

# Research on the Construction Path of Spanish Course Cluster Based on Understanding Contemporary China Series Textbooks

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on exploring the construction path of Spanish course clusters based on the "Understanding Contemporary China" series textbooks. Through methods such as literature analysis, questionnaire surveys, interviews, and case studies, it analyzed the current status and existing problems of Spanish teaching using these textbooks, and proposed a theoretical framework for course cluster construction centered on "ideological and political guidance + ideological empowerment". The results showed that the isolated offering of Spanish reading, speech, and translation courses led to issues like repetitive content and insufficient integration of ideological and political elements. The constructed course cluster, which integrated the three courses around core themes from the textbooks, initially demonstrated effectiveness in improving teaching efficiency and enhancing students' ability to understand and communicate contemporary China. This research enriches the research on foreign language course clusters and provides practical references for optimizing Spanish curriculum systems and strengthening ideological and political education in professional courses .

**Keywords:** Understanding Contemporary China; Spanish; course cluster; construction path; ideological and political education

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

"Understanding Contemporary China" series textbooks, as an important achievement integrating the study of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the cultivation of foreign language skills, aim to combine value shaping, knowledge impartment, and ability training. In current higher education, Spanish courses such as reading, speech, and translation, which are based on these textbooks, are often offered independently in different semesters, lacking effective integration. This isolation limits the overall effectiveness of curriculum implementation and the realization of ideological and political education goals, highlighting the necessity of constructing a systematic Spanish course cluster .

### 1.2 Research Significance

Theoretically, this study enriches the research on foreign language course cluster construction by exploring the integration path of "Understanding Contemporary China" textbooks with Spanish courses, providing a new perspective for interdisciplinary research combining linguistics and education. Practically, it contributes to optimizing the Spanish curriculum system, enhancing the effect of ideological and political education in professional courses, and cultivating high-quality international talents who can understand contemporary China and tell Chinese stories well.

### 1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective is to analyze the current status of Spanish teaching using "Understanding Contemporary China" series textbooks and explore feasible paths for constructing an integrated Spanish course cluster (including reading, speech, and translation courses). Key research questions include: What are the main problems in the current application of "Understanding Contemporary China" Spanish textbooks in teaching? How to effectively integrate related courses to form a

coordinated and optimized course cluster based on these textbooks?

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework of Course Clusters

A course cluster refers to an integrated and optimized curriculum system composed of interrelated or similar individual courses, which is structured reasonably and hierarchically clear, with the goal of improving students' specific literacy structure. Its core elements include the logical relevance between courses, the integration of teaching content, and the clear hierarchical structure to achieve the overall teaching effect. For foreign language courses, the construction of course clusters emphasizes the organic combination of language skills training, knowledge impartation, and value shaping, which is consistent with the educational concept of the "Understanding Contemporary China" series of textbooks.

### 2.2 International Research on Course Clusters

International research on course clusters originated in Europe in the mid-19th century, with the concept of integrated courses gradually taking shape in Europe and America in the 1950s. A typical case is the curriculum reform of the University of Tsukuba in Japan in 1991, which adopted the "Tsukuba Model" characterized by "school group and department system". This model reconstructed the curriculum system oriented by the cultivation of educational thought and social engineering talents, highlighting the comprehensiveness and interdisciplinary nature of courses, and effectively integrating general education and professional education.

In the field of foreign language education, European countries such as Britain and France have taken the lead in constructing a sound language course cluster model. This model combines the resources and talent advantages of social enterprises and universities, emphasizing the integration of language learning and practical application, which provides a reference for the construction of Spanish course clusters.

### 2.3 Domestic Research on Course Clusters

In China, the research and practice of course clusters began in the 1990s. Beijing Institute of Technology first proposed the idea of integrating related courses to form an independent and complete teaching content system. In recent years, domestic universities have carried out extensive explorations: some studies have constructed integrated language course clusters from the perspectives of curriculum system architecture, teaching model construction, and evaluation mechanism establishment; others have focused on the construction of ideological and political course clusters, emphasizing the horizontal integration and vertical connection of courses to realize the fundamental task of moral education.

However, current research on foreign language course clusters, especially Spanish course clusters, is relatively limited. Most studies focus on other languages or general curriculum systems, and there is a lack of in-depth exploration on the integration of Spanish reading, speech, and translation courses based on the "Understanding Contemporary China" series of textbooks. This study intends to fill this gap by exploring the construction path of Spanish course clusters combined with the aforementioned textbooks.

## 3 Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to systematically explore the construction path of the Spanish course cluster based on the "Understanding Contemporary China" series textbooks. The design aimed to ensure the comprehensiveness and depth of the research, integrating theoretical analysis with empirical verification to address the research questions effectively.

### 3.2 Specific Research Methods

#### 3.2.1 Document Analysis

This method involved collecting and sorting relevant literature, including academic papers, educational policies, and teaching syllabi related to course cluster construction, ideological and political education in foreign language teaching, and

the application of the "Understanding Contemporary China" series textbooks. By reviewing these documents, the study clarified the theoretical connotations of course clusters, summarized existing research results, and identified research gaps, laying a theoretical foundation for the design of the Spanish course cluster framework .

### 3.2.2 Questionnaire Survey

Questionnaires were distributed to teachers and students from universities that used the "Understanding Contemporary China" Spanish series textbooks. The survey focused on the current status of textbook application, course offering patterns, teaching effectiveness, and existing problems in Spanish reading, speech, and translation courses. The collected data were statistically analyzed to reveal the practical challenges in integrating these courses, providing empirical support for optimizing the course cluster construction plan.

### 3.2.3 Interview Method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two groups of participants: university administrators responsible for curriculum management and Spanish teachers who taught courses using the series textbooks. Administrators were asked about institutional support for course cluster construction and policy constraints, while teachers shared their experiences in textbook application, teaching methods, and difficulties in integrating ideological and political elements. These interviews supplemented the questionnaire data with in-depth qualitative insights .

### 3.2.4 Case Study Method

1-5 Spanish classes from selected universities were chosen as case study objects. The study tracked their teaching processes, including curriculum design, classroom activities, and assessment methods, before and after the implementation of the course cluster. By comparing the teaching effects (e.g., students' language proficiency, understanding of "contemporary China," and ideological awareness), the feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed course cluster construction path were verified, ensuring the practical relevance of the research conclusions .

### 3.2.5 Systematic Analysis

Drawing on theories from political science, comparative studies, and education, this method integrated macro-level national educational policies with micro-level teaching practices. It aimed to construct a holistic framework for the Spanish course cluster that aligned with the goals of "Understanding Contemporary China" and met the requirements of high-quality foreign language education, ensuring the compatibility of the course cluster with both national strategies and educational realities .

## 4 Results and Analysis

### 4.1 Current Status of Spanish Teaching with "Understanding Contemporary China" Textbooks

The survey and interview results revealed several key findings regarding the application of "Understanding Contemporary China" Spanish series textbooks in teaching. Firstly, the textbooks were widely used in Spanish reading, speech, and translation courses across the surveyed universities, but the courses were typically offered in separate semesters with little coordination between them. Teachers reported that the independence of each course led to repetitive content and inefficient use of teaching resources.

Secondly, while most teachers recognized the value of integrating ideological and political education with language skills through the textbooks, they faced challenges in practice. The questionnaire showed that 68% of teachers struggled to systematically embed ideological and political elements into course content, often treating them as supplementary rather than core components. Students, meanwhile, indicated that their understanding of "contemporary China" remained superficial, with limited ability to connect language learning with national conditions .

Thirdly, the evaluation of teaching effectiveness was found to be fragmented. Assessments focused primarily on individual course outcomes (e.g., reading comprehension or translation accuracy) rather than overall literacy development, failing to reflect the holistic goals of value shaping, knowledge impartation, and ability training.

### 4.2 Theoretical Framework for Spanish Course Cluster Construction

Based on the above findings, the study proposed a theoretical framework for Spanish course cluster construction

centered on "ideological and political guidance + ideological empowerment."

#### 4.2.1 Ideological and Political Guidance

The framework reconstructed the curriculum structure by integrating reading, speech, and translation courses around ten core themes extracted from the "Understanding Contemporary China" textbooks (e.g., "China's development path" and "Ecological civilization"). A set of evaluation criteria was developed, covering course cluster positioning, content integration, and ideological and political education effectiveness, to ensure alignment with national educational policies.

#### 4.2.2 Ideological Empowerment

Taking Spanish Reading and Writing, Chinese-Spanish Translation, and Spanish Speech as foundational materials, the framework designed interdisciplinary teaching modules. For example, reading courses focused on analyzing texts to grasp China's theoretical discourse, translation courses emphasized accurately conveying Chinese concepts, and speech courses trained students to present China's stories coherently. This integration aimed to cultivate students' ability to combine Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era with practical language application.

### 4.3 Preliminary Achievements of Course Cluster Construction

During the project, several phased achievements were realized. A survey report on the current status of Spanish teaching using the textbooks was completed, identifying key issues such as isolated course design and inadequate ideological and political integration. Additionally, a preliminary course cluster framework was drafted, with 3 pilot classes implementing the integrated modules. Post-implementation feedback showed that students' interest in "understanding contemporary China" increased by 42%, and their ability to use Spanish to discuss Chinese topics improved significantly, indicating initial effectiveness of the cluster model.

However, challenges remained, including the need for more teacher training in interdisciplinary teaching and the lack of long-term data to verify sustained effects. These findings highlighted the importance of further refining the framework based on practical feedback.

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Implications of the Findings

The results of this study hold both theoretical and practical implications for Spanish course cluster construction and ideological and political education in foreign language teaching.

Theoretically, the research enriched the discourse on foreign language course cluster development by proposing a framework integrating "ideological and political guidance" and "ideological empowerment." This framework validated the feasibility of centering course cluster design on specific textbooks—in this case, the "Understanding Contemporary China" series—thus expanding the application scenarios of course cluster theory in foreign language education. By emphasizing the logical correlation between reading, speech, and translation courses, the study also reinforced the notion that course clusters should serve holistic talent cultivation goals, aligning with the definition of course clusters as "integrated, hierarchically clear curriculum systems".

Practically, the findings provided actionable insights for universities using the "Understanding Contemporary China" Spanish textbooks. The identified challenges—such as isolated course offerings and superficial integration of ideological elements—highlighted the urgency of curriculum reform. The proposed course cluster framework, with its themed modules and interdisciplinary design, offered a solution to these issues. For instance, integrating reading, translation, and speech courses around core themes from the textbooks addressed content repetition and improved resource utilization, while the emphasis on "ideological empowerment" guided teachers to systematically embed ideological and political education into language training.

### 5.2 Limitations of the Study

Despite these contributions, the study had several limitations. First, the scope of the survey and case studies was relatively narrow, focusing on a small number of universities. This restricted the generalizability of the findings, as regional differences in teaching resources and faculty expertise might affect the applicability of the course cluster model. Second, the

evaluation of the course cluster's effectiveness relied primarily on short-term feedback from pilot classes, lacking long-term data on whether the model sustained improvements in students' language proficiency or ideological awareness. Third, the framework's "ideological and political evaluation criteria" remained preliminary, requiring further refinement to balance objectivity and operability.

### 5.3 Future Research Directions

To address these limitations, future research could expand the sample size to include more institutions, particularly those with diverse educational contexts, to test the adaptability of the course cluster model. Longitudinal studies tracking students' performance over multiple semesters would also help verify the model's long-term impact. Additionally, refining the evaluation system—for example, by incorporating quantitative metrics for ideological and political education outcomes—could enhance the framework's practicality. Finally, exploring collaborations between universities and external institutions (e.g., cultural exchange organizations) might provide new avenues for applying the course cluster to real-world scenarios, further strengthening students' ability to "tell Chinese stories" in Spanish.

## 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study systematically explored the construction path of the Spanish course cluster based on the "Understanding Contemporary China" series textbooks, with the aim of addressing the fragmentation of current Spanish teaching and enhancing the integration of ideological and political education with language skills training. Through document analysis, questionnaire surveys, interviews, and case studies, several key conclusions were drawn.

Firstly, the research confirmed that although the "Understanding Contemporary China" Spanish textbooks were widely used in reading, speech, and translation courses, these courses remained isolated in practice, leading to repetitive content, inefficient resource utilization, and inadequate integration of ideological and political elements. This isolation hindered the achievement of holistic educational goals, including value shaping, knowledge impartation, and ability training.

Secondly, the study developed a feasible framework for Spanish course cluster construction centered on "ideological and political guidance + ideological empowerment." This framework integrated the three courses around core themes from the textbooks, reconstructed the curriculum structure, and established evaluation criteria that emphasized both language proficiency and ideological understanding. Pilot implementations in selected classes demonstrated initial effectiveness, with improved student engagement in understanding China and enhanced ability to communicate Chinese perspectives in Spanish.

Finally, the research highlighted the importance of systematic curriculum design and teacher collaboration in realizing the potential of the "Understanding Contemporary China" textbooks. The course cluster model not only optimized teaching efficiency but also strengthened the alignment between foreign language education and national strategies for cultivating international talents.

### 6.2 Limitations and Future Work

Despite its contributions, the study had limitations. The scope of the case studies was limited to a small number of universities, and the long-term effectiveness of the course cluster model remained to be verified. Future research should expand the sample size to include more institutions and conduct longitudinal tracking to assess sustained impacts on student development.

Additionally, the evaluation system for the course cluster, particularly the metrics for ideological and political education outcomes, required further refinement. Future work could focus on developing more quantitative and objective assessment tools to better measure the holistic effects of the course cluster.

In conclusion, the construction of the Spanish course cluster based on the "Understanding Contemporary China" series textbooks provided a viable approach to integrating language education with ideological and political guidance. With continued optimization and broader application, this model could play a significant role in advancing foreign language education reform and cultivating talents capable of bridging Chinese and global perspectives.

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