



A Production-Oriented Approach to Value-Conflict Argumentative Writing: Embedding Ideological-Political Education via *After Twenty Years*

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Abstract

This study adopts Unit Six (*After Twenty Years*) of *Integrated English I* as the instructional context and constructs a “motivating–enabling–assessing” teaching model within the framework of the Production-oriented Approach (POA) to explore how value-conflict texts can integrate language learning with value cultivation in English-major classes. By creating an authentic law-enforcement ethical scenario to stimulate students’ output needs and providing tri-dimensional scaffolding (content, language, and structure) during the enabling phase, the study guides learners to transform textual understanding into value-based argumentative writing. Classroom observations, discussion records, and writing samples reveal that POA effectively enhances students’ English expressive ability, argumentation skills, and ethical reasoning. Students demonstrate a clear shift from intuitive, emotion-based judgments to evidence-supported ethical reasoning, and their participation and engagement in class are substantially improved. Moreover, ideological-political elements are naturally integrated into the language-task chain rather than added externally. The findings suggest that value-conflict texts exhibit strong pedagogical appropriateness under the POA framework, offering a replicable instructional paradigm for achieving the integration of knowledge, skills, and values in English-major courses.

Key words: Production-oriented approach;

Ideological-political education; Value-conflict texts; Argumentative writing; *After Twenty Years*

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the deepening implementation of the “curriculum-based ideological and political education” (CIP) framework in Chinese higher education (Yang, 2020), the formative function of foundational courses for English majors has gained increasing prominence. As a core entry-level course, *Integrated English I* is tasked not only with developing students’ linguistic competence but also with fostering their abilities in value judgment, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding (Wen, 2021). However, traditional language-point-centered instruction often prioritizes decontextualized formal knowledge while overlooking the ethical implications embedded in literary texts, resulting in a disconnection between language learning and value education (Liu & Yue, 2020). Consequently, CIP is frequently treated as an add-on rather than an intrinsic driving force for language learning and cognitive development (Sun, 2020).

Value-conflict texts provide a natural entry point for CIP integration. O. Henry’s *After Twenty Years* centers on the ethical tension between “personal affection and public responsibility,” presenting Jimmy’s dilemma between friendship and legal obligation as a classic moral conflict. The text’s clear value structure and rich narrative clues offer fertile ground for guiding students toward value reasoning, responsibility awareness, and an understanding

of rule-of-law principles. Yet without systematic task design and scaffolded support, students often remain at the level of superficial comprehension, unable to transform reading experiences into mature value expression.

The Production-oriented Approach (POA), with its three-stage mechanism of “motivating–enabling–assessing,” provides an effective framework for promoting the simultaneous development of language proficiency and cognitive growth (Wen, 2015) and is particularly suitable for deep engagement with value-laden texts. Its core principle of “learning-by-using” emphasizes fostering the integrated development of language, thinking, and values through authentic communicative needs (Qiu, 2020). However, existing studies largely focus on the general effectiveness of POA in writing or speaking instruction (Zhang, 2017), while research on task-chain design for ethical-conflict texts, the development of value-argumentation skills, and corresponding classroom-based evidence remains limited.

Therefore, this study uses *After Twenty Years* as a teaching case and constructs a three-stage POA task chain around the central value issue of “friendship versus legal obligation.” The study aims to examine the effectiveness of POA in teaching value-conflict texts and to reveal the mechanisms through which students’ language ability, value judgment, and argumentative competence are jointly developed.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The Production-oriented Approach, proposed by Wen Qiufang (2015), represents a major theoretical achievement in the localization of foreign language education in China. Its core principles—learning-centeredness, learning-using integration, and whole-person education—highlight that language learning should simultaneously promote knowledge acquisition, linguistic competence, and value cultivation.

The three theoretical hypotheses of POA form an internally coherent system: The Output-driven Hypothesis posits that output tasks are essential for activating learning needs; The Input-enabling Hypothesis requires input to directly serve output goals; The Selective Learning Hypothesis stresses that learners make purposeful selections based on task demands. Together, these hypotheses support the POA’s “Motivating–Enabling–Assessing” instructional cycle and provide a systematic and operable framework for classroom implementation.

At the operational level, all three stages of POA are supported by a solid body of research. In the motivating stage, tasks must contain authenticity, social relevance, and communicative purpose; only when tasks elicit genuine communicative needs can learners enter a state of deep learning (Wen & Sun, 2020). In the enabling stage,

Qiu Lin (2017, 2020) proposes the principles of precision–progression–diversity, emphasizing the use of multi-layered content and language scaffolding to transform comprehension-based input into transferable output competence. In the assessing stage, Sun Shuguang (2020) advocates a full-process, collaborative assessment model characterized by “goal-oriented preparation, problem-driven interaction, scaffolded support, process monitoring, and exemplary feedback,” which strengthens learner self-monitoring, reflection, and expression optimization.

A growing body of empirical research has verified the effectiveness of POA in developing speaking, writing, and integrated language abilities (Zhang, 2016; Zhang, 2017). Wen (2018) further emphasizes the “Chinese characteristics” of POA, highlighting its ability to integrate language learning with cognitive development and value reasoning, thereby laying a theoretical foundation for combining POA with moral-education-oriented instruction. Recent studies have also begun to explore POA’s potential for ideological-political education, noting that POA’s task-chain mechanism facilitates the implicit embedding of values within language learning (Wang & Lu, 2024).

However, three gaps remain in the existing research. First, previous studies focus primarily on general writing, speaking, or integrated-skills training, with limited attention to POA instruction for ethical-conflict literary texts. Second, few studies have explored how to construct a task chain grounded in textual ethical structure, nor how to design corresponding scaffolding within the POA framework. Third, empirical evidence from real classroom settings regarding students’ value-reasoning writing remains scarce.

Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts *After Twenty Years* as its instructional focal text and constructs a POA-based task chain centered on the theme of “friendship vs. legal obligation,” aiming to offer a systematic and replicable pedagogical model for ideological-political instruction in English-major courses.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Background and Participants

This study was conducted in the *Integrated English I* course for first-year English majors at a provincial key university in Sichuan, China. The course—using *College English: Intensive Reading I* (2021) as its textbook—serves foundational functions in the program, including language competence development, humanistic literacy enhancement, and value formation. As the core text of Unit 6, *After Twenty Years* provides an authentic context for embedding ideological and political education, cultivating value-based reasoning, and supporting close-reading training through its central ethical tension between friendship and legal obligation.

The participants were 25 first-year English majors (4 males and 21 females). A pre-instruction diagnostic survey showed that most students had a solid language foundation (Most students demonstrated an English proficiency roughly equivalent to the CET-4 level.) and were able to comprehend narrative texts and express basic ideas. However, they lacked experience with higher-order language tasks such as ethical-issue discussion, logical reasoning, and value-position articulation. These characteristics align with typical linguistic-cognitive developmental features of first-year English majors, and provide an appropriate classroom context for implementing POA-based instructional intervention in this study.

3.2 Research Methods and Instructional Intervention

This study adopts a mixed research paradigm combining classroom-based instructional intervention with qualitative content analysis. By implementing the full sequence of the POA “motivating–enabling–assessing” cycle, the study examines the effectiveness and underlying mechanisms of POA in teaching value-conflict text writing within the context of ideological and political education in the English-major curriculum.

The instructional intervention lasted six class hours and the POA task chain was designed as follows:

3.2.1 Motivating phase (Session 1)

A scenario-based task involving an ethical dilemma in law enforcement was created. Students were positioned as trainee police officers who needed to decide whether to arrest a close friend identified as a suspect. This task aimed to stimulate genuine communicative needs and reveal learners’ deficiencies in ethical expression, logical reasoning, and use of textual evidence, thus generating a clear necessity for subsequent enabling instruction.

3.2.2 Enabling phase (Sessions 2–5)

In response to the difficulties exposed during the motivating phase, a systematic three-dimensional scaffolding system was constructed.

The first is content scaffolding. Through close reading of the text, students analyzed character motivations, narrative conflicts, and ethical tensions to build the conceptual foundation for value judgment.

Language scaffolding comes next. Based on the text, a tiered resource system consisting of ethical vocabulary, functional chunks, and reasoning-oriented sentence patterns was designed to address students’ problems of “not knowing what to say or how to say it precisely.”

The third is the structure scaffolding. Explicit instruction was provided on the five-step value argumentation framework, i.e. stance, conflict, evidence, reasoning and value uplift, to support students in constructing coherent and logically developed paragraphs.

3.2.3 Assessing phase (Session 6)

Students completed the final output task: a 150–200-word argumentative essay addressing the question of whether Jimmy should arrest Bob himself. Assessment combined self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teacher evaluation, focusing on four dimensions: clarity of stance, coherence of reasoning, use of textual evidence, and value orientation. The feedback from the assessment stage further facilitated students’ reflection and transfer of learning.

3.3 Data Sources and Analytical Methods

3.3.1 Data Sources

The study collected multiple types of process-oriented and product-oriented data, including: classroom audio and video recordings, capturing learners’ engagement, interaction patterns, and observable performance; group discussion transcripts and classroom presentation texts, serving as oral production data; final written assignments, representing learners’ written production; learner self-evaluation and peer-evaluation sheets, documenting learners’ value construction and self-reflection processes; teacher’s classroom observation notes and reflective journals, used to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the instructional intervention.

3.3.2 Data Analysis Methods

The analysis employed open coding and thematic analysis. The major steps included: First, all textual data were subjected to line-by-line open coding to identify changes in students’ language resources, value judgments, and argumentative structures. Second, data from different sources were cross-validated to enhance the reliability and consistency of interpretation. Third, the findings were interpreted through the lens of the POA “learning-and-using integration” mechanism, linking observed changes to the instructional process and task-chain design. Finally, all data were anonymized prior to analysis, and the study adhered strictly to ethical standards for educational research.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Motivating Stage: Activating Learners’ Expressive Needs through an Ethical Scenario

In the motivating stage, this study designed a law-enforcement ethical case that mirrors the underlying value structure of *After Twenty Years* without revealing the plot, so that students generate authentic communicative needs before reading the text. Students were positioned as “trainee police officers participating in an ethics-in-law-enforcement workshop” and were required to make an immediate decision and elaborate on the reasons about the following scenario:

During patrol duty, a surveillance system identifies your high-school friend as a suspected participant in an ongoing online

fraud investigation. His name has already entered the police watchlist. As the only officer present, should you report and take action immediately? State your position and provide reasons.

The task resonates with students' real-world experiences (e.g., online fraud, pressure in law-enforcement decisions) and presents a typical ethical tension—personal relationship vs. legal responsibility. This dilemma structurally parallels Jimmy's conflict regarding Bob in *After Twenty Years*, thus creating a natural transition into subsequent text-based learning.

Classroom observations show that although students were able to quickly form initial stances, they commonly encountered several difficulties in writing down the argumentation essay: insufficient ethical-concept vocabulary, limited logical elaboration of reasons, inability to analyze the dilemma from dual value dimensions, and challenges in constructing a coherent argument. Such a state—"having something to say, being able to say it, but not saying it sufficiently"—demonstrates the POA's Output-Driven Hypothesis, whereby an authentic task exposes learners' limitations and generates the necessity for targeted input in the enabling stage.

Thus, the motivating task not only activated students' engagement with the ethical issue but also made explicit their gaps in conceptual understanding, linguistic resources, and argumentation competence. These diagnosed needs directly informed the design of the content, language, and structural scaffolds in the enabling stage, forming the starting point for the effective operation of the entire POA output task chain.

4.2 Enabling Stage: Scaffolding Through Content, Language, and Structure

Classroom observations during the motivating stage revealed three major difficulties in students' value-focused expression: (1) insufficient understanding of the ethical values embedded in the text writing; (2) limited linguistic resources for presenting value positions and analyzing conflicts, leading to situations of "having ideas but being unable to articulate them precisely"; (3) weak argumentation experience, with viewpoints presented in a fragmented manner.

Guided by the POA "input-enabling hypothesis," the enabling stage constructed a set of progressive scaffolds across the dimensions of content, language, and structure, supporting students' development from understanding the text to expressing value positions, and from mastering words and sentences to constructing coherent arguments.

4.2.1 Content Enabling: Building the Ethical Conflict Based on Textual Evidence

Content enabling addresses the problems identified during the motivating stage—specifically "shallow value comprehension" and "unclear conflict identification." Through three steps—locating key textual details, analyzing character value structures, and constructing ethical tension—students were guided to move from

factual comprehension to value abstraction, forming a solid conceptual foundation for subsequent expression.

First, locating key textual details: extracting ethical meaning from narrative clues. Students conducted close reading of crucial narrative segments and annotated value-relevant details. Examples included: the phrase in the opening paragraph "guardian of the peace" highlighting Jimmy's legal responsibility; Bob's self-description "I've had to compete with some of the sharpest brains" implying potential involvement in morally ambiguous activities; the match scene, where the flash of light reveals that Bob is "wanted in Chicago"; Jimmy's letter "I couldn't do it myself." marking the climax of the ethical dilemma. This process trained students to elevate "textual facts" into "value implications."

Second, character value structure analysis: inferring value logic from actions. After identifying key details, students were guided to construct character value-structure diagrams that linked characters' actions to their underlying value orientations. This step enabled students to understand why the characters made certain choices and how conflicting values shaped their decisions, laying the groundwork for advanced ethical reasoning.

Table 1
Value Structure Analysis of Major Characters

Character	Textual evidence	Underlying value orientation
Jimmy	Police patrol identity; the letter stating "I couldn't do it myself."	law, justice, duty vs. loyalty
Bob	Emphasis on keeping promises; the match scene revealing his wanted status	loyalty, friendship, promise, violation of law
Plainclothes officer	Execution of arrest	objectivity of law; impersonality of justice

By discussing questions such as "Why couldn't Jimmy arrest Bob himself?" and "Does Bob's loyalty still carry moral legitimacy?", students further realized that the ethical conflict in the story is not merely a narrative device, but a clash and negotiation between the characters' underlying value orientations. This step helps students grasp character motivations and construct a foundational value framework for interpreting the ethical tensions embedded in the text.

Third, constructing ethical tension: from plot comprehension to value abstraction. After identifying key textual details and analyzing the characters' value structures, students are guided to integrate these discrete elements into discussable value propositions, thereby achieving a cognitive shift from "understanding the story" to "understanding the values." Working in groups, students create an ethical tension map to outline the three central value conflicts embedded in the text: law vs. loyalty, public duty vs. personal ties, and justice vs. emotion. This task enables students to move from narrative-level comprehension to a more abstract grasp of

the text's value structure, clarifying why Jimmy's decision constitutes an ethical dilemma and uncovering the value roots underlying this conflict.

4.2.2 Language Enabling: Constructing a Multi-Level Linguistic Scaffold

In tasks involving value-laden expression, students in the motivating stage typically exhibited several language-related bottlenecks, such as vague ethical concepts, a lack

Table 2
Design of the Language Scaffolding

Level	Language resources	Output difficulties	Teaching tasks	Ability goals
Vocabulary level	justice, duty, loyalty, responsibility, guardian of the peace, wanted in Chicago, consequences	Lack of key ethical concepts; vague expression	Word-meaning inference; contextual fill-in tasks	Express ethical concepts accurately
Chunk level	From the story we learn that...; This reveals a conflict between...; Jimmy could not arrest Bob...	Unable to state a position or describe the conflict	Function-matching tasks; imitation exercises	Form reusable patterns for stating positions and conflicts
Sentence pattern level	The reason Jimmy hesitated is...; Another important point is that...; This detail shows that...	Unable to develop reasons; lack of logical progression	Sentence rewriting; use of logical connectors	Strengthen explanation and reasoning abilities

First, the lexical level reinforces the understanding and precise expression of core ethical concepts. Drawing on textual evidence such as “guardian of the peace” and “wanted in Chicago”, the instruction guides students to construct semantic associations among key ethical concepts including justice, duty, loyalty, and responsibility. Compared with traditional vocabulary teaching, this scaffolding emphasizes the functional role of vocabulary in ethical judgment, enabling students to articulate stances accurately and interpret the value logic underlying characters' actions during subsequent reasoning tasks.

Second, the chunk level addresses the gap between comprehension and expression. Functional chunks with high transferability are extracted from the text comprehension—for example, “From the story we learn that...”, “This reveals a conflict between...”. Through activities such as chunk-function matching and guided imitation, students learn basic patterns for expressing stances, presenting conflicts, and articulating value judgments. The replicability of chunks reduces the cognitive load of organizing ideas and helps students quickly transition from textual understanding to expressing viewpoints.

Third, the sentence-pattern level supports the logical progression of value reasoning. To address the difficulty that students can state a stance but struggle to elaborate reasons, the instruction provides logical progression structures such as “The reason...is that...”, “Another important point is that...”, and “This detail suggests that...”. For example, transforming the match-lighting scene into “This detail suggests that Jimmy recognized his duty at that moment.” exemplifies how textual evidence can be converted into a reasoning step.

Overall, the three-tier scaffolding of lexis—chunks—sentence patterns forms a progressive chain of conceptual understanding, expression patterns, reasoning

of expression patterns, and difficulty developing coherent lines of reasoning. To address these output-oriented challenges, this study designed a three-tier linguistic scaffold consisting of vocabulary, lexical chunks, and sentence patterns. Through a step-by-step progression, this scaffold supports students in moving from understanding the language of the text to using language to construct value-based arguments (see Table 2).

development, effectively alleviating students' difficulties of “inaccurate expression—unclear articulation—illogical reasoning” in value-based writing, and laying a linguistic foundation for the integrated argument structure introduced in the structural scaffolding stage.

4.2.3 Structural Enabling: Constructing a Text-Based Framework for Value Argumentation

The structural enabling stage aims to help students develop a clear, normative, and transferable argumentative structure at the macro level, addressing the difficulties revealed in the motivating and language-enabling stages—such as unclear stance, scattered evidence, and weak logical progression. Drawing on the narrative logic of *After Twenty Years*, this study constructs a five-step value argumentation framework—“stance—conflict—evidence—reasoning—value extension”—to guide students from textual understanding to value reasoning.

First, structural enabling emphasizes stance-first instruction. Through model paragraphs, students learn to articulate an explicit judgment on the core ethical issue (e.g., “Should Jimmy arrest Bob by himself?”), which sets the direction for the entire argument.

Second, students identify the central ethical conflicts embedded in the text through close reading. Using visual tools such as value axes and tension charts, the teacher helps students concretize abstract contradictions—such as law vs. loyalty and public duty vs. personal ties—into expressible value structures.

Third, the training highlights the normative use of textual evidence. Students extract details with argumentative significance, such as the match scene revealing Bob was “wanted in Chicago” or Jimmy's note “I couldn't do it myself.” With teacher modeling, students learn to construct an evidence chain through “textual fact-interpretive explanation-value inference,” transforming simple description into analytical interpretation.

Fourth, students develop multi-layered reasoning chains based on the evidence, drawing on concepts such as duty, justice, police ethics, and social consequences. This process strengthens logical progression and adds ethical depth to their argumentation.

Finally, students are guided to complete value extension, elevating the case-specific judgment to broader ethical principles—such as the boundaries of responsibility, rule-of-law awareness, and public ethics, thus forming a coherent logical arc from “case to principle and to value.”

Overall, the structural enabling stage provides systematic training through explicit stance, conflict presentation, evidence chain, reasoning expansion and value extension, enabling students to integrate textual evidence, logical reasoning, and ethical judgment. Unlike the language-level scaffolding, which supports micro-level expression, structural enabling offers macro-level discourse organization, helping students produce arguments that are well-structured, logically developed, and rich in value orientation when dealing with real ethical issues.

4.3 Assessment Stage: A Formative–Summative Integrated Evaluation System

As the final link in the “motivation–enabling–assessment” chain, the assessment stage aims to diagnose learning progress, consolidate ability development, and examine students’ overall performance in value-oriented writing tasks. This study adopts a dual-track assessment system that integrates both formative and summative approaches to more comprehensively capture students’ development in language proficiency, critical thinking, and value judgment.

4.3.1 Formative Assessment: Process Diagnosis and Strategy Adjustment

Formative assessment spans both the motivation and enabling stages, emphasizing real-time diagnosis, continuous feedback, and strategic adjustment. First, the teacher documents students’ performance during discussions—including clarity of stance, depth of textual comprehension, and logical coherence of language—to inform subsequent input selection and scaffold modification. Second, peer assessment conducted after group activities allows learners to negotiate shared criteria for “effective argumentation,” strengthening their awareness of key standards such as clarity of position, sufficiency of reasoning, and appropriateness of textual evidence. Additionally, students complete self-assessment checklists to reflect on their own performance, focusing on logical cohesion, linguistic accuracy, and the use of textual evidence.

Through the cyclical mechanism of “instant diagnosis—instant feedback—instant adjustment,” formative assessment continuously guides students to refine their expression strategies during the enabling

stage, thus laying a solid foundation for the final written output.

4.3.2 Summative Assessment: Comprehensive Evaluation in a Real Output Task

Summative assessment is based on students’ 150–200-word value-judgment essays, which serve as an authentic measure of their integrated performance. Aligned with the motivational scenario, this task functions as an overall test of the content, language, and structural scaffolds provided during the enabling stage. The evaluation includes four dimensions (see Table 3):

Table 3
Dimensions of Summative Assessment

No.	Assessment Dimension	Assessment Criteria
1	Clarity and Depth of Value Position	Whether the student presents a clear stance and demonstrates independent ethical judgment
2	Use of Textual Evidence and Logical Reasoning	Whether key textual details are appropriately selected and integrated into a coherent reasoning chain
3	Accuracy and Appropriateness of Language Use	Whether relevant vocabulary, chunks, and sentence patterns are effectively transferred and whether the expression is accurate and cohesive
4	Value Orientation and Textual Relevance	Whether the argument naturally extends to themes such as rule of law, responsibility boundaries, or public ethics and maintains strong relevance to the text

This evaluation system not only assesses final performance but also examines whether students can effectively transfer the scaffolding provided in the enabling stage to a real argumentative writing task, thereby embodying the POA principle of learning-and-using integration.

5. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Drawing on one week of instruction (six class hours) and multiple sources of data—including classroom observations, discussion transcripts, written outputs, self- and peer assessments—the findings demonstrate that the Production-oriented Approach significantly enhances students’ English expression, value judgment, and engagement in ideological and political education when dealing with value-conflict texts. The following section presents the major results from three dimensions and discusses them in relation to the core mechanisms of POA.

5.1 Improvement in Language Expression: From Fragmented to Structured Output

During the motivating stage, students commonly relied on colloquial or emotion-based expressions, such as “I won’t arrest him because he is my friend.” (S06). These responses revealed typical weaknesses: limited ethical concepts, weak logical chains, and a lack of discourse organization.

Supported by the content, language, and structural scaffolds, students' expressions became increasingly conceptualized, logical, and academic. For example, after the enabling stage, Student S03 was able to articulate the value framework more precisely: "There is a moral dilemma between personal loyalty and legal duty."

Further evidence from written outputs shows that most students successfully applied logical connectors, explanatory sentence patterns, and the "five-step argumentation structure," shifting from fragmented statements to evidence-based, logically developed, and structurally coherent value arguments.

This transformation illustrates the core POA mechanism of "output-driven, input-enabled": the motivating task exposed deficiencies in expression, while the enabling scaffolds effectively addressed linguistic and cognitive gaps, allowing students to transfer newly acquired language resources into authentic production (Wen, 2015).

5.2 Improvement in Value Judgment: From Intuitive Responses to Evidence-based Reasoning

During the initial discussion, students' judgments about the ethical dilemma were largely driven by emotions or personal experiences—for example, "He is my friend, so he shouldn't be arrested." Such responses reveal a predominantly intuitive mode of thinking, lacking a value framework or a clear reasoning path, which resulted in superficial interpretations.

With the support of the content and structural scaffolds, students gradually learned to identify the core ethical conflicts embedded in *After Twenty Years* and began to analyze them from multiple dimensions, including duty of law, professional integrity, social consequences, and personal ties/role obligations. In the final writing task, students were able to cite key textual evidence (e.g., "I couldn't do it myself," and the "match scene") and construct a reasoning chain that linked textual evidence, interpretive explanation, value judgment. For example, many students were able to explain the ethical significance of the match scene rather than merely retelling the plot.

This shift from emotional reaction to evidence-based value reasoning demonstrates that the structured scaffolding effectively strengthened students' analytical ability and enabled them to make value judgments with greater depth and justification. The outcome aligns with the POA principle of "whole-person education," highlighting the potential of language tasks to foster critical thinking and value awareness.

5.3 Natural Integration of Ideological and Political Education

Students generally reported that "value discussions emerged naturally," "there was no extra burden," and "understanding became deeper," indicating that ideological

and political education was not imposed as an external component of language teaching but rather emerged organically throughout the task chain. This implicit yet effective value orientation is reflected in three aspects:

5.3.1 The motivating stage activates value awareness through authentic scenarios

By situating students in realistic ethical dilemmas related to law enforcement, the task stimulates their spontaneous engagement with value-laden issues such as responsibility, emotion, and legal obligation, thereby initiating their value-oriented thinking during expression.

5.3.2 The enabling stage builds a conceptual foundation for value meaning.

Close reading of key narrative details, character motivations, and ethical tensions enables students to uncover the moral implications embedded in the text. This process helps them gradually construct value frameworks that are discussable and expressible.

5.3.3 The enabling of structure promotes the academicization and logical articulation of values.

Through the five-step argumentative framework, students transform intuitive or naïve moral judgments into reasoned, evidence-based academic discourse. This process allows value implications to "take shape naturally" within their language output.

Taken together, these three dimensions—scenario activation, meaning construction, and structured expression—form a coherent chain in which ideological and political education permeates the entire process of language production "like salt dissolving in water." This aligns with Wang and Lu's (2024) argument that the POA framework is inherently compatible with ideological and political education, which should be integrated within the task chain rather than added superficially to language teaching.

5.4 Verification of the Effectiveness of the Three-Dimensional Scaffolding through Learners' Outputs

To examine how the three-dimensional scaffolding system enhances students' ability to express value judgments, this study compares the written outputs of 25 students during the motivating stage and the final writing stage.

5.4.1 Improvement in Content Understanding: From Plot Retelling to Value Identification

During the motivating stage, students mainly remained at the level of plot retelling, such as: "It would be quite hard for Jimmy to make a decision." (S07) With the support of content scaffolding, students were able to identify the ethical conflict embedded in the text and articulate it in the final writing, for example: "The story presents a dilemma between Jimmy's duty as a police officer and his personal loyalty to Bob." (S07) This change demonstrates students' cognitive shift from "narrating the text" to "explaining the values."

5.4.2 Improvement in Language Resources: From Everyday Expressions to Academic Expression

The language scaffolding helped students move from everyday expressions to more conceptual and academic forms of expression. For instance, S10's output evolved from: "Friendship is important so it's hard to decide." To "Emotional ties should not override Jimmy's legal duty." Class-wide linguistic data (Table 4) also show a marked increase in the use of ethical vocabulary, functional chunks, and explanatory sentence patterns.

Table 4
Overall Language Use Data (n = 25)

Indicator	Motivating stage	Final writing
Use of ethical vocabulary	2.1	8.4
Use of functional chunks	0.4	3.2
Use of logical-progression sentence patterns	0.6	3.5
Use of textual evidence	0.4	1.9

5.4.3 Improvement in Argument Structure: Migration Toward the "Five-Step Argumentation" Framework

In the final writing task, students were generally able to transfer and apply the "Five-Step Argumentation" framework. The core components of S14's writing are as follows: Position: Jimmy should not arrest Bob by himself. Conflict: A dilemma exists between legal duty and personal loyalty. Evidence: Bob was "wanted in Chicago." Reasoning: A police officer must prioritize justice. Value Elevation: Law should remain impartial to personal emotions.

The overall completion rate of structured argumentation increased substantially, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Overall Completion of Argumentative Structure (n = 25)

Argumentative Indicator	Motivating Stage	Final Writing
Clear position	60%	100%
Identification of ethical conflict	24%	88%
Use of textual evidence	16%	92%
Construction of reasoning chain	12%	84%
Value extension	8%	76%

The above data indicate that the three-dimensional scaffolding effectively facilitated students' transition from intuitive judgments to evidence-based value reasoning. This shift validates the appropriateness and effectiveness of the POA mechanism of "learning–application integration" and "learning through use" in teaching value-conflict text writing.

6. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Using *After Twenty Years* as the instructional text and "friendship versus legal duty" as the core ethical issue, this study constructed and implemented a Production-oriented Approach–based task chain consisting of the stages of "motivating–enabling–assessing." Drawing on classroom observations, analyses of learner output, and results from multidimensional assessments, the study demonstrates the pedagogical appropriateness of POA for teaching value-conflict text writing and its potential to promote the coordinated development of language proficiency and value education. The major findings, pedagogical implications, and directions for future research are summarized below.

6.1 Major Findings

Grounded in the authentic classroom context of teaching a value-conflict text writing, the study verifies the suitability of POA for tasks involving value-laden expression. The key findings are as follows:

First, authentic ethical scenarios can effectively activate learners' need to express themselves. The motivating task encouraged students to shift from passive comprehension to the active construction of value positions, revealing gaps in their language and reasoning abilities and confirming POA's Output-driven Hypothesis.

Second, the three-dimensional scaffolding of content, language, and structure substantially enhanced students' value understanding and argumentative competence. With scaffolded support, students were able to identify ethical tensions based on textual evidence and produce conceptualized, structured argumentation, achieving a progressive development from understanding to expression and then to reasoning.

Third, the multidimensional assessment system fostered students' metacognitive growth and value awareness. Self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment jointly provided continuous feedback, enabling students to refine their expression strategies and methods of value judgment through sustained reflection.

6.2 Pedagogical Implications

Based on the above findings, several pedagogical implications for teaching value-conflict texts can be proposed:

First, instructional design should strengthen the driving function of authentic scenarios. Ethical dilemmas and role-based tasks can enhance task authenticity and tension, naturally motivating learners to express themselves while engaging with real-world value issues.

Second, value-oriented writing tasks require systematic and progressive language scaffolding. Teachers

are advised to provide transferable linguistic resources following a clear gradient, namely, vocabulary, chunks, sentence patterns, discourse structures, to support learners in articulating complex ethical judgments in English.

Third, ideological and political education should be embedded within the task chain rather than appended externally. Value education ought to permeate the entire “motivating–enabling–assessing” process, allowing students to form value cognition naturally through authentic expression and argumentation.

6.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This study still has several limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small and the intervention period was short, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Second, the dual role of the researcher as instructor may introduce potential subjective bias. Future research could expand to multiple classes and institutions to enhance external validity, and employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to examine the sustained development and transferability of students’ value-based writing abilities. In addition, further studies may explore the applicability of POA to a wider range of value-laden topics and cross-cultural contexts. Incorporating multiple raters and reliability indicators into the assessment system would also help improve the objectivity and robustness of evaluation outcomes.

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