

# Exploring innovative teaching methods in secondary Chinese language teaching

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**Abstract:** As a core subject for fostering language skills and cultural literacy, middle school Chinese education faces problems in traditional teaching, such as low student participation, weak application of knowledge, and neglect of individual differences. This article first analyzes the dilemmas of traditional teaching and the need for innovation, then elaborates on three core innovative methods: situational teaching, project-based learning (PBL), and differentiated instruction, outlining their practical approaches. Finally, it proposes the implementation support of "teacher training - resource development - management reform" to enhance teaching quality.

**Keywords:** secondary Chinese language teaching; innovative teaching methods; core competencies; situational teaching; differentiated teaching

## 1 Introduction

Secondary education is critical for students' language proficiency and thinking development. Yet traditional Chinese classrooms remain "teacher-led lecturing with passive students", disconnected from digital-era students' interactive learning needs. *The Compulsory Education Chinese Curriculum Standards* (2022 Edition) (hereafter New Curriculum Standards) clearly requires teaching to focus on the four core competencies of "language construction, thinking development, aesthetic appreciation, and cultural inheritance"—for example, adding practical content like "writing community proposals" to push teaching beyond traditional frameworks [1].

## 2 Predicaments of traditional secondary Chinese language teaching and the need for innovation

### 2.1 Core predicaments of traditional teaching

Traditional teaching mainly has three problems:

- Passive learning causes low engagement. Teachers take over 70% of class time, with students mostly acting as "note-takers". *The Chinese Society of Education's 2023 Report* shows that only 32% of students "often participate in classroom discussions" and 45% consider "Chinese classes boring". For example, in a rural middle school's "Kong Yiji" class, the teacher spent 40 minutes analyzing the text, leaving just 5 minutes for interaction; only 2 students asked questions, all focused on "exam key points".

- Fragmented knowledge results in weak application. Reading, writing, listening and speaking modules are isolated. A survey reveals 61% of junior high graduates "can analyze the structure of argumentative essays but cannot write proposals", and 58% "can recite Tang poems but cannot use them to express emotions".

- Individual differences are neglected and evaluation is single-dimensional. Uniform teaching leads to "underachieving students falling behind and top students not being sufficiently challenged". 76% of teachers admit that they "have to teach at the pace of average-performing students"; evaluation mainly relies on paper-and-pencil test scores, with practical abilities not included [2].

## 2.2 Core directions of innovation needs

In line with the *New Curriculum Standards*, teaching needs to achieve three transformations: from "teacher-centered" to "student-centered" to stimulate initiative; from "fragmented knowledge" to "integrated competencies" to strengthen application; from "uniform teaching" to "personalized development" to adapt to individual differences.

## 3 Core innovative teaching methods in secondary Chinese language teaching

### 3.1 Situational teaching method: immersive text comprehension

Based on constructivist theory, abstract texts are transformed into experiences by creating scenes [3]. There are three implementation paths:

Multimedia restoration of scenes: When teaching "The Preface to the Pavilion of Prince Teng," a video of the Dongting Lake scenery is played along with guzheng music, guiding students to associate phrases like "the floating light leaps like gold" with the imagery to understand the emotion behind "worrying about the world before oneself".

Role-playing to experience characters: When teaching "Kong Yiji", students are divided into groups to build a "Xianheng Hotel", playing roles such as Kong Yiji and the patrons, experiencing the character's pedantry and society's indifference through dialogue;

Realizing life context transfer: After teaching argumentative essays, students are required to write argumentative essays on the topic of "food waste in schools" using "example proof" and post them in the cafeteria. A pilot program at a certain high school in Beijing showed that the classroom participation rate in the experimental class reached 89% (compared to 41% in the control class), and the average score on text comprehension tests was 14.2 points higher.

### 3.2 Project-based learning (PBL): Integrating language competencies

Based on the "student-centered" theory, this method integrates competencies through long-term tasks [4].

- Clarify goals and division of labor: Each group sets roles such as "information collector" and "writer", with goals including "interviewing teachers and students to collect school history" and "writing introductions to campus scenic spots".

- Promote tasks in phases: 1 week for interviews, 2 weeks for writing and typesetting, and weekly group meetings to solve problems (e.g., "how to adjust the interview time when the principal is busy").

- Display, feedback, and revision: Display the draft handbook in class, and teachers and students comment from dimensions such as "content completeness".

- Extend the application of results: Distribute excellent handbooks to new students and arrange communication between the creators and new students.

- Diversified evaluation and summary: 60% of the score comes from the process (e.g., interview records), and 40% from the final results [5].

A pilot study in a middle school in Guangzhou showed that the average score of argumentative essays in the PBL class was 13.6% higher, and the excellent rate of oral English was 2.1 times that of the control class.

### 3.3 Differentiated teaching method: adapting to individual differences

Based on Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" theory, this method designs hierarchical goals, content, and evaluation. Taking the teaching of the concept of "ren" (benevolence) in *The Analects* as an example:

- Basic level: Master 10 words such as "ren" (benevolence) and "li" (ritual), and translate sentences like "Do not do to others what you do not wish for yourself".
- Intermediate level: Analyze the embodiment of "ren" in modern life (e.g., anti-epidemic volunteers).
- Advanced level: Compare "ren" with Western "humanism" and write a 300-character essay.

A pilot study in a middle school in Shanghai showed that the accuracy rate of word recognition at the basic level increased from 65% to 90%, and the excellent rate of innovative writing at the advanced level increased from 30% to 58%.

## 4 Implementation support system for innovative teaching

### 4.1 Teachers' professional development

Improve teachers' capabilities through "concept updating, skill training, and teaching research":

- Concept updating: Invite curriculum standard experts to interpret core competencies and eliminate the concern that "innovation affects exam scores".
- Skill training: Conduct practical training on "video production for situational teaching" and "PBL project design".
- Teaching research support: Hold "innovative teaching seminars" every week and share excellent cases within the region.

### 4.2 Teaching resource development

Construct three types of resource libraries:

- Digital resources: Led by municipal-level education departments, build a "situational material library" (e.g., text animations) and a "PBL template library".
- Practical resources: Set up "Chinese project studios" and provide interview recorders, typesetting software, etc.
- Human resources: Invite writers and museum staff to guide practical activities.

### 4.3 School management reform

Ensure the implementation through institutional guarantees:

Evaluation reform: incorporate the participation rate in innovative activities into Chinese scores (accounting for  $\geq 30\%$ ).

Time adjustment: Set up 90-minute "innovative integrated classes" for PBL discussions and situational activities.

Incentive mechanism: Provide innovation funds and commend "outstanding innovative teaching teachers".

## 5 Conclusion

The three methods—situational teaching, PBL, and differentiated teaching—effectively address traditional teaching predicaments and meet the *New Curriculum Standards*' core competency requirements. However, their promotion faces issues like insufficient rural resources, heavy teacher workloads, and college entrance examination-oriented constraints. In the future, it is necessary to increase rural resource investment, reduce teachers' non-teaching tasks, and include practical ability assessment in the college entrance examination, thus making secondary Chinese classrooms a "competency cultivation field where students love to learn, know how to learn, and enjoy learning".

## Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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