volumes declined from this peak, they consistently surpassed 110 annual publications—over tenfold the 2019 output. This sustained momentum, however, reveals emerging homogenization: studies increasingly address repetitive themes with limited methodological or conceptual innovation.

Publications for 2024 (based on preliminary data through April) remain modest, yet the established trajectory suggests annual output will likely exceed 118 papers.

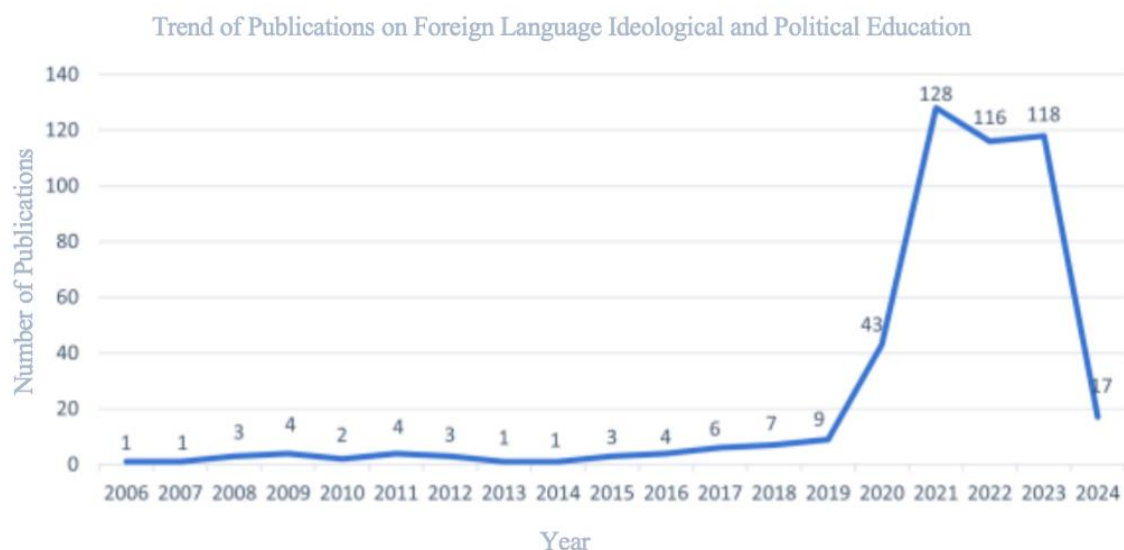


Figure 2 Annual publication volume trend: publication trends in "foreign language ideological-political education" research.

3.2 Overview of Ideological-Political Integration in Foreign Language Education

3.2.1 Disciplinary Focus

The disciplinary landscape reveals where scholarly attention and resources converge. Research on foreign language ideological-political education concentrates predominantly in three fields: Foreign Language Studies (42.25%), Chinese Language and Literature(17.28%), and Higher Education Research (9.6%). Together these domains represent nearly 70% of publications.

Foreign Language Studies' predominance reflects its direct relevance to language teaching contexts where ideological-political integration naturally occurs. Chinese Language and Literature's significant share stems from its rich repository of cultural narratives and value systems essential for ideological education. Higher Education Research ranks third as it examines pedagogical reform—a natural home for studies addressing the dual mission of knowledge transmission and values cultivation. Scholarship in this area bridges theory with classroom practice, driving innovation in curricular design.

3.2.2 Research Authors and Institution Networks

Identifying active scholars and institutions highlights thought leadership while collaboration patterns reveal partnership opportunities. Using CiteSpace with these parameters are used:

- Timeframe: 2004-2024
- Slicing: Annual segments
- Node type: Author co-occurrence

The resulting network (“Figure 3”) comprises 185 nodes and 82 links (density = 0.0048).

Analysis of CNKI data (“Table 1”) and co-authorship patterns indicates:

- Chinese scholars dominate productivity, though no individual exceeds 10

Using CiteSpace with institution-based nodes and identical parameters (timeframe: 2004-2024, annual slicing), the institutional co-occurrence map (“Figure 4”) contains 161 nodes and 38 links (density = 0.003). Analysis of CNKI data (“Table 2”) and the collaboration network reveals:

publications. Leading contributors include Liu Zhengguang, Xu Jinfen, Wen Qiufang, Huang Guowen, and He Lianzhen—all with ≥4 publications in core journals.

- Collaboration remains limited, characterized predominantly by independent scholarship or small-team efforts rather than sustained networks.

Table 1. Top 10 authors by publication volume

No.	Author	No. of Publications
1	Liu Zhengguang	6
2	Xu Jinfang	5
3	Wen Qiufang	5
4	Huang Guowen	5
5	He Lianzhen	4
6	Wang Shouren	3
7	Wang Xin	3
8	Liu Jianda	3
9	Xiang Mingyou	2
10	Xiao Weiqing	2

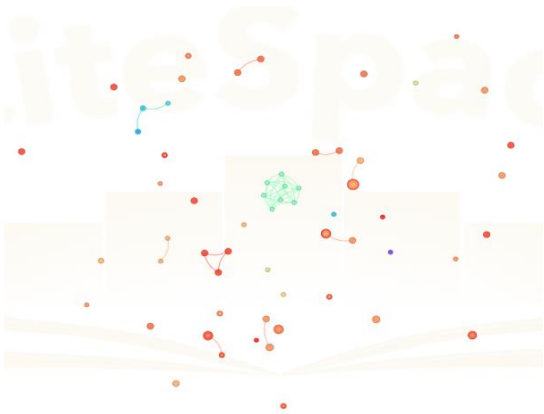


Figure 3 Author collaboration network.

Among domestic institutions researching foreign language ideological-political education over two decades, Shanghai International Studies University leads with 13 publications, followed by Beijing Foreign Studies University (11 publications). Hunan University, Xi'an International Studies University, University of Science and

Technology Beijing, and Higher Education Press comprise other significant contributors. Most remaining institutions produced 1-3 publications.

The top two institutions (Shanghai International Studies University and Beijing Foreign Studies University) account for nearly two-thirds of

publications from the top five contributors, demonstrating their dominant scholarly influence.

The collaboration network exhibits dispersed nodes with sparse connections, indicating limited institutional partnerships. Existing collaborations primarily occur within regional clusters rather than cross-institutional teams.

Table 2. Top 10 Institutions by Publication Output

No.	Institution	Number of Publications
1	Shanghai International Studies University	13
2	Beijing Foreign Studies University	11
3	Hunan University	5
4	Xian International Studies University	4
5	University of Science and Technology Beijing	4
6	Higher Education Press	4
7	Nanjing University	3
8	School of Foreign Studies, Nanjing University	3
9	Shanghai Jiao Tong University	3
10	School of Foreign Languages, South China Agricultural University	3



Figure 4 Institutional collaboration network.

Node size and connection density in keyword co-occurrence analysis indicate research attention. Higher node centrality reflects both frequency and

scholarly consensus, revealing disciplinary priorities during specific periods.

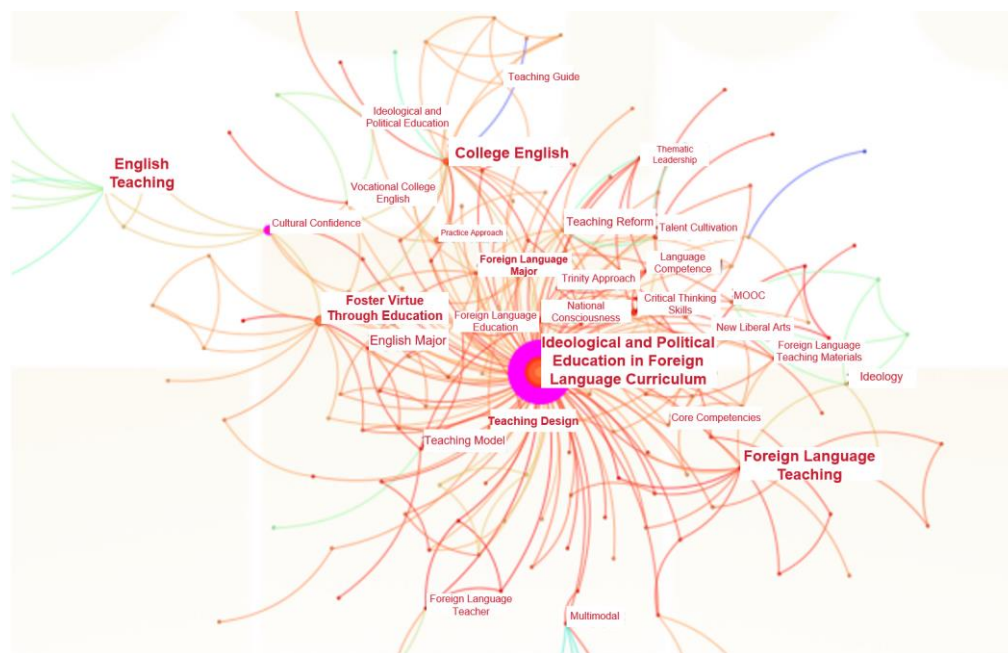


Figure 5 Keyword co-occurrence network.

The network positions “curriculum-based ideological-political education” as the dominant central node, surrounded by closely linked keywords including “college English,” “foreign language teaching,” and “instructional design.” This configuration confirms its status as the field's core research focus, while the associated terms represent active subdomains where educators integrate ideological-political content with pedagogical implementation.

This integration moves beyond superficial addition, embedding national consciousness and cultural confidence organically within language curricula. Consequently, foreign language education transcends linguistic skill development to become interdisciplinary training encompassing cultural literacy, values formation, and critical thinking.

Concurrent prominence of “national consciousness” and “cultural confidence” demonstrates the pedagogical emphasis on ideological dimensions. The former cultivates students’ understanding of historical legacy and civic responsibility, enriching knowledge structures while strengthening national identity. The latter balances foreign language acquisition with Chinese cultural transmission, building cultural self-assurance that showcases China's civilizational distinctiveness.

Thick connections between these keywords and the central node indicate frequent co-occurrence in

literature, highlighting contemporary foreign language education's defining characteristic: enriching linguistic training with profound cultural-political dimensions.

Predominantly red nodes and connections signify heightened scholarly activity in recent years—a trend accelerated by policy initiatives and guiding directives. This chromatic concentration visually captures the field's dynamic evolution, reflecting vigorous scholarly engagement with teaching strategies and curricular innovations in ideological-political education.

3.2.3 Keyword Co-Occurrence Cluster Mapping Analysis

In CiteSpace, keyword co-occurrence cluster mapping is a widely used visualization tool for illustrating the co-occurrence relationships among keywords and their clustering patterns within a research field. Results are presented as a map, with distinct clusters marked in different colors. This enables researchers to identify major themes, hot topics, and research trends in the field. By examining connections between clusters, they can also uncover interdisciplinary relationships and points of convergence.

Using CiteSpace for keyword clustering, the researchers identified seven key themes currently shaping research on ideological and political education in English curricula (“Figure 6”). The

"Modularity" metric evaluates the quality of community structure partitioning in a network, indicating how distinctly nodes are grouped. Values range from 0 to 1, with higher values signifying clearer community divisions. Network topology analysis yielded a modularity Q-value of 0.8848 ($Q > 0.3$ indicates statistical significance),

confirming robust community structure. The mean silhouette coefficient reached 1.0 (the theoretical maximum), reflecting perfect intra-cluster homogeneity and absolute inter-cluster distinction—demonstrating exceptionally strong clustering validity.

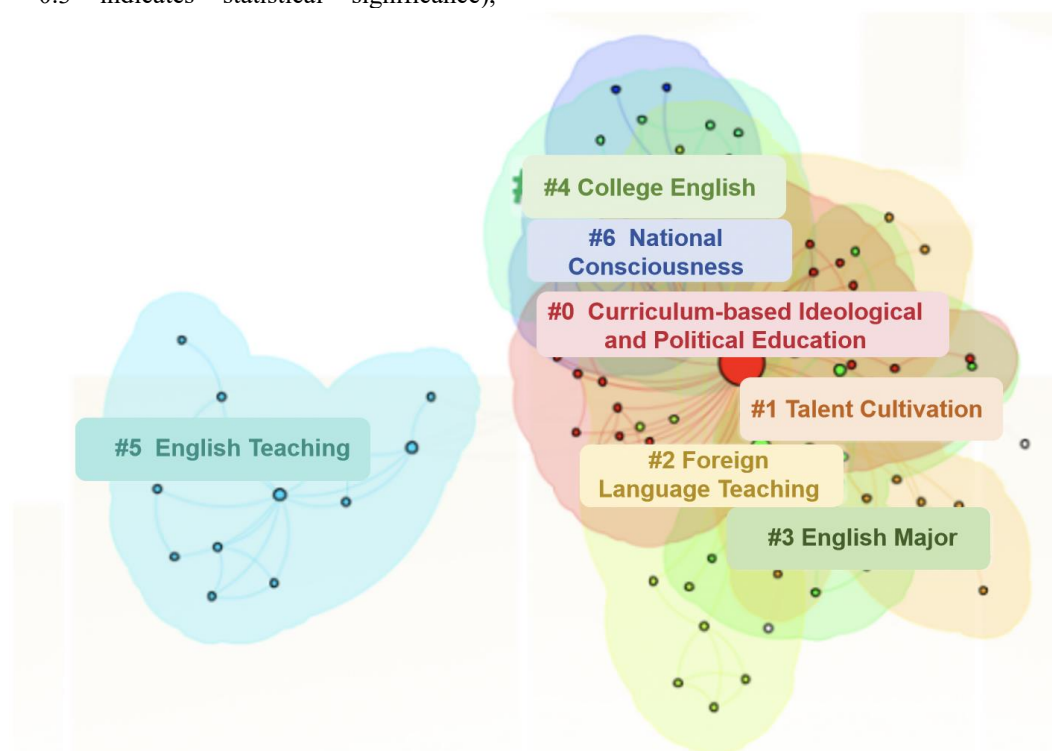


Figure 6 Keyword cluster map.

The keyword cluster map generated by CiteSpace ("Figure 6") reveals current research priorities in English curriculum-based ideological and political education in China. Seven clusters emerged:

- #0 Curriculum-based Ideological & Political Education: Focuses on integrating ideological education into course design, exploring its role in enhancing students' political awareness, values education, and moral cultivation.
- #1 Talent Cultivation: Examines foreign language education's role in developing globally competent, socially responsible professionals, emphasizing innovative training models and educational philosophies.
- #2 Foreign Language Teaching: Addresses pedagogical approaches, strategies, resource utilization, technology integration,

and effective infusion of ideological-political elements.

- #3 English Major: Analyzes discipline-specific issues like curriculum design, skill development, and professional literacy, alongside strategies for implementing ideological-political education.
- #4 College English: Investigates challenges and innovations in teaching non-major English courses, including curriculum design, methodology, proficiency enhancement, and ideological integration.
- #5 English Teaching: Concentrates on practical aspects of English pedagogy (e.g., teaching listening/speaking/reading/writing, cultural instruction, applying SLA theories).
- #6 National Consciousness: Explores fostering patriotism, cultural confidence, and national identity through foreign language education, emphasizing its role in ideological-political teaching.

These clusters collectively highlight the field's core focus: integrating ideological-political education into foreign language teaching, enhancing students' comprehensive competencies and national consciousness, and innovating talent development models. The prominence of Curriculum Ideology & Politics and National Identity Awareness underscores the growing emphasis on cultivating socially responsible, culturally confident graduates. Overall, these clusters offer valuable insights for understanding the trajectory and priorities of ideological-political education in foreign language disciplines.

3.2.4 Analysis of Keyword Burst Chronology

Burst term detection employs Kleinberg's burst detection algorithm, identifying emerging research themes by analyzing abrupt frequency shifts in keyword time-series data. As shown in "Figure 7", burst strength in ideological-political foreign language education correlates with highlighted active periods (red zones), where Duration and Strength collectively indicate a theme's temporal prominence.

Top 13 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

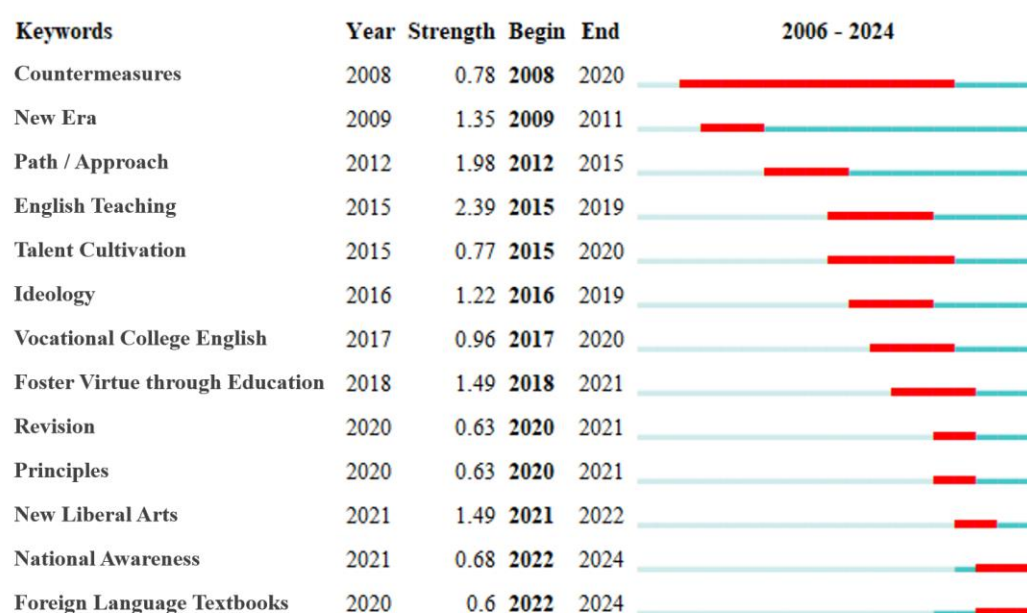


Figure 7 Top 13 keywords with the strongest citation bursts.

The CiteSpace-generated burst table reveals:

- Countermeasures (2008–2020): This persistent burst reflects sustained scholarly efforts to develop educational solutions, spanning policy design to pedagogical implementation.
- English Language Teaching (2015–2019) and Talent Cultivation (2015–2020): Their overlapping bursts align with national education priorities, notably the 2016 Guidelines for Enhancing Innovation Capabilities in Higher Education (issued by 14 ministries including the NDRC). This policy amplified foreign language education's role in developing innovative talent, driving reforms to boost students' linguistic and intercultural competencies for globalization demands. Concurrently,

alent Cultivation's prominence signifies institutional responses integrating language training with professional skills to foster globally minded innovators. Future policies will likely extend this trajectory, emphasizing international collaboration and cross-cultural literacy.

- Ideology(2016–2019): Its surge resonates with global political discourse, particularly in higher education and socialist core value dissemination.
- Building Morality and Talent(2018–2021): This burst marks an educational paradigm shift—from knowledge transmission toward holistic development emphasizing ethical cultivation.

- **New Liberal Arts (2021–2022):** Tied to China's 2020 New Liberal Arts Construction Initiative (Ministry of Education), this policy promotes interdisciplinary integration between humanities, technology, and societal needs. The research surge explores tech-enhanced curricula, innovative pedagogies, and global perspectives, especially in reshaping foreign language programs.
- **National Awareness (2022–2024) and Foreign Language Textbooks (2022–2024):** These parallel bursts reflect heightened emphasis on cultural confidence amid globalization. National Identity Awareness research examines how language teaching reinforces patriotism and cultural identity. Foreign Language Textbooks' prominence coincides with MOE's curriculum reform guidelines, prioritizing materials that organically integrate national consciousness, historical narratives, and values—enabling students to master languages while deepening cultural rootedness.

4. DISCUSSION AND OUTLOOK

4.1 Results and Discussion

Reviewing the evolution of ideological-political education (IPE) in foreign language studies reveals several key patterns:

- **Sustained Growth:** Research output in this field has shown marked growth since 2016, culminating in a peak publication volume in 2021.
- **Homogeneity Concerns:** As the field expands, studies increasingly converge around repetitive themes (e.g., "College English," "foreign language teaching," "Building Morality and Talent," "cultural confidence") with limited methodological or conceptual innovation.
- **Collaboration Deficits:** Scholarship remains predominantly individual-driven, with minimal cross-institutional cooperation and no established collaborative networks.
- **Theory-Practice Gap:** While theoretically insightful, many findings lack practical applicability, hindering the translation of research into pedagogical impact.
- **Interdisciplinary and Cross-Phase Integration Challenges:** Disparities in disciplinary frameworks and learning

objectives across educational stages (K-12 to tertiary) complicate the design of cohesive curricula that simultaneously meet subject-specific depth and developmental appropriateness.

- **Assessment Complexities:** Evaluating IPE in foreign language contexts requires measuring both linguistic proficiency and ideological internalization. Traditional metrics inadequately capture this dual focus, while dedicated IPE assessment tools often lack quantifiability and feasibility.

4.2 Implications and Recommendations

Addressing these challenges requires strategic interventions:

- **Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** There will be a necessity to forge cross-institutional academic networks to consolidate research resources (e.g., shared materials, methodologies, facilities). Establish interdisciplinary teams spanning linguistics, education, psychology, political science, and philosophy to co-develop innovative pedagogical models. Regular symposia and international conferences can integrate global perspectives into China's IPE reform efforts.
- **Strengthening Cross-Phase Articulation:** There is a must to facilitate dialogue among educators across K-16 stages to align curricula and teaching strategies. Primary/secondary education should emphasize foundational skills and engagement, while tertiary instruction focuses on complex socio-political analysis. Such coordination ensures progressive development of students' ideological understanding and critical capacities.
- **Refining Assessment Systems:** It is necessary to implement hybrid evaluation frameworks combining quantitative (e.g., exams, assignments) and qualitative methods (e.g., reflective essays, case analyses) to holistically measure linguistic and ideological learning outcomes, and integrate student self-assessment and feedback mechanisms to inform instructional adjustments. Real-time monitoring enables responsive pedagogical interventions.

5. CONCLUSION

This study employs CiteSpace to analyze core journal publications (2004–2024) on IPE in foreign language education, mapping intellectual evolution through keyword visualization. The findings provide theoretical and practical guidance for developing effective curricula and assessment mechanisms. Moving forward, continued exploration is essential to deeply integrate language teaching with ideological education, thereby fostering students' holistic development.

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