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# A Study on Chinese English Majors' Morphological Awareness

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**Abstract:** Recently, morphological awareness has become a hot topic. So far, many scholars at home and abroad have conducted theoretical and empirical studies on it. However, the main subjects were foreign students so situations on Chinese English learners' morphological awareness can't be known. Based upon it, this article takes Chinese English majors as subjects, exploring the current situations of their morphological awareness. The results are that Chinese English majors' overall morphological awareness has reached a moderate level. Their receptive morphological awareness is better than productive morphological awareness and their inflectional morphological awareness is the strongest. Meanwhile, students' levels of morphological awareness are related to students' language proficiency. The findings made in the present study have provided some enlightenment for English vocabulary teaching.

**Keywords:** Chinese English Majors; Morphological Awareness; Vocabulary Acquisition

## 1 INTRODUCTION

To be honest, learning vocabulary effectively is difficult for many Chinese English learners in that vocabulary knowledge is a multi-dimensional, rich and complex construct (Koda 2005; Schmitt 2010) [10,20]. It is like a bridge linking listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Accordingly, learning vocabulary from different dimensions is essential.

In the light of this problem, many scholars have devoted themselves into the research of vocabulary acquisition to facilitate English teaching and learning. Many studies about vocabulary acquisition strategies have been conducted. Cohen (2000) [3] claimed that vocabulary learning can be very effective if learners use appropriate learning strategies such as contextualized memorization, classification memorization and so on. Nowadays, morphological awareness has attracted more and more scholars. They found that the use of morphological knowledge can contribute to L2 learners' vocabulary building (Morin 2003) [14], improve the depth of vocabulary knowledge and connect more members of a word family (Hayashi & Murphy 2015)[8]. Therefore, cultivating the morphological awareness intentionally is an effective way to improve Chinese English learners' vocabulary learning.

So far, there have been some existing studies exploring the morphological awareness. However, there are few studies exploring Chinese English

learners' morphological awareness, especially English majors' one. In a meantime, there have been few researches studying the relationship between Chinese English majors' morphological awareness and their vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the present study will investigate Chinese English majors' morphological awareness and the relationship between the morphological awareness and vocabulary acquisition.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Morphological Awareness

Carlisle (1995)[4] regarded morphological awareness as "learners' awareness of the morphemic structure of words and their ability to reflect on and manipulate that structure" (p.194). Later she (2000) revised morphological awareness as "the ability to parse words and analyze constituent morphemes for the purpose of constructing meaning" (p.170). Koda (2000) [9] argued that it could be defined from two layers: the ability to recognize and extract sub-lexical morphemic information and the competence to perceive morphemic structures and relationships. Morin (2003) [14] took morphological awareness as the competence to recognize and manipulate morphemes and reflect the word formation rules in a language. Kuo and Anderson (2006)[11] suggested that morphological awareness is "the ability to reflect upon and manipulate morphemes and employ word formation rules in one's language" (p.161). Morphological awareness is considered as the competence to distinguish and manipulate the structure of morphemes (Hayashi & Murphy 2015)[8]. Combining with the previous definitions, in this article, morphological awareness means students can use their morphological knowledge to coin new words and speculate word meanings, which is not only helpful to broaden the vocabulary size but also beneficial to strengthen the understanding of vocabulary depth.

Morphological awareness has some classifications. It can be divided into inflectional and derivational morphological awareness (Nation 2001) [17]. Inflectional morphological awareness, in fact, means the students' ability to recognize vocabulary's grammatical meaning. Derivational morphological awareness refers to students' competence to perceive a new word formed by adding an affix. Later, Hayashi and Murphy (2011)[7] claimed morphological awareness covers two types: receptive morphological awareness and productive morphological awareness.

Receptive morphological awareness, also called passive morphological awareness, refers to students' ability to recall the vocabulary's meaning according to its form. Productive morphological awareness, also called active awareness, is defined as learners' competence to use vocabulary in speaking and writing. What's more, morphological awareness also can be categorized as the morpheme identification awareness, which is the competence to distinguish different meanings through homophones; and morphological structure awareness, which is the ability to take advantage of known morphemes to derive new meanings. Apel (2014)[1] deemed the morphological awareness involves four aspects: awareness of spoken and written forms of morpheme, the meaning of affixes, how written affixes are connected to basic words and the relationship between a word and its inflected or derived forms. This article adopts the Nation's classifications.

In addition, regarding to the morphological awareness measurements, so far, there have been many morphological awareness tests. Carlisle (2000) [5] proposed a test of morphological awareness that contains two tasks: decomposition and derivation. The former has 30 items, asking participants to give the basic form of a word based upon its morphologically derived stem and context of the sentence. The later also has 30 items but it requires participants to give the derived form according to the word's basic stem. McBride-Chang et al. (2005)[15] also designed the morphological awareness test, including a morpheme identification awareness test and a morphological structure awareness test. Later, Hayashi and Murphy (2011)[7] designed *Morphological Awareness Test (MAT)*, which is applied in the current study because of its validity and suitability of research subjects.

*MAT* is to examine students' morphological awareness, consisting of two tasks: Affix Elicitation Task (AE) and Word Segmentation Task (WS). Affix Elicitation Task requires students to complete the sentences with the correct form of the given words. For instance, "Normally she intensifies the effect by turning off the lights. (intensify)" The sentences in this task are sampled from the British National Corpus. Word Segmentation Task requires students to break the specific words up to find how the words form. For instance, the word books can be shown as book+s.

There have been many empirical studies about morphological awareness. Concerning the role of morphological awareness in language learning, there are many empirical studies. For instance, for L1 learners, Bertram, Laine and Virkkala (2000) [2] studied affix frequency and productivity in Finnish students' vocabulary knowledge and found that the Finnish elementary school students are beneficial from using morphological knowledge when choosing and deciding word meaning. For L2 learners, Morin (2003) [14] investigated Spanish classes to study the mastering situation of derivational morphology based

upon three questions: (1) Do L2 beginners who attend Spanish derivational morphology master more vocabulary than learners who do not? (2) Can they make use of morphological knowledge receptively and productively? and (3) Is their success related to their L2 proficiency level? The results showed learning Spanish derivational morphology could foster the vocabulary building at least in an experiment group, the second-semester learners who have learned Spanish morphological knowledge.

In addition, many studies have paid attention to the influence of morphological awareness on the vocabulary growth. Kieffer and Lesaux (2012)[12] researched the morphological awareness and its effects to vocabulary growth. They investigated a group of Spanish-speaking English language learners and proved morphological awareness and vocabulary growth were closely related. Similar results also have been found among Chinese-speaking learners (Zhang & Koda 2012)[22].

Finally, morphological awareness has been discovered to help improve literacy-related skills, such as reading and listening. Gilbert, Goodwin, Compton, and Kearns (2013)[6] took 169 fifth graders from 40 schools as the subjects, examining the influence of morphological analysis of multisyllabic words on reading ability. The results suggested the positive relationship between morphemic analysis and reading comprehension and 39 % of students who didn't have good morphological awareness were faced with more problems about morphologically-complex words in reading comprehension. Besides, Saeidi and Mirzapour (2013)[21] analyzed the relationship between morphological awareness and listening comprehension for Iranian EFLs by investigating 40 students (25 boys and 15 girls) majoring in English Language Teaching at Hamedan Branch, Islamic Azad University and concluded the close relationship between morphological awareness and listening comprehension.

## 2.2 The Relationship between Morphological Awareness and Vocabulary Knowledge

Morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge are correlative (McBride-Chang et al. 2005)[15]. Many studies have revealed the positive relationship between morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge among monolingual speakers of different language backgrounds (McBride-Chang et al. 2005) [15]. For instance, McBride-Chang et al. (2005) [15] investigated the morphological awareness of some monolingual English-speaking kindergarten pupils and first grade students. The same results were demonstrated.

Furthermore, many previous researches have suggested morphological awareness fostered ESL vocabulary acquisition (Kieffer & Lesaux 2012)[12]. For example, Kieffer and Lesaux (2012)[12] studied the influence of morphological awareness on vocabulary development of some Spanish-speaking

English language learners. The findings showed a close relationship between Spanish English learners' morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge. The results suggested that learners acquiring morphology obviously had higher scores than ones who didn't acquire.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Questions

The present research is conducted for the purpose of learning about Chinese English majors' current situations of morphological awareness, exploring if students of different language proficiency have different levels of morphological awareness and studying the relationship between students' morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge. The following three questions are raised to study:

- (1) What are the current situations of Chinese English majors' morphological awareness?
- (2) Do students of different language proficiency show different levels of morphological awareness?
- (3) Is students' vocabulary knowledge related to their morphological awareness?

#### 3.2 Participants

A total of 44 English majors from a university were recruited to participate in the current study. Among them, twenty-two students are sophomores and the rest are junior students. This distinction of the subjects' levels is to measure the morphological awareness of students with different language proficiency levels. They namely represent the elementary level and the advanced level.

#### 3.3 Instruments

In the current study, there are totally three tests being administered and they are respectively *Morphological Awareness Test* (see Appendix I), *Vocabulary Levels Test* including Productive Vocabulary Levels Test (see Appendix II) and Receptive Vocabulary Levels Test (see Appendix III). In addition, a questionnaire (see Appendix IV) is applied to learn students' morphological awareness more deeply and comprehensively.

Hayashi and Murphy's (2011)[7] Morphological Awareness Test (MAT) is used in this study because Wang and Zhang (2013)[23] have proved its validity and it is appropriate to this present study because the test is designed for second language learners.

The Morphological Awareness Test includes two tasks: Affix Elicitation (AE) Task to examine students' productive morphological awareness and Word Segmentation (WS) Task to examine receptive morphological awareness. The AE Task imitated Nation's (2001) morphological task, requiring students to complete the sentences with the correct forms of the given words. For instance, Example 1: Normally she intensifies the effect by turning off the lights. (intensify)

Vocabulary Levels Test was designed by Nation (1990) [16] to examine students' vocabulary size. In this present study, with the distinction of receptive and

productive vocabulary, vocabulary tests involve Receptive Levels Test proposed by Schmitt and Clapham (2001)[19] and Productive Levels Test developed by Laufer and Nation (1999)[13]. These two tests' validity are both supported (Nation & Meara 2002)[18].

Questionnaire is designed to learn about students' vocabulary acquisition and the current situation of their morphological awareness more deeply and comprehensively. There are five questions in this questionnaire. Obviously, the main stress of this questionnaire is the degree of students' attention to morphological awareness and how students acquire vocabulary. The questionnaire can be beneficial to learn about the reasons of the results demonstrated from the three tests mentioned before, which can provide the enlightenments for vocabulary learning and teaching.

#### 3.4 Research Procedure

The present study was administered offline. The author invited 22 sophomores and 22 junior students to complete three tests and a questionnaire. The time of every task is not limited. Before the study began, the author clarified the details of these tests. Subjects were required to complete these tasks carefully and not to use any reference materials including paper dictionary, electrical dictionary and so on or to ask others. In the whole process, the author always supervised and answered some questions when needed. After all students have finished, the author collected all tests on the scene.

#### 3.5 Data Analysis

After collecting the data of the tests and questionnaire, the author classified them and drew them into tables through Excel and then analyzed data in detail by SPSS 24.0. Firstly, descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test were conducted to show the characteristics of Chinese English majors' morphological awareness. Then, one-way ANOVA and descriptive statistics were used to examine the situations of morphological awareness of students of different English proficiency. Furthermore, the relationship between morphological awareness and vocabulary size was examined by descriptive statistics, Person Correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Last but not least, combining the questionnaire, these data collected were employed to answer the questions and achieve the purpose ultimately.

### 4. RESULTS

#### 4.1 Results of Research Question One

The first question is mainly about the current situations of Chinese English majors' morphological awareness. It is examined through MAT including AE and WS. This test has 84 points in total and this score is considered as the criteria to examine students' morphological awareness. AE is designed to test students' productive morphological awareness and WS is for receptive morphological awareness. In the study, a total of 44 English majors finished these tasks.

Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive statistics of Chinese English majors' morphological awareness.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Chinese English Majors' Morphological Awareness

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MA	44	46	71	59.34	6.958

From Table 1, it can be found that the minimum of MAT is 46 and the maximum is 71. In the meantime, the mean of MAT is 59.34, which is higher than the passing score of 50.4 points ( $84 \times 60\% = 50.4$ ). The mean counts for 70.6% of the total grade, which shows that morphological awareness for Chinese English

majors is at a moderate level.

In order to analyze Chinese English majors' current situations of morphological awareness more detailly and accurately, WS and AE are analyzed respectively. AE Task has 34 points in all and WS Task has 50 points totally.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of Chinese English majors' AE and WS tasks.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AE	44	10	27	18.84	4.281
WS	44	32	47	40.61	3.895

From Table 2, it can be seen that in the AE task, the minimum is 10 and the maximum is 27. The mean is 18.84, which is slightly lower than the passing score of 20.4 ( $34 \times 60\% = 20.4$ ) and counts for 55.4% of the total grade. Accordingly, the levels of Chinese English majors' productive morphological awareness are relatively poor. In the WS task, the minimum is 32 and the maximum is 47. The mean is 40.61, which is much higher than the passing mark of 30 ( $50 \times 60\% = 30$ ) and counts for 81.2% of the total grade. Thus, the levels of Chinese English majors' receptive morphological awareness are relatively high. Through

the comparison, it can be seen that Chinese English majors' receptive morphological awareness is better than productive morphological awareness.

In order to analyze scientifically if Chinese English majors' performance in AE Task and WS Task indeed has differences, Independent Sample T-test is applied. Table 3 presents its results.

From Table 3, students' performance in AE Task and WS Task has obvious differences ( $P=0.000 < 0.05$ ). In other words, Chinese English majors' receptive morphological awareness is indeed better than productive morphological awareness.

Table 2 Independent sample t-test for the ae task and ws task

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			T-Test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
AE Task and WS Task	.907	.344	-24.954	86	.000	-21.773	.873

\*. sig. (2-tailed) is used.

For the purpose of studying Chinese majors' morphological awareness better, AE and WS can be further analyzed. Table 4 gives the specific analysis about three types of morphological awareness. They are respectively inflectional affixes, class-maintaining

derivational affixes, and class-changing derivational affixes. In AE Task, the scores of three types are respectively 10, 12, and 12 points. In WS Task, the scores of three types are respectively 10, 17 and 23 points.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Scores of Affix Types

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Accuracy Percentage
AE	Inflectional Affixes	44	3	10	6.43	1.59	64.3%
	Class-maintaining Derivational Affixes	44	1	10	5.73	1.96	47.8%



	Class-changing Derivational Affixes	44	3	11	6.63	2.21	55.3%
WS	Inflectional Affixes	44	6	10	8.59	1.20	85.9%
	Class-maintaining Derivational Affixes	44	3	18	13.55	2.88	79.7%
	Class-changing Derivational Affixes	44	4	22	17.68	3.24	76.9%

From Table 4, the means of three affixes types in AE Task are respectively 6.43, 5.73, 6.63. Among them, only the mean of inflectional affixes is higher than the passing score of 6 and it counts for 64.3% of the total score. The means of three types in WS Task are respectively 8.59, 13.55 and 17.68, which all are higher than the passing score of 6, 10.2, and 13.8. Hence, generatively, Chinese English majors have better receptive morphological awareness than productive morphological awareness. In addition, the accuracy percentage of inflectional affixes is the highest in both WS Task and AE Task, which shows Chinese English majors' inflectional morphological

awareness is the best.

In conclusion, generally speaking, Chinese English majors' morphological awareness is at a moderate level. Specifically, their receptive morphological awareness is comparatively better than productive morphological awareness. Furthermore, they do have better inflectional morphological awareness.

#### 4.2 Results of Research Question Two

The study's second question is to analyze morphological awareness of students with different language proficiency. Table 5 demonstrates basic descriptive statistics of morphological awareness of Chinese English majors at different levels.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics for Morphological Awareness of the Two Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Elementary Level	22	46	65	54.73	5.138
Advanced Level	22	52	71	63.95	5.305

From Table 5, the scores of students at the elementary level are from 46 to 65 and the mean is 54.73 (SD=5.138) and it counts for 65.2% of the total score. The scores of students at advanced level are from 52 to 71 and the mean is 63.95 (SD=5.305) and it accounts for 76.1% of the total score. The scores of both groups are higher than the passing score of 50.4 ( $84 \times 60\% = 50.4$ ). However, the levels of morphological awareness for students at the elementary level are comparatively lower ( $65.2\% < 76.1\%$ ). The differences of means in two groups show that morphological awareness of students in two groups is different. In order to further explore if the morphological awareness of students with different language proficiency is significantly different, one-way ANOVA is applied. Table 6 demonstrates the homogeneity test of variance of the two groups. In this table,  $P=0.571 > 0.05$ , so F Test is used. Table 7 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis of the scores for the two groups. From Table 7,  $F=34.345$  and  $P=0.000 < 0.05$  show that levels of morphological awareness for Chinese English majors with different language proficiency are obviously different.

Table 5 Homogeneity Test of Variance for Scores of the Two Groups' Morphological Awareness

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.326	1	42	.571

Table 6 Analysis of Variance for Scores of the Two Groups' Morphological Awareness

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	936.568	1	936.568	34.345	.000
Within Groups	1145.318	42	27.269		
Total	2081.886	43			

To learn current situations of morphological awareness for Chinese English majors of different language proficiency in AE and WS tasks, descriptive statistics of it is given in Table 8.

Table 7 Descriptive Statistics for Scores of the AE and WS Tasks of the Two Groups

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Accuracy Percentage
AE	Elementary Level	22	10	23	16.27	3.298	47.9%
	Advanced Level	22	16	27	21.41	3.581	63.0%
WS	Elementary Level	22	32	45	38.32	3.138	76.6%
	Advanced Level	22	38	47	42.91	3.191	85.8%

From Table 8, in AE Task, the mean of the elementary level group is 16.27 (47.9% of the total score) and the mean of advanced level is 21.41 (63.0% of the total score). In WS Task, the mean of elementary level is 38.32 (76.6% of the total score) and the mean of advanced level is 42.91 (85.9% of the total score). All in all, whether in AE or WS, the mean of elementary level is both lower than the mean of advanced level. Accordingly, students of different language proficiency show different levels of morphological awareness.

In order to learn the morphological awareness for students of different language proficiency more accurately, Table 9 presents the descriptive statistics of two groups' morphological awareness of affix types in WS Task.

From Table 9, on the whole, the accuracy percentage of the advanced level group is higher than the elementary level group. In terms of accuracy percentage, for the elementary level, inflectional affixes are the best (the accuracy percentage is 77.5%) and then are respectively class-maintaining and class-changing derivational affixes. For the advanced level, class-maintaining derivational affixes are the best (the accuracy percentage is 88.5%) and then are inflectional and class-changing derivational affixes. In both groups, Chinese English majors' class-changing derivational affixes are relatively poor. What's more, the descriptive statistics of two groups' morphological awareness of affixes types in AE Task are presented in Table 10.

Table 8 Descriptive Statistics for Morphological Awareness of Affix Types in the WS Task of the Two Groups

	Elementary Level		Advanced Level	
Affixes Types	Mean	Accuracy Percentage	Mean	Accuracy Percentage
Inflectional Affixes	7.75	77.5%	8.73	87.3%
Class-maintaining Derivational Affixes	9.32	54.8%	15.04	88.5%
Class-changing Derivational Affixes	12.02	52.2%	18.96	82.4%

Table 9 Descriptive Statistics for Morphological Awareness of Affix Types in the AE Task of the Two Groups

	Elementary Level		Advanced Level	
Affix Types	Mean	Accuracy Percentage	Mean	Accuracy Percentage
Inflectional Affixes	5.82	58.2%	7.05	70.5%
Class-maintaining Derivational Affixes	4.86	40.5%	6.60	55%
Class-changing Derivational Affixes	5.64	47%	7.64	63.7%

From Table 10, as for every type of affixes, students at the advanced level are better than the elementary

level. Additionally, whether for the elementary level group or the advanced level group, the accuracy

percentage of inflectional affixes is both highest (respectively 58.2% and 70.5%). That is to say Chinese English majors have the best inflectional morphological awareness and then class-changing and class-maintaining derivational affixes.

To conclude, as for the second question, Chinese English majors of different language proficiency indeed have different levels of morphological awareness. Students at the elementary level have lower levels of morphological awareness, whether for receptive or productive morphological awareness. Whereas, students at the advanced level have good inflectional morphological awareness and poor class-maintaining and class-changing derivational morphological awareness. In the WS task, class-changing derivational morphological awareness is better than class-maintaining one; but in the AE task, students' class-maintaining morphological awareness is better than class-changing one.

#### 4.3 Results of Research Question Three

The third question is to explore the relationship between morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge. The participants finished RVLT and PVL. Table 11 presents the descriptive statistics of RVLT of the two groups.

Table 10 Descriptive Statistics for the Scores of RVLT of the Two Groups

Frequency Levels	Elementary Level		Advanced Level	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
2000	27.14	3.075	28.73	1.162
3000	24.63	3.345	28.23	1.688

Table 12 Correlations of Morphological Awareness and Vocabulary Knowledge for the Two Groups

			RVLT	PVLT	VK
Elementary Level	MA	Pearson Correlation	.296	.385	.354
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.182	.077	.106
Advanced Level	MA	Pearson Correlation	.212	.597	.465
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.344	.003	.029
	N	44	44	44	44

From Table 13, as for the elementary level group, the results of P are respectively 0.182, 0.077, and 0.106, which all pass 0.05. Accordingly, the morphological awareness of students at the elementary level is not related to their vocabulary knowledge. As for the

Table 13 Regression Analysis Explaining Morphological Awareness with Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Knowledge

Variables	Beta	T-value	R2
Elementary Level: predicting morphological awareness			.155
RVLT	.104	.396	

5000	15.18	6.254	24.05	4.509
Total (%)	66.95	12.674	81.01	7.359

\*. A maximum score at each frequency level was 30 for the RVLT.

Table 11 Descriptive Statistic for the Scores of PVL of the Two Groups

Frequency Levels	Elementary Level		Advanced Level	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
2000	12.09	3.02	15.05	2.32
3000	5.04	2.28	11.68	2.83
Total (%)	17.13	5.3	26.73	5.15

\*. The maximum score at each frequency level was 18 for the PVL.

From Table 11, in terms of means, as for 2000 and 3000 frequency words, the differences between the elementary level group and the advanced level group are slight, while as for 5000 level words, the scores of the elementary level are obviously lower than the advanced level. The result is the same in Table 12. In addition, from Table 11 and 12, according to the result of 3000 level, in RVLT, the scores of English majors at two levels are both much higher than the passing score. Instead, in PVL, the score of elementary students is lower than the passing score and the score of advanced students is just slightly higher than the passing score. Thus, it proves Chinese English majors have better receptive morphological awareness again. To study the relationship between morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge, correlation analysis is done.

advanced level group, the results of P are respectively  $0.344 > 0.05$ ,  $0.003 < 0.05$  and  $0.029 < 0.05$ . Among them, RVLT is not related to morphological awareness but PVL and VK are significantly related.

	PVLT	.323	1.234	
Advanced Level: predicting morphological awareness				.373
	RVLT	.130	.709	
	PVLT	.578	3.150	

a. Predictive variable: receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge

b. Dependent variable: morphological awareness

From Table 14, it can be seen as for the elementary level group,  $R^2$  is 0.155, which demonstrates that their morphological awareness is slightly related to RVLT and PVLT. As for the advanced level,  $R^2$  is 0.373, which shows that morphological awareness is relatively linked to RVLT and PVLT.

To sum up, as for the third question, based upon the results of data analysis, morphological awareness is not necessarily related to vocabulary knowledge, depending on learners' language proficiency. As for the elementary level group, students' language proficiency is not so good, therefore, the morphological awareness is not related to their vocabulary knowledge; as for the advanced level group, students' language proficiency is better, thus, their morphological awareness is related to their vocabulary knowledge.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 The Current Situations of Chinese English Majors' Morphological Awareness

Based upon the results presented in the last section, Chinese English majors are found to have a moderate level of morphological awareness and their inflectional morphological awareness is the best. The answers of the questionnaire conducted may explain the results. The questionnaire has been divided into two parts. One is about the situation of teachers' teaching and the other is about students' learning.

The first is to analyze Chinese English majors' morphological awareness from the teachers' teaching perspective. As far as the frequency of teaching morphological awareness of English majors' teachers, only 2% of teachers rarely teach morphological awareness, 20.50% of teachers sometimes do, 59.10% of teachers often do and 18.4% of teachers always do. Obviously, most teachers of English major teach morphological awareness in the class but teachers who always teach are few. This is one of reason why Chinese English majors have a moderate morphological awareness. Besides, because teachers of English major pay more attention to teach inflectional morphology, students have the best inflectional morphological awareness.

In addition, students' learning of morphology is also a reason for presenting this result. In terms of students' degree of attention to morphological awareness, only 4.5% of students rarely attend to it, 56.8% of students sometimes do, 34.2% of students often do, and 4.5% of students always do. It can be seen that most English majors can pay attention to morphological awareness

but students who always do are few. About if students think morphological awareness can help extend vocabulary size, only 2% of students rarely think, 15.9% of students sometimes do, 45.5% of students often do and 36.3% of students always do. Thus, it can be indicated that most English majors realize the necessity of morphological awareness to extend vocabulary knowledge. Concerning if students think morphological awareness can help deepen to understand vocabulary meaning, no students think affixes can't help, 11.4% of students think it can sometimes help, 56.8% of students think it can often help and 31.8% of students think it can always do. Obviously, most students think affix learning is beneficial. In brief, most Chinese English majors attach the importance to affixes and they have realized that affix learning is significant and useful to increase vocabulary size and deepen the understanding of vocabulary meaning. It's students' attitude to morphological awareness that results in a moderate morphological awareness.

### 5.2 Different Levels of Morphological Awareness for Students of Different Language Proficiency

As for the second question of the current study, based on the data collected, students of different language proficiency indeed have different levels of morphological awareness. Why? Similarly, such an outcome can be discussed on the part of teachers and students respectively.

In the first place, the analysis pertains to the teachers' teaching. For students at the elementary level, 4.5% of teachers rarely teach them affixes, 40.9% of teachers sometimes teach, 50% of teachers often teach and only 4.6% of teachers always teach. In contrast, for students at the advanced level, 68.2% of teachers often teach and 31.8% of teachers always do. Thus, through comparison, the teachers teaching students at the advanced level teach affixes more frequently than teachers teaching students at the elementary level, which is one of the reasons why students at the advanced level have better morphological awareness than ones at the elementary level.

Furthermore, students themselves is another factor to influence the differences in morphological awareness for students at different levels. In terms of students' degree of attention to affixes in their daily study, 9% of students at the elementary level rarely attend the morphological awareness but no student at the advanced level rarely attend to it. 72.7% of students at the elementary level sometimes attend it while only 40.9% of students at the advanced level sometimes do. Only 18.3% students at the elementary level often attend to it, instead, 50% of students at the advanced

level often do. No students at the elementary level always attend to it but 9.1% of students at the advanced level always do. Only through the comparison of this question, it can be explained partly why students at the advanced level have better morphological awareness than ones at the elementary level.

With regard to if students think affixes learning can help extend vocabulary size, 4.5% of students at the elementary level think it can rarely help while no student at the advanced level think it rarely does. The number of students who think it sometimes and often helps at the elementary level are almost the same as at the advanced level. 31.8% of students at the elementary level think it always helps but 40.9% of students at the advanced level think it always does. From these data, more students at the advanced level realize the importance of morphological awareness than ones at the elementary level, which also can account for why there are different degrees of morphological awareness for students at different levels.

### 5.3 The Relationship between Chinese English Majors' Morphological Awareness and Vocabulary Knowledge

So far, many scholars have already proven that the morphological awareness is related to vocabulary knowledge. From the results demonstrated in the last section, Chinese English Majors' morphological awareness is not necessarily related to vocabulary knowledge, depending on learners' language proficiency. There are several assumptions.

First of all, according to correlations analysis, morphological awareness of the elementary level students is completely not related to vocabulary knowledge. However, through Regression Analysis,  $R^2$  is 15.5%, which indicates there is a little relationship between morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge. For students at the elementary level, from the data demonstration of the second question's discussion, firstly, few teachers teach affixes frequently; additionally, most students don't put too much importance on the improvement of morphological awareness; and few students think morphological awareness is useful; finally, they don't have enough morphological knowledge. Accordingly, students' morphological awareness at the elementary level is not so good. In other words, students at the elementary level may use other ways to extend their morphological awareness, such as context-learning, picture-association and movie-learning and so on. In addition, the morphological knowledge of students at the elementary level is not so rich that they don't have the strong morphological awareness. Thus, the result that morphological awareness is not related to vocabulary knowledge can be explained.

As for students at the advanced level, PVLT and VK are related to morphological awareness but RVLT is not related to morphological awareness. Because the

students at the advanced level have a relatively good morphological awareness, VK is related to morphological awareness. As for RVLT, maybe students are not habitual to learn vocabulary through morphological awareness. And students' morphological awareness is not so strong that they are not proficient to use affixes to learn vocabulary. Sometimes, maybe they can't recognize which are affixes, can't comprehend the meanings of affixes and can't know how to use affixes to understand vocabulary. Therefore, RVLT is not related to morphological awareness.

Although from correlation analysis, as for students at the elementary level, morphological awareness is not closely associated with vocabulary knowledge but the results of Regression Analysis present that they have a little relation. As for students at the advanced level, from correlation analysis, PVLT and VK are related to morphological awareness and the results of regression analysis also demonstrate that they have correlation. So, generally speaking, morphological awareness is certainly related to vocabulary knowledge, depending on students' language proficiency. However, it is undeniable that teaching and learning morphology are necessary and indispensable.

### 6. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Based upon the results and discussions of the present study, obviously, the level of morphological awareness is relevant with teachers and students themselves. Thus, in order to extend vocabulary knowledge efficiently, students' morphological awareness should be improved.

Firstly, teachers should cultivate students' morphological awareness intentionally through some teaching activities. For instance, in vocabulary teaching, teachers can require students to had better remember words through affixes. In a meantime, teachers are supposed to demonstrate the meanings of affixes to improve students' proficiency of using affixes. In addition, during reading teaching, when meeting some strange words, the teacher shouldn't tell the meaning of them directly but to guide students to infer the meanings according to word formation if possible. In these ways, gradually, students' morphological awareness can be improved.

Besides, students should build a good habit to recognize the affixes deliberately in their daily learning. Learning vocabulary by rote is not so productive. They should spend time building their morphological awareness. English is a kind of formalized language and knowing its construction can help learn vocabulary more easily. There are some ways to improve morphological awareness for students. On the one hand, students can learn to acquire those English affixes and deepen their understanding of words' meaning based on the English roots and affixes. On the other hand, in their daily study, when meeting some difficult words, they should form a habit to try to infer the meanings based on word

formation but not to look for dictionary immediately. Intentional training can gradually improve students' morphological awareness.

The most important role of the present study is to bring pedagogical implications. For many Chinese English learners, vocabulary learning is difficult; and for some English teachers, vocabulary teaching is not easy. The present study can provide a good way to solve the problem so as to improve the efficiency of vocabulary teaching and learning.

Although the study has got relatively satisfying results, there are still some limitations. On the one hand, the number of subjects is not large enough, which may cause the results to be not so authoritative and representative. On the other hand, in discussions of the present study, some assumptions put forward should be further proved. Furthermore, there are so many tests of morphological awareness, so it's not sure that if there are different results using other tests.

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# The fusion strategy and practice of folk dance elements in the creation of children's dance

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**Abstract:** Folk dance is an important part of traditional culture, with rich cultural connotation. Integrating folk dance elements into children's dance creation is not only conducive to developing traditional culture, but also can enrich the content of children's dance and improve children's aesthetic ability. This paper first analyzes the value of folk dance elements into children dance creation, then expounds the principle of the children dance creation penetration dance elements, then discusses the folk dance elements and children dance creation fusion basic elements, finally from the based on the characteristics of young children, screening dance elements, children imagination, rich art image, strengthen the emotional experience, sublimation dance artistic conception, formulated the folk dance elements in children dance creation into the application strategy.

**Keywords:** Folk Dance; Children's Dance; Creation and Application; Artistic Appeal

## 1 THE VALUE ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATING FOLK DANCE ELEMENTS INTO CHILDREN'S DANCE CREATION

### 1.1 Enrich the Content of Children's Dance

With the development of society, diverse cultures constantly invade people's lives, which not only promotes the diversified development of society, but also has an impact on the protection and inheritance of traditional Chinese culture. In recent years, China has been emphasizing cultural recovery and strengthening the inheritance of traditional culture. Preschool education should also actively respond to the call of the country and integrate traditional cultural elements into education and teaching. Dance creation can be used as the entry point, integrating folk dance elements into children according to the characteristics of their physical and mental

development, so as to enrich the content of dance creation, improve children's aesthetic ability and creative ability, and promote children's all-round development.

Folk dance has a rich variety of movements, music and expression forms, which can provide materials and inspiration for the creation of children's dance. Many choreographers draw inspiration from different folk cultures. From the perspective of dance movements, folk dance does not have high requirements for movements, but most of them are mainly cheerful and active jumping movements and beautiful stretch rotating movements. For children, these movements are simple and easy to learn, and will not cause too much burden to children's body, and can also be flexibly adjusted according to children's age characteristics. From the perspective of music, there are various kinds of folk dance music, including both cheerful and passionate music style and melodious tunes. The lively music can add unique artistic charm to children's dance, and also enable children to mobilize their own "dancing passion" in the relaxed and happy background music. From the perspective of expression form, folk dance can perform solo dance, pas de deux and group dance according to different scenes. When creating children's dance, it can design solo dance or group dance for children according to the basic situation of different children. For the consideration of children's interests, many kindergartens will create children's dance with animal theme, when the Mongolian "soft arm" action can be applied to guide children to learn the wings of the eagle flying posture; can also be integrated into the Dai "peacock dance", let children learn the peacock standing posture and the body posture [1], as show in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Folk arts and crafts category

### 1.2 Inheriting and Developing the National Culture

Under the background of globalization, more and more foreign cultures change people's aesthetic ideology, leading to the gradual marginalization of folk dance. Folk dance is a unique cultural feature in different regions. However, the current inheritance and development of folk dance is not optimistic. Many measures have been taken to solve this problem, including school education, commercial performance competition, mentoring inheritance and so on. Preschool education is also an important part of the education system, the kindergarten should bear the burden of integration of national culture, and children dance folk dance elements into among them, let children intuitive feel the charm of folk dance, and under the guidance of teachers make children to explore folk dance culture, learning the idea of folk dance, in this form to inherit and carry forward the national culture contribute [2].

### 1.3 Improve Children's Aesthetic Ability

Aesthetic ability is the basic quality that children need to have. Dance is artistic and highly ornamental. Learning dance is conducive to cultivating children's aesthetic ability. Folk dance is unique in both body movements and makeup modeling. For example, Tibetan dance costumes, which not only have bright colors but also decorate various accessories for performers. If Tibetan dance elements can be integrated into the dance, and children can wear Tibetan costumes, children can feel the beauty of color and decoration. In addition to external elements such as clothing, many folk dances will make a variety of beautiful movements in the performance, especially the "peacock dance". Dancers with high dance quality can accurately simulate the peacock

walking, foraging and screen opening posture, supplemented by special peacock dance clothes, as if people are in the real peacock kingdom. Integrating peacock dance elements into children's choreography can improve children's aesthetic ability [3].

## 2 THE PRINCIPLE OF INFILTRATING DANCE ELEMENTS IN THE CREATION OF CHILDREN'S DANCE

### 2.1 Grasp the Needs of Children's Physical and Mental Development

Children's dance creation should be children-centered, and know that its ultimate goal is not to show the artistry of dance, nor to show the flexibility of superb skills, but to enlighten children's mind through learning dance, cultivate children's interest in dance art, and improve children's physical quality and body flexibility. Therefore, when integrating folk dance elements into the process of children's dance creation, we should start from the perspective of children's physical and mental development needs, and think about which dance content that children are more easily interested in. Usually, dance with bright rhythm, strong color contrast and rich interesting plot has great attraction to children. We can try to integrate competitive game movements in folk dance elements, and create and compose gamified dance movements. When children have a certain dance foundation and aesthetic ability, they can try to adapt professional dance works. Collect children's ideas and turn these ideas into specific movements into the dance, so as to cultivate children's innovative consciousness, creative ability and aesthetic ability [4], as show in Figure 2.





Figure 2 Children's dance creation goal

## 2.2 The Gradual Process from Easy To Difficult

The awareness and ability of children aged 3-6 years old are still in the initial stage of development, and their ability to accept all kinds of things is relatively weak. When creating children's dance, their physical and mental development should be fully considered, reasonably design the difficulty of dance, and penetrate the dance culture gradually in a gradual way from easy to difficult. But it does not mean that children's dance should tend to be simple and plain, how to grasp this "degree" is a big challenge. When creating a dance, we should first analyze the elements of folk dance, select the content suitable for children's learning, and then integrate it with the basic movements of children's dance, and then decompose the movements and integrate them into each link. Warm-up link can be designed simple and activity the joints, and then based on the children master the basic dance movements, and the teaching content and objectives of each class, design in line with the theme and children's body control degree, including tiptoe forward, jumping, sliding, suction leg, vertical fork, cross fork, hand [5].

## 2.3 Both Interesting and Open

Interest is the best teacher. When creating children's dance, we should fully consider children's interest orientation, extract interesting elements from folk dance elements, integrate these elements into the dance movements suitable for children, or design dance stories according to these elements, so as to enhance children's enthusiasm to participate in dance training. In addition, children generally have rich imagination, which should provide them with a space for them to play their imagination. Children can be guided to try to integrate their personal ideas into the dance movements based on the principle of openness. For example, the introduction of white space art, combined with children's cognitive level and body control ability, the relatively simple part of the dance works for children to design, let children to give full play, so as to cultivate children's creativity and

aesthetic ability [6].

## 2.4 The principle of safety first

In order to show beautiful dance movements, it is often necessary to put out a variety of shapes through body movements. In this process, it is easy to cause joint injury, ligament strain and other problems, and may even cause permanent damage due to operation error. In the social background of information explosion, news about children learning dance injury is endless. Some children caused "syringomyelia" due to the operation error of cooperation, some children accidentally fell down when practicing the "standing down" action, and were not timely and effective treatment, leading to the child's high paraplegia. Therefore, no matter what kind of dance works, the safety of children must be taken as the first criterion.

## 3 FOLK DANCE ELEMENTS AND THE INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN'S DANCE CREATION OF BASIC ELEMENTS

### 3.1 Acting Elements

Folk dance comes from life and is a cultural treasure left over from the development of the Chinese nation over 5,000 years. Through folk dance, we can not only understand the living customs in various regions, but also see the social background and people's spiritual outlook at that time. Under the background of modern society, the meaning and form of the existence of folk dance have undergone certain changes, but they still represent the people's yearning for a better life. Most of these folk dances will show exaggerated performance characteristics, and at the same time have good appreciation, in line with the basic requirements of children's dance creation. In creating dance, the performance elements of folk dance should be integrated. "folklore" is a unique feature of folk dance, which embodies the traditional customs, beliefs and folk stories of various regions. The existence of these elements enhances the story of folk dance and creates favorable conditions for the integration of children's dance. In order to further

improve the expressiveness of children's dance creation works, it is necessary to start from the plot arrangement and emotional release. However, in view of children's limited cognitive level, it may be difficult to fully show the performance of the dance works. In this respect, the standard [7] can be appropriately lowered.

### 3.2 Dance Language Elements

Folk dance language elements are important tools to shape the artistic image, which can enlarge the artistic characteristics of dance works infinitely, which is convenient for children to observe and learn. When creating children's dance, dance language elements should be used as much as possible, so that children can feel the charm of dance personally. Different folk

dances often contain different dance languages, so it is necessary to deeply analyze whether various dance languages are suitable for children's dance, and then reorganize the selected dance language and integrate it into the specific dance movements. For example, "Peacock Dance" is the most famous dance in the Dai folk dance. It not only integrates local customs and religious culture into the dance movements, but also shows the natural beauty of the peacock. These are distinct dance language. Integrating the dance language elements contained in "Peacock Dance" into children's dance creation can not only enrich children's emotional experience, but also improve the artistic conception [8] of the whole dance work.

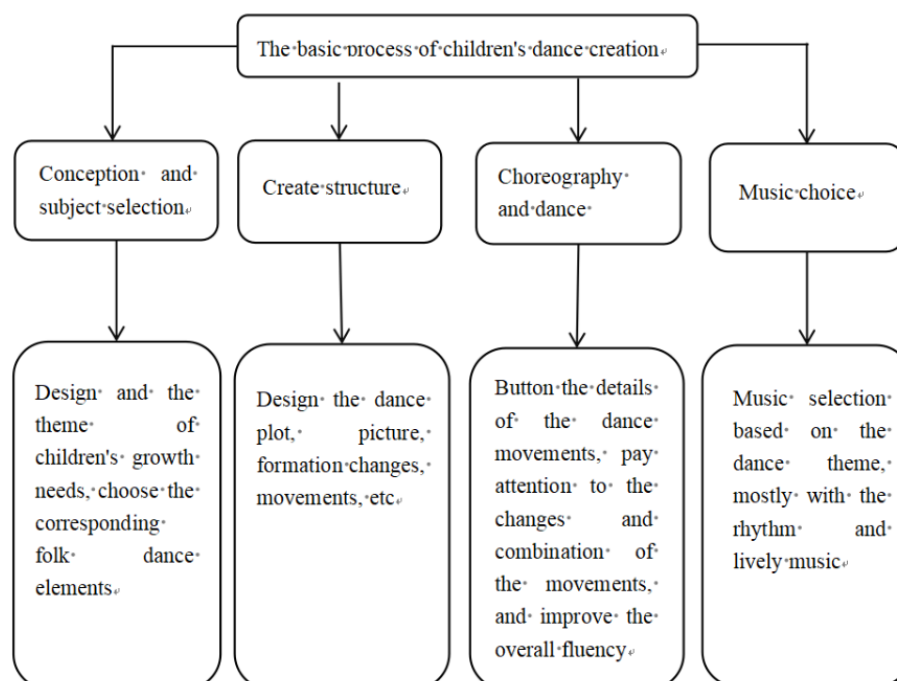


## 4 THE APPLICATION STRATEGY OF INTEGRATING FOLK DANCE ELEMENTS INTO CHILDREN'S DANCE CREATION

### 4.1 Select Dance Elements Based On Children's Characteristics

Although the elements of folk dance are rich and diverse, not all the elements are suitable for children. When creating children's dance, we must start from the basic characteristics of children and reasonably select the dance elements of folk dance. Children generally have low cognitive level, poor body control ability, and cannot accept difficult learning content. They are interested in making strange body movements, and will also respond positively to the music with light rhythm. Therefore, in the screening of dance elements, we should try to take the simple movements, lively rhythm and full of childlike fun elements, so that children can quickly grasp it.

According to the research of different folk dances, it is found that the Mongolian dance clapping, stomping and horse running movement, as well as the arm swing, waist twisting and peacock opening in the Dai dance are suitable for children. In addition, the creation of dance should reflect the educational significance, select the best elements with positive (unity, friendship, diligence and courage) theme, and guide children to establish correct values in the process of learning dance. "Happy national wind" dance can well reflect this, children dressed in the characteristics of different ethnic costumes, hand in hand happily into the performance venues, action design on the application of Mongolian dance riding, whip, also applied the swing sleeve, spinning action shows the Tibetan dance majestic, and the dai dance light and graceful also through the gentle hand movements, lightsome pace well show [9].



#### 4.2 Select the Appropriate Soundtrack and Improve the Structure of the Work

Good dance works need to be matched with high-quality music to create a good atmosphere for children to sing and dance. When creating children's dance, we need to understand the basic situation of folk dance and music around the country first, and choose the music suitable for children. Jiangnan silk and bamboo and northern Shaanxi folk songs are good choices. When creating the dance works with the folk elements, the music with the cultural characteristics of ethnic minorities should be given priority, such as Fengwei Bamboo in the Moonlight by Dai and Tianlu by Tibetan. In the process of creation, we need to sort out the creation background of these scores, so as to increase children's understanding of various ethnic groups. Traditional folk songs "jasmine" is also one of the commonly used music, its beautiful melody, melody, lyrics and profound meaning, with the folk song music and dance, can design from the lyrics of intuitive dance movements, such as hand movements show jasmine

bloom, or with light pace to show the breeze blowing [10].

#### 4.3 Give Full Play to Children's Imagination and Enrich the Artistic Image

Imagination is the source power of the development of human civilization. Whether folk dance or children's dance are developed on the basis of imagination. Only with enough imagination can we create perfect works of conception, stage effect, dance movements and other aspects. Imagination is also the basic quality that children should have. Let children participate in the dance creation can stimulate their imagination and creativity, and the dance works integrated into children's imagination can be more complete for children. Lead children together before the dance, need to popularize children folk dance elements, let children have a clear direction, such as the Korean dance "crane step, crane fly" action embodies the human imagination of animals, children can adapt these movements, and then into the dance and white, complete action points see table 1.

Table 1 Key points of dance creation and choreography

warm-up	Keep hand position movement, wrist down, fingers up; keep feet together, toes forward, and feet up alternately; keep back straight.
1-4 Shoot	Open your feet and keep the width of your shoulders. Raise your hands over your head and lean left with your palms facing.
5-8 Shoot	Increase the left tilt of the body based on the 1-4 beat action, and put the hand back on the mouth to do the propaganda action.
1-4 Shoot	Two feet open, toes outward, left and right swing body, hand action from the propaganda shape smaller flower shape.
5-8 Shoot	Lean left, your feet together for small steps, your hands from your chest, your fingers slightly.
1-4 Shoot	The body right turns a bend half squat posture, the right hand in the chest below the orchid finger, the left five fingers together up.
5-8 Shoot	Keep the last beat unchanged, jump with both feet, left foot half standing to the right.
1-4 Shoot	Stand in balance and keep your feet up, lean slightly left, push your wrist up and press your

	hand.
5-8 Shoot	Open your feet, put the index finger in the dimple, slightly head to do a smile, with the body shaking
1-4 Shoot	Jump to the highest point of the toe against the main leg up, the lower hand to the upper side of the hand.
5-8 Shoot	Repeat the 1-4 legs and move the hand from the upper to the bottom.
1-4 Shoot	Feet together to do small broken steps, the body slightly right tilt, face to the right 45° corner, hands down to press the hand.
5-8 Shoot	Feet together to do small broken steps, the body slightly left tilt, face to the left 45° corner, hands down to press the hand.
1-4 Shoot	Keep your feet against the floor, raise your heels and jump quickly, placing your hands in front of your chest and clapping your feet fall to the ground.
5-8 Shoot	Body slightly right to do half squat posture, hands open, wrist down to do the hand.
1-8 Shoot	Relax the body, step in place, put your hands on both sides of the body, follow the rhythm to swing the body.
Repeat the previous action in the second paragraph	

#### 4.4 Strengthen the Emotional Experience and Sublimate the Artistic Conception of the Dance

The quality of dance works is influenced by many factors, and the artistic conception is one of them. Folk dance generally has special significance. When it is integrated into children's dance creation, attention should be paid to reflect the artistic conception of dance. If the dance only has "shape" without "god", it will fall into the low level of "action competition". Strengthening the emotional experience can help children to deeply perceive the rich emotional atmosphere and cultural heritage behind the dance works. In the past, children's dance creation generally focuses on the appreciation of the movements, ignoring the artistic conception of the dance, and should make appropriate adjustments to this aspect in the future. For example, by referring to the theme of the Mongolian dance "Heroes Returning to the East", the music of this dance takes the swan goose and shows the desire of the dancers to return home by imitating the movements of the swan goose flying. When creating dance movements, children can be arranged according to the way of "inverted eight characters", and wave their arms with the music rhythm to simulate the swan goose flying. This kind of position and movements are within the range of children's understanding, and the children can quickly complete the rehearsal. In order to sublimate the artistic conception of the work on this basis, it is necessary to introduce the "homecoming emotion" contained in this dance to children at an appropriate time, and integrate the elements of the dance into the newly created dance, the purpose is to cultivate children's feelings of family and patriotism. Although children can not fully understand the artistic conception of the dance works at this time, but with the growth of age, children's cognition of this aspect will be more and more deep, and then review the dance will often have different feelings [11].

TAG

To sum up, dance is an important part of the art education system. Learning dance can not only

improve children's aesthetic ability and body coordination, but also help to cultivate children's sentiment. Dance creation is the key content of kindergarten dance curriculum. Folk dance has been widely used in dance creation by virtue of its own advantages and characteristics. To further promote the integration of folk dance elements and children's dance creation, teachers should first clarify the basic principles and core elements of dance creation and editing. Then, by comprehensively considering the characteristics of children's learning period, growth needs, curriculum content and other elements, targeted integration strategies are formulated to create more dance works suitable for children.

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# A Study of Bystander Intervention into Uncivilized Behavior onboard High-speed Railway

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**Abstract:** The increasing popularity of high-speed railway travel has been accompanied by a rise in uncivilized behaviors, prompting some passengers to intervene. This study examines 84 videos from the TikTok platform, featuring such interventions against uncivilized behaviors. Employing conversational analysis to transcribe the corpus and drawing upon Speech Act Theory and the Moral Foundations framework, this study investigates the strategies and motivations employed by interveners in addressing uncivilized behaviors. The findings suggest that direct intervention strategies prevail, encompassing imperative command, direct reminder, altruistic persuasion, and warning threat. These interventions are underpinned by pragmatic motivations to uphold three moral foundations: respect for others, pursuit of fairness, and advocacy for harmony. This study contributes to the literature on intervention studies within the context of social and public communication, offering a novel perspective for future endeavors.

**Keywords:** Uncivilized Behavior Onboard High-Speed Railway; Bystander Intervention; Moral Foundation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

High-speed railway, as a fast and convenient means of transportation, is favored by a large number of passengers. However, with the increase in high-speed railway travel, uncivilized behaviors have gradually become prominent. These behaviors not only affect the travel experience of passengers, but also pose a challenge to the public moral order. In response to this, the phenomenon of passengers' bystander intervention is also relatively common. Based on the five-step bystander intervention model theory proposed by Latané and Darley, scholars such as Nickerson (2014) put forward bystander intervention. According to the five-step bystander intervention model, the intervention process is divided into five steps: noticing the event, interpreting it as an emergency, determining whether to take responsibility for the action, assessing whether one has the ability to provide assistance, and taking intervention actions.

Regarding the definition of uncivilized behaviors, scholars at home and abroad have different definitions for different scenarios. Pearson et al.

(2001)[13] pointed out that uncivilized behaviors in the workplace have three characteristics: violating the principle of mutual respect among people, having no obvious intention to harm, and being of low intensity. The "Regulations for Railway Passenger Traffic" clearly stipulates those behaviors such as children crying and making noise, taking off shoes and socks, occupying seats without tickets, which hinder the normal traffic order and damage the travel environment, are uncivilized behaviors on high-speed railway. Based on this, this study defines uncivilized behaviors on high-speed railway as behaviors that passengers engage in during the process of taking high-speed railway, which hinder the traffic order, damage the travel environment, corrupt social morality and affect the harmonious atmosphere. In this study, "bystander intervention" refers to the behavior that on high-speed railway, bystanders use direct or indirect verbal or non-verbal behaviors to stop and correct the perpetrators of uncivilized behaviors in order to maintain the moral foundation followed in high-speed railway.

Currently, although some studies have focused on bystander intervention against uncivilized phenomena in public places, the number of such studies is relatively small and the research perspectives are rather limited. Therefore, this study selects 84 video cases recorded on the TikTok platform, which document passengers' intervention in uncivilized behaviors. Based on the speech act theory and the perspective of moral foundation, it delves deeply into the pragmatic strategies and motivations of bystanders when they implement interventions in the face of uncivilized behaviors during the process of taking high-speed railway.

## 2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Uncivilized Behaviors in Public Places

Research on uncivilized behaviors in public places in China involves multiple disciplinary fields, including sociology, psychology, economics, etc. Among them, sociological research mainly focuses on the social culture, values and norms behind the behaviors (Long, 2022)[12]; research in the field of psychology mainly concentrates on the psychological mechanisms of uncivilized behaviors, including the influence of factors such as individuals' attitudes, motivations, and emotions on uncivilized behaviors, as well as the process of individuals' behavioral decision-making in



public places (Wang et al., 2014); research on uncivilized behaviors in the field of economics mainly centers on aspects such as incentive mechanisms, social norms, and behavioral economics (Zhan, 2017, 2023).

Research on uncivilized behaviors in pragmatics mainly involves aspects such as public disputes and public shaming, focusing on speech acts, pragmatic strategies, and identity construction. Haugh (2022)[7] explored the condemnation behaviors for personal shaming in the online public space from the perspective of pragmatics. Joyce (2020) examined the interpersonal disputes that occur between strangers in public places, with a focus on the ways of argument and interpersonal relationship management.

## 2.2 Bystander Intervention

Research on bystander intervention mainly focuses on fields such as psychology, sociology, and education. Psychological researchers pay attention to the relationship between bystander intervention and individual psychological processes, including conducting research on the psychological mechanisms of bystander intervention behaviors under different situations (Huang et al., 2019). Sociological researchers focus on the relationship between bystander intervention and social relations as well as social structures, including studying the dissemination and influence of bystander intervention behaviors within social groups (Xu, 2011; Wang & Dou, 2021). Educational research focuses on the relationship between bystander intervention and the educational environment as well as educational practices, including researching the manifestations and influences of bystander intervention behaviors in schools and educational institutions (Qiu et al., 2024). From the perspective of pragmatics, most researchers focus on bystander intervention in conflict contexts. Chen & Xue (2021)[3] revealed the interpersonal pragmatic motivations of intervention behaviors around intervention and its relational orientation in the context of online interaction. Joyce (2022)[9] explored some interactive practices adopted by bystanders when they intervened in an ongoing argument that was clearly racist, with a focus on analyzing how they strived to stay "out of" the dispute without taking responsibility for their intervention. Kálár (2016, 2019)[10] pointed out that bystander intervention aims to correct behaviors that violate social norms and maintain the moral principles and social norms recognized by members of online communities. Some scholars also pointed out that bystander intervention can serve as an ending strategy for conversational conflicts, such as Vuchinich (1990).

## 2.3 Intervention and Morality

Intervention is closely related to morality. The implementation of intervention behaviors mostly stems from moral evaluations and aims to maintain the moral foundation. For example, interveners may

conduct interventions out of moral responsibility or sympathy. Kálár (2019) believes that intervention behaviors have specific intentions, such as persuasion, warning, and reproach, and these intentions are often related to moral concepts and value orientations. Language, as a tool for implementing intervention, not only reflects the moral judgments and behaviors of interveners but also influences the moral cognition and behavioral choices of those being intervened. Therefore, in bystander intervention, speech acts are not only a means of communication but also carry moral concepts and value orientations.

Haidt et al. (2010) put forward five basic moralities within the framework of western culture: Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation. Later, Graham (2011) incorporated Freedom/Oppression into the dimension of moral foundations. Although these moral foundations mentioned above are universal, their moral connotations are complex and culturally diverse. Societies with different cultural backgrounds have different moral outlooks, thus varying in the degree of recognition of the moral values of each moral foundation. Moreover, subcultures within the same society may also place different emphases on different moral dimensions. Some studies have shown that gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnic background are also related to differences in the recognition of moral issues (Haidt, 1993).

The moralities and virtues in traditional Chinese culture have both similarities with the concepts of Western moral foundations and elements of native Chinese culture. Zhao & Zhang (2021)[19] analyzed the connotations and structures of moral foundations in the context of Chinese culture, developed and tested a measurement scale for moral foundations, and pointed out that the connotations of moral foundations in the context of Chinese culture are rich. They added two more dimensions, namely Thrift/Waste and Diligence/Laziness, to the above six moral foundation dimensions. Meanwhile, the moral foundations in traditional Chinese culture are mainly constructed by the moral outlooks advocated by Confucianism, which emphasizes the assumption of moral responsibilities, requiring people to take on the moral responsibilities of self-cultivation and character-building for themselves and those of managing the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world for society. Therefore, the moral foundation concepts that can symbolize Confucian ethical thoughts include constantly striving for self-improvement, having great virtue to carry all things, a gentleman establishing his foundation, the benevolent loving others, being true to one's word, constantly striving for perfection, serving the country with loyalty, governing with virtue, ruling the country with morality, the world belongs to all,

To sum up, there are few studies that conduct intervention research on uncivilized behaviors in public places from the perspective of moral foundations. For this reason, this study analyzes video cases of high-speed railway passengers' intervention in uncivilized behaviors, and explores the intervention strategies and motives of bystander intervention based on the speech act theory and the perspective of moral foundations. Specifically, based on Searle's speech act theory, this study explores how interveners carry out interventions through verbal means. Integrating Haidt's moral foundation theory and the moral foundation concepts of Confucianism, it analyzes the pragmatic motives reflected in the intervention of high-speed railway uncivilized behaviors according to the corpus of this study.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

The corpus of this study was selected from public accounts on TikTok (named Dou Yin in Chinese) platform, a Chinese social media platform, which meets the requirements of naturalness and authenticity of the corpus. Based on random sampling, a total of 100 video clips from January 2019 to December 2023 were collected. Video clips covering from the occurrence of uncivilized behaviors in high-speed railway carriages to the occurrence and end of intervention behaviors were selected. In accordance with the chronological order of conversational communication, this study transcribed the corpus using the transcription standards for conversation analysis proposed by Jefferson (the transcription symbols and explanations are shown in the appendix). The first turn was numbered as 01, the second turn as 02, and so on. Subsequently, two researchers independently coded the corpus and classified the strategies of bystander intervention with reference to Searle's speech act theory. Finally, a further analysis was conducted on specific intervention strategies to

reveal the main motives for bystander intervention. Eventually, 84 clips were marked consistently by the two researchers. Meanwhile, 20% of the corpus was randomly selected for reliability testing, which can ensure the objectivity and accuracy of the analysis in this study. In the corpus analysis, relevant contents were highlighted by underlining. Due to space limitations, contents that did not affect the analysis were omitted.

This study attempts to answer the following two research questions:

1. What intervention strategies do bystanders use for high-speed railway uncivilized behaviors?
2. What are the pragmatic motivations for bystanders to intervene in uncivilized behaviors on high-speed railway?

### 4. DIRECT INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The corpus analysis reveals that when bystanders intervene in uncivilized behaviors on high-speed railway, they do not always confront the intervenees directly. Sometimes, they employ an indirect approach without face-to-face interaction. However, this intervention strategy lacks a specific manifestation in linguistic form, making it difficult to conduct a pragmatic analysis. As shown in Table 1, in this study, direct intervention accounts for 76.2%, with a much higher frequency of use than indirect intervention. Among direct interventions, the strategy of mandatory commands has the highest proportion, followed by direct reminders, while altruistic persuasion and warning threats are less frequent. In indirect interventions, exaggerated hints are the most common, and the proportions of indirect reminders and Complaint through Code are comparable. This study mainly focuses on direct intervention strategies. The following is an analysis in combination with language examples.

Table 1 Classification of intervention strategies and specific behavioral manifestations

Intervention Strategies (n,%)	Specific Behavioral Manifestations	Frequency	Proportion
Direct Intervention (64,76.2%)	Imperative command	28	33.3%
	Direct reminder	16	19%
	Altruistic persuasion	14	16.7%
	Warning threat	6	7.1%
Indirect Intervention (20,23.8%)	Exaggerated Hint	11	13.1%
	Indirect Reminder	5	6%
	Complaint through Code	4	4.8%

Among the 84 videos, there are 64 cases that reflect the direct intervention strategy, which is manifested as interveners taking face-to-face verbal actions to stop and correct uncivilized behaviors on high-speed railway. The direct intervention strategy is characterized by immediacy, directness, and effectiveness, and specifically includes the following

four types of speech acts: imperative commands, direct reminders, altruistic persuasion, and warning threat.

#### 4.1 Imperative Command

Imperative command refers to the situation where interveners conduct interventions by using speech acts with clear pragmatic intentions such as command,



which is prominently reflected in the use of imperative sentences, as shown in the following example.

*Example 1:*

*[A passenger was dissatisfied with the angle of the seat in front and kicked it seven times within a minute. Then the family member of the passenger sitting in the front seat intervened.]*

01 intervener: → 不要踢他的座椅了!

02 intervenee: 谁规定的?

03 intervener: > 不是什么叫谁规定的? 这是的权利怎么了? 你不也在后面躺着吗? 你怎么不立起来啊? <

04 intervenee's companion: 算了, 你把椅背也往后调一调。

In Example 1, an elderly passenger was dissatisfied with the angle of the seat in front and kicked it seven times within a minute, which affected the travel experience of the passenger sitting in the front seat. Consequently, the family member of the front-seat passenger stopped the uncivilized behavior through the speech act of mandatory commands. Mandatory commands are mostly presented in the form of imperative sentences and often employ words with strong imperativeness such as “不要” and “别”. Here, the intervener used the explicit command form “不要踢他的座椅了” to express his or her attitude and hoped that the intervenee would stop the uncivilized behavior. Although the verbal conflict between the two continued in the subsequent communication, the persuasion behavior carried out by the intervenee's companion effectively corrected the uncivilized behavior of kicking the seat.

#### 4.2 Direct Reminder

In some cases, interveners will conduct interventions by using direct reminders with clear pragmatic intentions, such as rhetorical questions, which is prominently reflected in the consecutive use of multiple rhetorical questions, as shown in the following example.

*Example 2:*

*[The children in the carriage were making noise all the way, and the crew's several reminders had no effect.]*

01 intervener: > 谁家的小孩, 能不能安静点? ! 叫什么呢? <

02 intervenee: ...

03 intervener: 没做过高铁是不是? = 谁再叫? 家长呢? = 管管行不行? 叫了一路了。

04 intervenee: ...

In public places, especially in enclosed and quiet-required environments, excessive noise not only affects the comfort and travel experience of other passengers but also poses a potential threat to the order and safety within the carriage. In the above example, after the crew had reminded the children several times, the uncivilized behavior still didn't

stop. Therefore, the bystander chose to intervene with a direct reminder. Multiple rhetorical questions expressed the intervener's dissatisfaction with the behavior of the children and their parents. From the perspective of language form, this reminder was somewhat impolite (Brown & Levison, 1999), threatening the positive face of the children and their parents. However, keeping quiet in the high-speed railway carriage is a civilized norm that everyone should abide by. Thus, in the face of the reproach, the children stopped making noise.

In a few cases, interveners will use ironic rhetorical questions to give direct reminders to those who have committed uncivilized behaviors, as shown in the following example.

*Example 3:*

*[After the rear-seat passenger took off his shoes and put his feet on the front seat, the front-seat passenger gave the person who committed the uncivilized behavior several warning looks. Then, the neighboring passenger intervened.]*

01 intervener: (叹气) 哎, 哥, 您刚才把脚伸到前面座位了吗?

02 intervenee: 嗯。

03 intervener: 那么厉害呀? 您说我们是不是应该鼓励这种高铁的文明行为呀? 哥, 你要是觉得还不舒服的话, 你直接把脚伸到我嘴里行不行呀?

In this example, the uncivilized behavior of the rear-seat passenger, that is, putting his feet on the front seat after taking off his shoes, obviously violated the personal space and comfort of the front-seat passenger. Meanwhile, it also went against the basic etiquette and civilized norms on public transportation. Faced with such a situation, the front-seat passenger first attempted to indirectly stop this behavior by giving several warning looks, but apparently it didn't work well. Subsequently, the neighboring passenger intervened in a more direct manner. From the perspective of language form, the direct reminder method of the intervener had an ironic element. He directly reminded that such behavior was unacceptable in the form of several ironic questions and rhetorical questions (turns 01 and 03). Although this way of expression was humorous, it was also impolite and posed a threat to the positive face of the person being intervened (Brown & Levison, 1999). Nevertheless, through the form of ironic rhetorical questions, this intervention method effectively conveyed the importance of civilized behavior and might prompt the person being intervened to realize his own mistakes and correct his behavior.

#### 4.3 Altruistic Persuasion

In some cases, interveners will conduct interventions by using altruistic persuasion with clear pragmatic intentions, which is manifested as persuading from the perspective and interests of the person being intervened, as shown in the following example.

*Example 4:*

[On the high-speed railway, an aunt took off her shoes and lay on the seat, leaving the neighboring passengers with nowhere to sit. Then other bystanders in the carriage intervened.]

01 intervener: 你的脚这样子不行啊, 阿姨, 这脚不要这样子, 这袜子要穿起来, 你这样子很不好看的, 真的!

02 internee: ...

Apparently, exposing one's feet and occupying multiple seats not only violates the order in public places but also infringes upon the legitimate rights and interests of other passengers. In Example 4, the intervener's use of the address "aunt" shows respect for the person being intervened and also helps ease the tense atmosphere, making it easier for the person being intervened to accept. The intervener was rather tactful when persuading. Firstly, the uncivilized behavior was pointed out. Secondly, a suggestion was given, namely "You'd better put on your socks". Finally, persuasion was carried out from the perspective of the person being intervened. It can be seen that altruistic persuasion can not only express the intervener's dissatisfaction but also avoid interpersonal conflicts caused by overly direct or harsh words. It is a strategy that can effectively prevent uncivilized behaviors (Vuchinich, 1990).

#### 4.4 Warning threat

Different from the above three situations, when bystanders conduct direct interventions, they may also adopt approaches that are likely to trigger interpersonal conflicts, such as warning and threatening, as shown in the following example.

Example 5:

[A passenger in the carriage played the music on his mobile phone loudly without using earphones.]

01 intervener: →您再这样的话我是要叫乘警过来!

02 internee: 你喊他过来嘛!

03 intervener: 这么大声的骚扰到其他乘客了。

04 internee: 我发现你这个人有神经病

05 intervener: 如果你人身侮辱我的话, 我可以报警起诉你的。

In Example 5, playing the music on a mobile phone loudly in a public carriage is an extremely uncivilized behavior. It not only violates the order in public places but also seriously infringes upon the rights and interests of other passengers. In response to this, the intervener adopted the speech act of warning and threatening to intervene, hoping to quickly draw the attention of the person being intervened and force him to consider and change his behavior. However, as warning and threatening remarks are rather coercive and are likely to trigger negative emotions in the hearer, the reply of the person being intervened, "你喊他过来嘛", shows his disregard for the warning and threatening and his lack of intention to correct his improper behavior. Subsequently, the intervener further pointed out the inappropriateness of the person being internee's behavior in turn 03, but this

led to personal attacks from the person being intervened (turn 04), and the conflict between the two further escalated later. In this study, the strategy of warning and threatening is rather rare, mainly because this strategy cannot effectively correct uncivilized behaviors but will instead trigger interpersonal conflicts (Kálár, 2019).

#### 5. INTERVENTION MOTIVATION

Based on Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory and the view of moral foundations in Confucianism, an analysis of the corpus in this study reveals that all (interventions) are carried out based on moral foundations, mainly manifested as respecting others, pursuing fairness, and advocating harmony. In the following, a discussion will be conducted in combination with specific corpus.

##### 5.1 Respect for others

Respect is a basic code of conduct and etiquette, embodying politeness and care for others. The corpus in this study shows that whether it is a direct or an indirect strategy, interveners will emphasize respecting others.

Example 6:

[A man put his feet on the adjacent seat.]

01 intervener: 就是你的脚不要放在别人的座位这里啊!

02 internee: 这怎么了? 伸一下有什么事呢?

03 intervener: 那你买两个座位啊, 你脚放在这里...

04 internee: 这都是出了门, 不舒服, 伸一下无所谓啊。

05 intervener: 不是, 你可以伸底下, →你不要踩在别人的座位上, 这样很不尊重他人, 这是别人的座位。

06 internee: 我懒得跟你说!

07 intervener: 别人刚才都拦你一次了, 你还要往别人这里放。

In Example 6, the intervener first intervened by using the speech act of imperative command (turn 01), aiming to quickly correct an obvious improper behavior—putting feet on others' seats. This behavior in public spaces not only invaded others' physical space but also violated the basic principles of etiquette and respect. Faced with the doubts and rebuttals of the person being intervened (turn 02), the intervener didn't compromise immediately but further emphasized the unacceptability of the behavior (turn 03) and put forward a reasonable solution, that is, if the person being intervened needed extra space, he should purchase an additional seat. This response reflected the adherence to the rules and also implied respect for the reasonable needs of individuals.

However, the person being intervened didn't accept this suggestion and instead continued to persist in his improper behavior on the grounds of personal comfort (turn 04). In this situation, the intervener reiterated the wrongness of the behavior and also

clearly pointed out the nature of disrespecting others' rights and interests behind this behavior (turn 05). By revealing the moral deficiency behind the behavior, the intervener attempted to awaken the moral foundation of respecting others in the person being intervened.

### 5.2 Pursuit of fairness

The basic meaning of the concept of "fairness" can be summarized in two aspects: first, treating the same people and things with the same attitude; second, when people engage in the same social activities, they must follow the same rules and procedures, and no exceptions are allowed (Liu, 2009). It emphasizes the collective and overall interests and ensures that everyone's legitimate rights and interests are treated equally. Example 9 reflects that the intervener intervenes in pursuit of the moral foundation of fairness.

#### Example 7:

*[In the carriage of a high-speed railway, a passenger was talking loudly on the phone, which affected the surrounding passengers.]*

01 intervener: 您好, 打扰一下, 您能否小声点啊? 这里是公共场所, 您的声音这么大, 会影响到其他乘客。

02 intervenee: 谁规定的?

03 intervener: 不是什么叫谁规定的? → 你可以打电话, 但是你声音实在太大了, 打扰到车厢内其他乘客休息了。你这样光顾个人利益不太好啊! 这个车里的每个人都有权享受安静的车厢。

04 intervenee: 好吧, 知道了。

The intervener's initial attempt (in turn 01) was to make a request in an extremely polite and respectful manner. This gentle and rational way of communication laid a good foundation for the subsequent dialogue. Even when faced with the doubts of the person being intervened (in turn 02), it maintained the continuity and constructiveness of the conversation.

As the dialogue deepened, the intervener's words (in turn 03) gradually became firm and forceful. Instead of avoiding the conflict, he directly pointed out the problem with the person being intervenee's behavior—excessively pursuing personal convenience while ignoring respect for the public environment and infringing upon the rights and interests of other passengers. By emphasizing that “这个车里的每个人都有权享受安静的车厢”, the intervener not only reiterated the boundaries of personal behavior in public spaces but also profoundly revealed the core value of social morality—that while enjoying freedom, individuals must respect and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of others (Liu, 2009).

Eventually, under the patient persuasion of the intervener, the person being intervened realized the inappropriateness of his own behavior and took the initiative to make adjustments (in turn 04).

### 5.3 Advocacy for harmony

“Harmony is precious” is a traditional Chinese concept, advocating harmonious coexistence among people and between people and nature. Harmony means respecting differences and coordinating contradictions on the basis of facing up to the differences and contradictions among things, and advocating multiple coexistence and harmonious cooperation (Shan, 2019). Some of the corpus in this study shows that interveners will directly intervene in the frictions and conflicts among passengers, which fully reflects the moral foundation of “harmony is precious”. For example:

#### Example 8:

*[On the high-speed railway, a man stepped on the foot of the woman sitting beside him. When he was asked to apologize, a conflict arose, which disturbed the rest of other passengers in the carriage.]*

01 intervenee 1: 踩了脚了连个对不起都不说。

02 intervenee 2: 那么计较干吗?

03 intervener: 简单一句对不起可以解决的事, 何必在这吵呢!

04 intervenee 2: 对不起, 好了吧! 我是有意的吗?

05 intervener: → 好了, 都道歉了, 各退一步, 何必如此呢?

In the situation of Example 8, within the enclosed and public space of the high-speed train carriage, a dispute triggered by a slight misunderstanding quickly escalated. It not only directly led to the emotional confrontation between the two parties involved but also indirectly disrupted the peace and rest environment of the surrounding passengers, constituting an uncivilized behavior that could not be ignored.

At this time, the timely intervention of the intervener, with a concise and powerful sentence (turn 03), directly pointed to the core of the problem—why did a simple “对不起” that should have been the key to resolving the conflict become the focus of the dispute between the two sides?

Subsequently, although the person being intervened 2 offered an apology (turn 04), there was still a hint of reluctance and justification in his tone, seemingly not fully realizing the inappropriateness of his own behavior. However, the intervener did not give up because of this. He continued to offer persuasion in a calm and firm manner (turn 05), emphasizing that “都道歉了, 各退一步”. This was not only an acknowledgement of the apology made by the person being intervened 2 but also an expectation that both sides could put aside their prejudices and seek reconciliation. Through such persuasion, the intervener not only stopped the continuation of the quarrel but also implicitly conveyed the value of “harmony is precious”, that is, in social interactions, mutual understanding, tolerance, and compromise are important cornerstones for maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships.



## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis, from the theoretical framework of pragmatics, of the intervention strategies adopted by passengers as bystanders and the motives behind them when faced with uncivilized behaviors in the typical public transportation environment of high-speed railway. This research not only broadens the research achievements in related fields but also introduces a new research perspective into the practical research of pragmatics.

The research results show that when dealing with uncivilized behaviors on high-speed railway, the frequency of direct intervention strategies is much higher than that of indirect intervention strategies. Among them, the adoption frequencies of imperative commands and direct reminders are significantly higher than those of altruistic persuasion and warning threats. The main reason is that these two types of strategies are more likely to correct and prevent uncivilized behaviors in public spaces.

When exploring the intervention motives, based on Haidt's moral foundation theoretical framework and integrating the moral concepts of Confucianism, this study reveals that direct intervention behaviors are mainly based on the moral foundations of respecting for others, pursuing of fairness, and advocating for harmony. This research not only deepens the understanding of passengers' intervention behaviors in public transportation scenarios such as high-speed railways but also provides a new theoretical perspective and empirical support for the research on intervention strategies in the context of social public communication, thus opening up a broader exploration space for future research in related fields.

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# Analysis of Positive Discourse in China Daily on the “Paris Olympic Games” from the Perspective of the Attitude System within Evaluation Theory

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**Abstract:** This study, framed by evaluation theory and positive discourse analysis, explores how the China Daily constructs social and cultural meanings through attitudinal resources in its news coverage of the 2024 Paris Olympic opening ceremony. The attitude system of evaluation theory includes three dimensions: emotion, judgment, and appreciation, which can reveal the values and positions embedded in media discourse. By analyzing 1,371 news texts, the study finds that the China Daily primarily constructs a positive intercultural understanding and image of social harmony through positive emotional expression and appreciation of the host country's culture. This discourse strategy not only enhances cultural trust between China and France but also provides a new case for positive discourse analysis. The results indicate that media can effectively promote cross-cultural communication and cooperation by utilizing evaluative resources in reporting on international events.

**Keywords:** Evaluation Theory; Positive Discourse Analysis; Paris Olympic Games

## 1. FOREWORD

The Olympic Games, as the world's largest sporting event, have transcended their athletic significance to become a vital platform for cultural exchange, political interaction, and economic cooperation (Chen, 2016). In an era of rapid information technology development, media reports not only offer us a glimpse into the cultural integration between different countries but also reveal how language strategies subtly shape public consciousness (Cheng Manli, 2007). Evaluation theory, as a tool for analyzing linguistic influence, can delve deeply into this phenomenon. Martin Building on critical discourse analysis, he further introduced the concept of positive discourse analysis, which promotes social harmony through the positive interpretation of discourse. This characteristic provides a unique research domain for discourse analysis.

The Olympics and positive discourse analysis share a deep logical connection: the former constructs visual symbols of a "community with a shared future for mankind" through ritualized performances, while the latter decodes the value consensus behind language

(Fairclough, 1995). Both emphasize the importance of cross-cultural communication. Through such exchanges and understanding, we can collectively build a more harmonious and inclusive world.

This study uses the opening ceremony report of the Paris Olympics from China Daily as a corpus, employing the UAM Corpus tool for evaluation resource annotation and quantitative analysis. Based on the framework of the theoretical attitude system, it focuses on examining the distribution characteristics and social functions of evaluative discourse in news reports, aiming to reveal how specific language strategies promote the construction of social consensus, providing a theoretical reference for international communication practices.

## 2. EVALUATION THEORY AND ITS ATTITUDE SYSTEM

Evaluation theory originated from Martin's research on the interpersonal significance of systemic functional linguistics, with its theoretical framework taking shape in the 1990s. This theory breaks away from traditional linguistic instrumentalism, viewing language as a symbolic medium for constructing social relationships, and focuses on analyzing the implicit value positions and emotional negotiation mechanisms embedded in discourse. The core of evaluation theory lies in its three subsystems: attitude (Attitude), intervention (Engagement), and gradation (Gradation). Attitude is a complex psychological construct that involves a series of evaluations and feelings individuals hold toward human behavior, textual processes, and various phenomena after being influenced by external factors.

The attitude system, as a core component of evaluation theory, encompasses three sub-dimensions: emotion, judgment, and appreciation. Li Zhanzi (2002) points out that the emotional dimension reflects the verbal subject's emotional response to specific phenomena, such as aesthetic pleasure or moral indignation; the judgment dimension involves ethical assessment of the acting subject, touching on social norms like integrity and responsibility; the appreciation dimension focuses on professional evaluation of the value attributes of things, including indicators such as technological innovation and artistic completion. These three aspects collectively form our

comprehensive understanding and response to the world around us. When evaluating a person or thing, we do not make judgments based on a single dimension alone, but rather combine emotion, judgment, and appreciation to form a three-dimensional perspective.

### 3. RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND METHODS

This study employs evaluative theory as an analytical framework to conduct a positive discourse analysis of the China Daily's news discourse on the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, aiming to expand the application scope of evaluative theory under the perspective of positive discourse analysis. The selected corpus comes from the China Daily official

website, totaling 1,371 words. The study uses the UAM corpus tool to analyze the selected news reports. The UAM corpus tool is a text and image language annotation tool based on systematic functional linguistics, which can analyze texts in a system environment.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 The overall distribution of resources in the discourse

For the selected corpus, different evaluation resources, including attitude, intervention and extreme difference, were manually annotated by UAM. The overall results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Total distribution of evaluation resources

Appraisal Type	Attitude	Engagement	Graduation	Toatal
Units	50	10	13	73
Frequency	68.5%	13.7%	17.8%	100%

The selected corpus consists of 73 evaluation resources, among which attitude resources and extreme difference resources account for a large proportion in the total amount, accounting for 35.6 and 39.7%, respectively. The selected news reports are mainly about the evaluation or description of the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, so a large number of attitude resources are used in the reports.

4.2 A systematic analysis of the attitude of discourse  
Constructing news discourse is not only about information transmission but also a unique form of social practice. By leveraging multi-dimensional language choices such as emotion, judgment, and appreciation, and through strategies like legitimization, concealment, collusion, concretization, or fragmentation, news discourse can intentionally emphasize or downplay specific information, thereby

reinforcing or challenging existing social order. These discursive techniques tilt evaluative resources toward the interests of the "us" group. The "us" perspective is amplified in the attitude evaluation system, enhancing readers' identification with the reporting stance and activating their emotional resonance. Evaluators manipulate attitude resources to evoke attitude scripts in readers' cognitive models, conveying evaluative tendencies of "affirmation/negation, positivity/negativity." This evaluation goes beyond simple descriptions of things; it guides readers at both cognitive and emotional levels, making them understand and feel that their perceptions align with the evaluators' intentions, thus evoking deep resonance in readers. Table 2 presents the statistics on attitude resources for the selected materials in this study:

Table 2 Distribution of attitude resources

Attitude Resources		Affect	Judgement	Appreciation	Total
Positive	Units	4	4	16	24
	Frequency	15.4%	15.4%	61.5%	92.3%
Negative	Units	0	2	0	2
	Frequency	0	7.7%	0	7.7%
Total	Units	4	6	16	26
	Frequency	15.4%	23.1%	61.5%	100%

According to Table 2, emotional resources account for the least proportion at only 15.4%, followed by judgmental resources at 23.1%, while appreciative resources reach 61.5%, holding an absolute position. The predominance of judgmental resources over emotional ones aligns with the genre requirements of news reporting, where reporters do not directly use emotional words to express their feelings to avoid compromising the objectivity and neutrality of the news. Moreover, among all attitude resources, almost

all terms are positive emotional words, reflecting the mainstream Chinese media's endorsement of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Paris Olympics. For example:

1) The bold innovation, overcoming numerous logistical and organizational challenges, successfully took shape on the world's biggest stage.

The opening ceremony injected a new and vibrant element into the Olympic Games through innovative attempts such as outdoor venues and boat entry for

spectators, which is in line with China's pursuit of innovation and excellence in all fields.

2) Cheered on by the enthusiastic Parisian crowd

Despite the drizzle, the audience's enthusiasm was undiminished: they cheered loudly on the banks of the Seine for the athletes and showed their love for the spirit of sport.

It is clear that China's positive and supportive attitude towards the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympic Games has not only injected a strong spiritual impetus into the Chinese delegation, but also added richer humanistic care and international friendship to the global sporting event.

There are two negative words in the judgment of resources in the corpus, such as:

3) Even with trickling rain and imminent security risks dampening part of the mood, Paris has delivered on its promise of raising the curtain on the 2024 Olympics in its uniquely romantic manner.

"Imminent" not only echoes the various strikes in France before the opening ceremony, but also responds to the public's dissatisfaction with the efficiency of the French government, fully reflecting China's inclusive and encouraging attitude.

4) Not the traditional way, not the safest way, but certainly the most Parisian way.

Not the safest mentioned safety issues again. Given the current international situation, countries are most concerned about the safety of athletes and delegations. However, France moved the opening ceremony from the stadium to the banks of the Seine River, which undoubtedly adds to the risks. Nevertheless, the report then turned positive, noting that it is precisely this innovative, relaxed, and unconventional arrangement that highlights Paris's charm as a city of art and demonstrates appreciation for French culture.

Most of the reports are appreciative and positive, showing that China's mainstream media appreciate France's long-standing art and culture, without mixing in other political factors. There is only appreciation and mutual admiration between the two countries as cultural and artistic powers.

From the perspective of appreciation resources, China's attitude towards the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games can be described as positive and proud, which can be seen in the description of the Chinese team and the various programs of the opening ceremony.

The Chinese delegation's appearance at the opening ceremony drew attention, especially the scene where Ma Long and Feng Yu, as flag bearers, waved the Five-Star Red Flag on the Seine River. According to official statistics, this summer Olympics opening ceremony moved outdoors for the first time, with over 300,000 spectators, fully demonstrating the event's broad appeal and social impact. The Chinese team is large in scale and strong in competitive strength, with female athletes accounting for 66.4%, reflecting the principles of gender diversity and equal opportunity. Additionally,

about 6,800 athletes from 205 countries and regions set off from the Bridge of Otrar, passing through iconic landmarks such as Notre-Dame Cathedral, the Louvre, and Place de la Concorde, and finally arriving at Place Trocadero. This innovative entry method not only broke tradition but also made history in multiple aspects. There were also descriptions of various innovative programs. The opening ceremony, held for the first time in an open urban space, centered around the Seine River, transforming the buildings and bridges along the river into a natural stage, showcasing Paris's history and culture.

Overall, China's attitude toward the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics is a complex mix of emotions, encompassing both pride and support for the national team's performance and an awareness of international divisions. On this global stage, China has not only showcased its sporting prowess and national image but also demonstrated respect for the spirit of sports and fair competition.

## 5. EPILOGUE

This study conducts a positive discourse analysis of the news reports on the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympics published on the official website of China Daily, systematically revealing the constructive stance of China's mainstream media in the dissemination of major international events. Under the framework of attitude resources, the study employs a combination of quantitative statistics and qualitative interpretation, focusing on the linguistic representations of emotion, judgment, and appreciation.

The analysis shows that the report constructs an open and inclusive discourse system, objectively presenting the innovative practices and core values of this Olympic Games while deeply interpreting the Olympic spirit demonstrated by the organizers during event preparation. This narrative strategy not only enhances international recognition of the grand Olympic event but also reinforces China's role as a participant in global governance. The study also finds that the professional narrative perspective and strategic agenda-setting in the reports effectively convey China's rational stance on international affairs, maintaining cultural subjectivity while demonstrating a profound understanding of civilizational diversity. This balanced communication paradigm essentially constitutes a new discourse practice for Chinese media in constructing national images under the context of globalization, providing an enlightening case study for cross-cultural communication research.

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# Research on the Digital Development Path of Cadre Education and Training in Ethnic Minority Areas of Yunnan Province under the Background of New Quality Productivity

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**Abstract:** Under the era wave of the vigorous development of new quality productive forces, cadre education and training in ethnic areas of Yunnan Province have problems such as the lack of targeted resource supply and single learning forms, making it difficult to effectively meet the development needs of new quality productive forces. This paper deeply analyzes the existing predicaments of digitalization in cadre education and training in ethnic minority areas of Yunnan Province, and finds that there are problems such as the disconnection between digital resources and the actual development of ethnic minority areas in current training, serious homogeneity of learning models, and insufficient development of local characteristic courses. This article, through the reflection on the supply mechanism and presentation method of innovative digital teaching resources, the technical integration of new digital learning platforms, and the deep integration of intelligent learning support service systems, aims to break through the limitations of time and space, explore a new paradigm of digital, refined and intelligent cadre education and training, and promote the synchronous development of cadre education and training and new quality productive forces. Provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for cultivating a high-quality cadre team that meets the development needs of the new era in ethnic minority areas of Yunnan.

**Keywords:** new quality productivity; digital development path; ethnic minority areas; intelligent learning support system; blended learning

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The wave of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, driven by artificial intelligence, is sweeping across the globe. As the core driving force for promoting high-quality economic and social development, artificial intelligence holds a strategic position as a new form of productive force, which is becoming increasingly significant. Yunnan Province, serving as a typical representative of China's multi-ethnic border regions, has faced long-standing constraints in its transportation infrastructure development due to its unique

geographical location and complex terrain structure. This distinctive provincial context has resulted in a pronounced contradiction between supply and demand in cadre education and training within the region. This study focuses on exploring innovative pathways for the cadre education and training system under the framework of digital transformation, aiming to systematically investigate the digital transformation approaches and developmental strategies for cadre education and training systems in multi-ethnic border areas. It provides both a theoretical foundation and practical guidance for enhancing the capacity-building of cadres in the new era.

## 2. THE INTRINSIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW QUALITY PRODUCTIVE FORCES

The new quality productive force is a production capacity system with the characteristics of innovation, efficiency and sustainability formed in the process of economic and social development. This form of productive force not only includes traditional material elements such as labor, capital and technology, but also emphasizes the driving role of non-material elements such as knowledge, information and management [1]. In the process of continuous technological progress and rapid social development, new quality productive forces have gradually become the core driving force leading economic transformation and upgrading as well as all-round social progress [2]. By integrating multiple elements, it has effectively broken through the development limitations of traditional productive forces, achieving a profound transformation of the production mode and a leapfrog improvement in production efficiency [3]. Driven by the new quality of productive forces, the economic structure has been continuously optimized, the industrial structure has shown a diversified development trend, and the sustainability of social development has also been significantly enhanced. This form of productive force breaks through the constraints of traditional factors and places greater emphasis on the enabling role of intangible elements such as knowledge, information and management [4]. It endows the economy and society with new impetus by relying on an innovative,

efficient and sustainable development model. Its value is not only reflected in the dual improvement of production efficiency and quality, but also provides important support for building a green and efficient modern economic system by promoting the optimal allocation of resources and sustainable environmental development [5]. Based on this, we should proactively adapt to the development trend of new quality productive forces, promote their in-depth application and innovative development in areas such as industrial upgrading and social governance, so as to fully unleash their leading role in the economy and society.

### 3. THE CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES OF CADRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS OF YUNNAN

#### 3.1. The Current Situation of Cadre Education in Yunnan Province

Existing studies have shown that the cadre education and training system in the multi-ethnic border areas of Yunnan has achieved remarkable results in enhancing the ability of cadres to perform their duties, promoting ethnic unity and progress, and driving regional economic and social development. Through a systematic training system, the cadre group can deepen their understanding of ethnic policies, strengthen their awareness of ethnic unity, and thereby effectively maintain the harmonious and stable pattern in the border areas. As the core path for the capacity building of cadres, education and training not only contribute to the improvement of individual qualities, but also play a strategic supporting role in regional development. The cadre education and training system in the multi-ethnic border areas of Yunnan Province has irreplaceable strategic value in promoting ethnic unity and progress and maintaining border governance and stability.

#### 3.2. Challenges Faced By Cadre Education in Yunnan Province under the Background of New Quality Productivity

With the acceleration of industrial iteration and upgrading, the demand of grassroots cadres for the knowledge system and practical skills of new productive forces has grown exponentially. However, due to the special geographical location and economic development level, there is a significant gap in the supply of high-quality educational resources in this region. The centralized training model also faces high organization and implementation costs, resulting in a bottleneck in the improvement of the quality and efficiency of education and training. Furthermore, there are deficiencies in the targeted construction and form innovation of the training content system. The existing knowledge supply is difficult to precisely match the differentiated demands of the cadre group for the knowledge and skills of new quality productive forces, resulting in a structural

disconnection between theoretical teaching and practical needs. The knowledge supply in the cutting-edge fields represented by new quality productivity, such as the application of advanced technologies, industrial innovation ecosystems, and digital governance, is insufficient. When facing the challenges of new business forms, officials often fall into a predicament of response capabilities due to the lack of knowledge reserves.

### 4. THE PATH TO ADDRESS THE NEW CHALLENGES OF CADRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS OF YUNNAN UNDER THE BACKGROUND OF NEW QUALITY PRODUCTIVITY

In response to the practical predicaments and contemporary demands of cadre education and training in the multi-ethnic border areas of Yunnan. First of all, deepen the innovation of the theoretical system of online education and construct a theoretical framework for digital learning of cadres that conforms to the characteristics of border governance; Secondly, promote the innovation of teaching paradigms, integrate multiple methods such as case studies, scenario simulations, and action learning into the digital teaching system, and enhance the immersive learning experience. Finally, enhance technological empowerment and resource integration. Through the construction of a digital teaching resource library, the technological iteration of intelligent platforms, and the innovation of online and offline integration models, form a three-dimensional promotion path of theoretical research, methodological innovation, and technological application, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for the digital transformation of cadre education in this region.

#### 4.1 The Theoretical Innovation and Development of Online Education for Cadres

Theoretical innovation, as the core driving force of online education for cadres, plays a strategic supporting role in its sustainable development. In the context of the development of new quality productive forces, efforts should be made to build an online education theoretical framework that meets the needs of border governance, and explore new concepts and models that integrate technological empowerment and regional characteristics. For instance, digital technologies such as big data analysis and intelligent algorithms are deeply integrated into the training system, and the precise push of learning content and the customization of personalized plans are achieved by building a dynamic knowledge graph. Meanwhile, the two-way interaction between theoretical research and practical exploration should be strengthened. Based on the governance characteristics of the multi-ethnic border areas in Yunnan, innovative research should be carried out in fields such as digital resource adaptation mechanisms, remote learning support services, and cross-cultural training models.

Gradually, a theoretical system for online education of cadres with regional adaptability should be formed to provide theoretical guidance and paradigm references for educational practice.

#### 4.1.1 New concept: learner-centered

In the era of new quality productive forces, online education for cadres should establish the core concept of "learner-centeredness". It is necessary to fully consider the individual characteristics and diverse learning needs of the cadre group and build a differentiated learning experience system. This concept breaks through the traditional one-way communication mode of "teacher-led" and shifts to a logical starting point based on the cognitive laws and development needs of learners, emphasizing the activation of learners' intrinsic motivation and creative thinking. Conduct research based on the competency model of positions to precisely identify the ability gaps and knowledge deficiencies that cadres encounter in the context of new quality productive forces. In the development of the curriculum system, enhance the alignment between training content, job practice, and career progression. Through modular course design, case library construction, and other strategies, establish a precise and dynamic response mechanism characterized by problem orientation, competency mapping, and adaptive content delivery. For instance, develop specialized courses such as blockchain applications and data-driven decision analysis to address the requirements of digital governance, thereby ensuring the practical relevance and applicability of learning materials.

#### 4.1.2 New model: intelligence and personalization

In the era when digital technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence are deeply empowering the education sector, online cadre education needs to build an intelligent academic support system that is driven by technology, meets demands, and enhances effectiveness. Research and practice should be carried out from the following three dimensions:

##### Dynamic Construction of Intelligent Learning Support System

Based on the technical architecture of big data analysis, develop an intelligent management platform that integrates learning behavior tracking, progress monitoring, and effectiveness evaluation. By deeply mining the online learning trajectory data of cadres (such as course browsing duration, interaction frequency, test scores, etc.), a personalized competency profile and knowledge gap map are constructed, and then precise learning suggestions are generated. For example, the system can automatically adjust the learning plan based on real-time data feedback and push suitable micro-courses, case libraries, or extended reading materials through the intelligent recommendation engine, thus realizing the transformation of the training model from experience-driven to data-driven.

##### Precise design of personalized learning paths.

In view of the heterogeneous characteristics of the cadre group in terms of position hierarchy, professional background, and ability foundation, a learning path generation model based on intelligent algorithms is constructed. This model collects cadres' personal basic information, post competency requirements, and career development goals. By using knowledge graph technology, it establishes the mapping relationships among ability indicators, course modules, and learning resources. Then, it generates an exclusive learning roadmap for each learner. For cadres, a modular course combination of "strategic planning framework + industrial innovation frontier + policy implementation practice" is constructed to ensure that the difficulty gradient and progress rhythm of learning content are adapted to individual cognitive laws, effectively improving learning engagement and knowledge transfer efficiency.

##### Scenario-based Empowerment of the Intelligent Tutoring and Q&A System

Leverage natural language processing (NLP) technology to develop an intelligent Q&A robot, establishing an intelligent tutoring system capable of real-time interaction, question analysis, and resource recommendation. This system can automatically identify high-frequency questions during the learning process, generate structured solution plans based on the knowledge base, and dynamically trigger a manual intervention mechanism according to the complexity of the questions. Specifically targeting cutting-edge issues related to new quality productive forces (such as the interpretation of digital economy policies and artificial intelligence ethics), the system can simultaneously push the latest research findings and practical cases, helping cadres break through cognitive bottlenecks in their learning and enhancing their ability reserves to deal with complex governance scenarios.

#### 4.1.3 New approach: blended learning and project-based learning

In the optimized development of online cadre education and training in Yunnan Province, it is possible to integrate the advantages of online and offline educational resources. By promoting "teaching at the doorstep" and constructing a resource library for VR on-site teaching points, innovative practices of blended learning and project-based learning can be advanced. Based on adult learning theories and cognitive laws, through the online learning platform, by aggregating digital content such as micro-courses, virtual simulation resources, and dynamic case libraries, a personalized learning space that adapts to fragmented time can be provided for cadres, meeting their needs for autonomous knowledge acquisition across regions and time periods. Offline teaching focuses on in-depth learning scenarios. Through forms of immersive learning such

as workshop-style seminars, situational simulation training, and on-site teaching, a field for face-to-face interaction, communication, and honing of practical skills can be created.

#### 4.2 The Application of Digital Teaching Resources and Technical Means

Driven by the digital transformation strategy, the development of teaching resources based on intelligent technologies and the iteration of educational technologies provide a practical fulcrum for the structural innovation of the cadre education and training system.

##### 4.2.1 The richness of digital teaching resources.

The in-depth integration of digital teaching resources is reshaping the content supply paradigm of cadre education and training. By constructing a multi-dimensional resource matrix and intelligent application scenarios, the precision and effectiveness of training are significantly enhanced. Relying on the all-domain resource network built on the online learning platform, the traditional spatiotemporal barriers of training are broken. Cadres can obtain high-quality knowledge and construct their personal capabilities in a personalized way across regions and terminals based on fragmented time.

Specifically, interactive electronic textbooks integrate elements such as pictures and texts, data visualization, and virtual simulation with the help of rich media technology. They transform abstract theories into operable learning scenarios, effectively enhancing the intuitiveness and interestingness of knowledge understanding. Modular online courses analyze cadres' job characteristics, ability gaps, and learning trajectories through intelligent algorithms, and dynamically generate suitable course combinations. With the "one person, one code" personalized learning path, they precisely meet the differentiated learning needs. Expert video lectures gather the cutting-edge insights of top domestic and foreign scholars and industry experts. Through functions such as live broadcasting, courseware sharing, and Q&A interaction, high-quality intellectual resources are transferred across regions, breaking the structural contradiction of insufficient supply of high-quality teaching staff in remote ethnic areas. The dynamic case resource pool focuses on typical governance scenarios in the development of new quality productive forces. It continuously updates successful practice cases and risk warning cases, providing cadres with decision-making reference models close to practical affairs.

These digital resources, empowered by technology, have three advantages. First, they break through the limitations of physical space, enabling cadres in remote areas and trainees in developed regions to access cutting-edge courses simultaneously. Second, they overcome the rigid constraints of time, supporting the seamless integration of mobile micro-learning and a systematic knowledge system.

Third, they break away from the homogenized supply of content. Through the analysis of learning behavior data, resources can be precisely matched and dynamically iterated, laying a solid resource foundation for building a cadre education system that meets the needs of the development of new quality productive forces.

##### 4.2.2 The innovativeness of digital technological means.

Immersive technologies represented by VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality) are reshaping the practical teaching paradigm of cadre training by constructing highly realistic digital scenarios. These technologies can transform complex policy environments, management situations, or real-world governance challenges into interactive virtual spaces, enabling learners to conduct decision-making simulations and hands-on training in virtual scenarios. This effectively breaks through the limitation of "emphasizing theory over practice" in traditional training.

##### 4.2.3 The integrated application of digital resources and technologies.

The systematic integration of digital teaching resources and emerging technological means is driving the transformation of cadre education and training from fragmented resource supply to an ecological and collaborative model, achieving intensive allocation and high-efficiency transformation of training elements. By building an all-domain digital learning platform, a three-in-one online cadre education ecosystem integrating resource aggregation, technological empowerment, and intelligent support services has been formed through the technical integration of a multimodal course resource library, VR/AR simulation on-site teaching sites, and intelligent interaction modules. Firstly, the accurate realization of personalized learning. Learners can independently select suitable learning content from the resource supermarket based on their job requirements and ability gaps. And a dynamic learning path is generated through the intelligent recommendation engine. The platform supports multi-terminal access and fragmented learning, allowing cadres to acquire theoretical knowledge in mobile scenarios. Moreover, in the virtual simulation cadre on-site education base, the online connection between teaching and practice scenarios can be achieved. Secondly, a scientific evaluation system driven by data. Relying on big data analysis technology, a learning behavior profile is constructed to real-time collect multi-dimensional data such as course completion rate, interaction frequency, and test scores.

#### 4.3 Development of Local Characteristic Courses

Against the backdrop of Yunnan's unique governance attributes and developmental imperatives as a multi-ethnic border region, the establishment of a regionally tailored curriculum system emerges as a

linchpin in enhancing the precision of cadre education and training. Anchored in the paradigm of new-quality productive forces, local economic development is meticulously aligned with Yunnan's "Three Pillar Strategies"-green energy, green food, and healthy living destinations-alongside the strategic deployment of the digital economy. With a particular focus on the modernization of characteristic agriculture, specialized courses have been developed, including "Digital Transformation of Plateau-based Characteristic Agriculture" and "Blockchain Applications in Agricultural Product Traceability." For the tourism innovation sector, modules such as "Digital Marketing in Cultural and Tourism Industries" and "Development of Immersive Experience Programs" have been meticulously crafted. Additionally, a suite of cross-border economic courses, including "Industrial Synergy within the China-Laos Railway Economic Corridor" and "RCEP Regulations and Enterprise Service Innovation," has been established to address the region's unique geopolitical and economic opportunities. These curricula are complemented by offline practical components, including field research and government-enterprise engagement sessions. Such integration enables cadres to enhance their capabilities in policy design and industrial service provision, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected processes of characteristic industrial upgrading, cultivation of new-quality productive forces, and regional coordinated development. By internalizing regional characteristics as core components of capacity building, this approach provides "precise and targeted" intellectual support for the modernization of governance in ethnic minority regions. In pursuit of the overarching objective of strengthening the Chinese national community consciousness, a series of courses titled "Deciphering Ethnic Cultural Genomes and Their Contemporary Significance" has been conceptualized. Through a systematic analysis of the cultural ecosystems, historical legacies, and intangible cultural heritage trajectories of Yunnan's 26 indigenous ethnic groups, and in consonance with the ethnic work guidelines of the new era, modular contents such as "Digital Preservation of Ethnic Cultures" and "Cross-cultural Communication in Community Governance" have been designed. These educational offerings not only deepen cadres' understanding of regional cultural diversity but also emphasize the cultivation of cultural resource conversion capabilities. By guiding cadres to leverage ethnic cultural elements for public service innovation and the implementation of cultural-tourism integration initiatives, this curriculum framework facilitates a transformative progression from "cultural recognition" to "governance effectiveness."

## 5. RESEARCH PROSPECTS

Overall, the research on the digital transformation of cadre education and training in the multi-ethnic border areas of Yunnan under the background of the era of new productive forces of a new quality has become a key academic proposition for solving the problem of improving regional governance capabilities. Future research can be deepened and expanded from four dimensions: First, strengthen the in-depth construction of the theoretical cognition of new-quality productive forces. It is necessary to base ourselves on the global industrial transformation and China's regional development strategies, systematically explain the core connotations, elemental compositions of new-quality productive forces, as well as the adaptation paths in ethnic minority areas along the border regions. Deconstruct its evolution logic and development texture to provide precise theoretical coordinates for the design of the training system. Secondly, promote the in-depth integration and innovation of digital resources and intelligent technologies. Thirdly, explore the dual innovation of the online education content system and teaching paradigm. Finally, establish a two-way interaction mechanism between theoretical research and practical innovation. Rooted in the governance practice of ethnic minority areas in Yunnan, extract the local experience in digital training, and carry out theoretical innovation in areas such as the regional adaptation of digital resources and cross-cultural learning support. Ultimately, construct a theoretical system of online education for cadres that meets the needs of border area governance and has regional uniqueness. This research path not only responds to the requirements of the development of new productive forces in the new era but also closely adheres to the special logic of governance in ethnic minority areas. Through the coordinated progress of theoretical innovation and technological empowerment, It provides a sustainable intellectual support system for the construction of the border area cadre team in the new era.

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# An Interpretation of Daoqing Shadow Play in Huanxian County from the Perspective of the Semiotic Double Axis: A Dual Analysis of Traditional Rurality and Contemporary Development

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**Abstract:** Daoqing Shadow Play in Huanxian County, as an important branch of the Qinyang Shadow Play in Gansu, is not only one of Gansu Province's intangible cultural heritage but also a gem of Chinese folk art. The dual-axis relationship is an inherent quality of any symbolic text. From the perspective of the dual-axis theory of signs, the selection and combination of the syntagmatic axis and the paradigmatic axis in Daoqing Shadow Play have shaped its expression over different historical periods. They also reflect its distinct features in the context of traditional rural culture and contemporary cultural discourse. Through the semiotic dual-axis analysis of Huanxian Daoqing shadow play, one can gain a deeper understanding of its cultural inheritance and innovation between tradition and modernity. This not only contributes to the preservation and promotion of this intangible cultural heritage but also offers valuable insights for the modern transformation of folk art.

**Keywords:** Daoqing Shadow Play in Huanxian County; Double Axis of Semiotics; Rurality; Contemporary Interpretation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Wei Liqun [1] defines shadow play as a form of puppet theatre, a traditional folk theatrical form with a long history and significant cultural status. According to *Huanxian Daoqing Piyang Zhi* [2], Daoqing Shadow Play represents a major branch of Chinese shadow play. Once a popular and accessible form of grassroots entertainment, Daoqing Shadow Play also served as a vital medium for transmitting historical and cultural narratives. However, the proliferation of modern entertainment forms has increasingly marginalized its role, as numerous alternatives now serve similar communicative and aesthetic functions. The central challenge today lies in preventing this ancient art from becoming a static museum relic-how to reanimate shadow play as a living performance and reinvigorate its cultural relevance in contemporary society.

## 2. SEMIOTIC DOUBLE AXIS THEORY

In any semiotic text, signs unfold along two axes: the syntagmatic axis and the paradigmatic axis. Every act

of signification-from a single dream to an entire culture-necessarily operates within this dual-axis relationship [3]. Saussure's conception of these axes proved the most resilient of his four binary pairs (langue/parole, signifier/signified, synchronic/diachronic, syntagmatic/paradigmatic). Combination relations refer to the ways in which individual signs link together to form a "text," and these relations are overtly realized in the text itself. Saussure, by contrast, called paradigmatic relations "associative relations," emphasizing that they exist only in the mind of the interpreter-as inferred connections requiring imaginative reasoning rather than being directly manifest in the text [4]. Saussure distinguished between "syntagmatic relations" (relations based on the linear concatenation of linguistic elements, which preclude the simultaneous occurrence of two units) and "associative relations" (the set of all words sharing a particular characteristic in the speaker's mental lexicon). In the 1950s, Roman Jakobson offered a clearer cognitive reformulation: he renamed the paradigmatic axis the "axis of selection," whose primary function is comparison and choice, and the syntagmatic axis the "axis of combination," whose role is to link and bind signs together [5]. For Jakobson, these twin operations of comparison and combination constitute the two essential, interdependent functions that allow any culture to maintain stability and achieve ongoing transmission.

In dual-axis model, the notions of "broadness" and "narrowness" describe how richly a sign system populates its paradigmatic (or categorical) axis and how rigidly it structures its syntagmatic (or syntactic) axis. In their analysis of Chinese acrobatics, Dong Yingchun and Zhang Yanqiu observe that when many elements are available along the paradigmatic axis, the axis is broad; conversely, with few selectable elements, it is narrow [6]. Zhao Yiheng further clarifies that Paradigmatic selection underlies syntagmatic combination, and combination projects selection-inseparable aspects of a single process of meaning-making [7]. This insight reveals that the fixed forms of overt culture are, in fact, the sedimented



outcome of prior invisible paradigmatic choices. In this study, we apply the semiotic double axis relationship to interpret the Daoqing shadow play.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL DAOQING SHADOW PLAY FROM SEMIOTIC DOUBLE AXIS PERSPECTIVE

#### 3.1 The Paradigmatic Axis: Limited Choices Rooted in Local Culture

Zhao Yiheng pointed out that once a text's textual combination is established, the paradigmatic axis withdraws from view-but this does not mean it leaves no trace. Its influence endures, continuously shaping the text's qualities. In terms of diachronically sign selection, the paradigmatic axis of Daoqing shadow play remains firmly anchored in the agrarian civilization of the Loess Plateau. In the heartland of this plateau, Taoist traditions have endured for millennia, while the ancient Qin-Long culture and neighboring regional cultures have intermingled, giving birth to the indigenous art form known as Daoqing shadow play. Huanxian County, situated on the edge of the Mu Us Desert within the hilly and ravine-cut terrain of the Loess Plateau, has long been home to farming communities whose lives are inseparable from the loess hills and rivers; these villagers hold deep reverence for the natural environment and venerate Taoist cultural heritage. The very contours of this landscape have not only shaped local livelihoods but also defined the developmental boundaries of Daoqing shadow play.

Daoqing Shadow play has evolved over a millennium, yet its repertoire renewal has remained extremely limited. Historical records note that shadow play scripts are an oral literary form without formal written manuscripts, passed down by word of mouth. The extant performance texts are almost entirely hand-copied transcripts compiled by folk artists recalling, recording, and editing their repertoires after the 1980s; only a very few handwritten or printed editions survive from the Qing dynasty and the Republican period. In Huan County, where countless Daoqing shadow play pieces have long circulated, traditional themes of dynastic rise and fall, loyalty and filial piety, karmic retribution, chivalric brotherhood, and romantic entanglement have dominated the repertoire, making the art form a vital source of knowledge and information for the largely illiterate masses of pre-modern society.

In paradigmatic axis, the creation of these plays has always drawn from a narrowly defined sign-pool constructed by Taoist moral texts. This self-constriction of the paradigmatic axis has preserved the cultural gene-purity of Daoqing shadow play but has also made its symbolic system difficult to break free from the stable ethical framework of Taoist didacticism-rendering it a unique specimen of local culture in the process of modernization. Moreover, the closed nature of skill transmission has further narrowed its paradigmatic breadth. Practitioners of

shadow puppetry are primarily rural folk artists, and the continuity of their craft depends heavily on oral apprenticeship rather than institutional training or written manuals. Performers regard the fourfold techniques of singing, recitation, acting, and manipulation as their lifeblood, and core methods are jealously guarded as treasures. Although this mode of transmission has helped maintain the purity and uniqueness of their techniques, it has also severely limited their dissemination and promotion, posing significant challenges to the art's inheritance and development.

#### 3.2 The Syntagmatic Axis: A Stable Localization of Rurality

The syntagmatic axis concerns the interrelations between sign elements within a textual combination, as well as the relationship between parts and the whole. Characterized by persistent structural stability, Daoqing Shadow Play-this ancient folk art-embodies a profound "rural rootedness" on the syntagmatic axis, manifesting through three defining features: ritual dimension, folkloric essence, and communal participation.

Daoqing Shadow Play, deeply intertwined with Taoism in its formation and development, holds an indispensable ritual role during temple fairs at Xinglong Mountain Taoist Temple-a site straddling the borders of Shaanxi, Gansu, and Ningxia. Here, shadow troupes are invariably commissioned to perform deity-venerating rituals. While human-acted dramas and puppet shows may also feature, the "ritual plays for divine worship" must be performed by Daoqing Shadow Play troupes, with their performances invariably occupying the inaugural night of the temple fair. Beyond serving as a vehicle for divine entertainment, Daoqing Shadow Play constitutes an essential component of local ceremonial practices, endowed with profound ritual significance. As anthropologist Li Yiyuan pointed, the religious domain comprises two critical spheres "the belief system, encompassing assumptions about supernatural beings and cosmic existence, and the ritual system, which enacts and expresses these beliefs through performative actions." 0

Li Yuezhong further notes, "The genesis, flourishing, and even decline of shadow puppetry are inextricably linked to folk customs." 0 Folk customs, defined as "the lived cultural phenomena created, perpetuated, and cherished by the masses of a nation or ethnic group," contextualize the artform's socio-cultural embeddedness. Thus, the hundreds of village temples scattered across Huanxian serve not only as hubs for Taoist and lay religious practices but also as primary venues for Daoqing Shadow Play performances. This artform's distinctive feature lies in its synthesis of human, divine, spectral, and mythical entities on a single stage, seamlessly merging the entertainment of deities and mortals into a unified performative act.

As a significant form of traditional Chinese folk art, Daoqing shadow play has, in recent years, faced a sharp decline in audience and performance opportunities under the growing impact of modern audiovisual media, teetering on the brink of extinction. From a semiotic perspective, this crisis can be attributed to the narrowing of its paradigmatic axis—that is, the overly limited range of selectable performance elements such as props and narrative content. This narrowing, however, is both a strategic adaptation for survival and a symptom of cultural memory's impasse. In times of material scarcity, oral transmission safeguarded the repertory from the risks of textual loss; formulaic performance ensured efficiency for itinerant troupes; and the stability of the symbolic system preserved a shared body of collective knowledge across generations. Yet as society evolves and cultural demands diversify, this stubborn adherence to "immutability" has become a barrier to dialogue with the contemporary world. Amid shifting light and shadow, the millennia-old puppet form now reveals the weight of its own inertia.

#### 4. CONTEMPORARY DAOQING SHADOW PLAY: EXPANSION OF THE PARADIGMATIC AXIS AND DIVERSIFICATION OF THE SYNTAGMATIC AXIS

Signs are understood as perceptual carriers of meaning, and interpreting a sign involves excavating the depth of its underlying signification. Zhao Yiheng has argued that the semiotic process comprises three distinct meanings: the sender's intended meaning, the sign's textual meaning, and the interpreter's inferred meaning; moreover, "the boundaries and composition of a text depend on interpretation—meaning cannot be determined by the text alone."<sup>0</sup> Under the twin forces of aesthetic disillusionment brought on by material abundance and the critical consciousness fostered by mass education, the social-ethical discipline and top-down moral instruction of traditional paradigms have been doubly deconstructed within our post-industrial, consumerist culture. Together, these transformations have produced a cognitive gap between the cultural signifiers of classical shadow puppetry and the meaning-expectations of contemporary audiences. This dynamic evolution of interpretants compels the sign system to adapt by reconfiguring itself along both axes. Accordingly, in the new era Daoqing shadow play has begun to broaden its paradigmatic axis—seeking fresh avenues for growth—and to generate a plurality of combinatorial texts.

Stage performance, as a new field of enactment, has revitalized contemporary Daoqing shadow play by fundamentally restructuring its combinatorial axis. By relocating Daoqing troupes from rural small-stage settings to the proscenium theater, this "theatricalization" represents a structural reconfiguration of the puppetry's syntagmatic framework. In 1959, the large-scale classical opera

*Feng Luo Chi* (Maple Luo Pool) premiered in Gansu Province as a commemorative piece for the tenth National Day festivities, achieving nationwide acclaim for its poignant narrative, rich Longdong regional character, and refined performance style. *Feng Luo Chi*'s innovation along the syntagmatic axis is evident in three interrelated dimensions. First, its narrative structure attains an epic scope, shattering the fragmentary mode of traditional shadow-play vignettes. Second, the embodiment of performance signs emerges through live actors who integrate codified puppet gestures with the facial expressions and body rhythms of Chinese opera, creating a semi-puppet aesthetic that is "like yet unlike" traditional figures. Third, immersive stagecraft—employing rotating platforms, multi-layered scenery, and dynamic lighting—transforms the spatial experience. Far from diluting the essence of Daoqing shadow play, this expansion of the syntagmatic axis dialectically renews its cultural vitality. Indeed, in 1987 the "China Gansu Folk Shadow Play Art Troupe," composed of Daoqing inheritors, toured Italy and was lauded as "a magical art from the East," and in 1992 Shi Chenglin's company performed at the inaugural Silk Road Festival in Lanzhou<sup>0</sup>. Such open, translocal performances offer semiotic insights for the living transmission of intangible heritage: only by allowing the syntagmatic axis to continually mutate across space and time can a traditional art escape the chrysalis of geography and fixed cognition, thereby reclaiming new life amid globalization.

Daoqing shadow play has undergone a narrative transformation under the influence of contemporary themes, exemplifying a shift in its paradigmatic axis from a singular value orientation toward pluralistic cultural choices. In response to the spirit of the times, practitioners have created more than twenty new productions—among them *Before Going Abroad*, *Health-Poverty Alleviation Warms the Heart*, and *Blood and Gold*. Particularly acclaimed are modern short dramas such as *The Handkerchief of Friendship*, which celebrates the unity of the Chinese nation, and *The Marriage of Old Meng's Family*, which reflects evolving attitudes toward marriage in the new era. The newly authored *The Marriage of Old Meng's Family* stands as a paradigmatic case of contemporary adaptation: through the expansion of its paradigmatic axis and innovations along its syntagmatic axis, it reconstructs the narrative logic of traditional shadow puppetry. Centered on the conflict between "old ethics" and "new ideas," the play employs a dual-axis reconfiguration of signs to elevate its rural subject matter into a metaphorical text of cultural transformation. Moreover, by introducing threefold symbolic substitutions of gender, marriage, and power, it activates a discursive space for modern interpretation.

Digital media integration through new technologies has significantly enhanced the expressive capacity of

Daoqing shadow play texts. In their study of Wei Zongfu-an inheritor of Huan County Daoqing shadow play-Bao Nuoyan and Di Liangchuan use his short-form videos and live-streaming practices as paradigmatic examples of how traditional culture's modes of dissemination have evolved. Historically, the paradigmatic axis of Daoqing shadow play was constricted by local-dialect singing, male-dominated troupe structures, and didactic narrative themes. To overturn this "male monopoly," Wei Zongfu and his daughter, Wang Xiuying, introduced gender-balanced duets as a new performance mode. To dissolve dialectal barriers, Wei also deployed real-time subtitling, juxtaposing Huan County dialect with Standard Mandarin on screen. This intervention effectively expanded the linguistic sign-pool of the paradigmatic axis-from a single regional code (dialect) to a composite system of "dialect + text + visual"-thereby enabling the art form to transcend phonetic limitations and engage diverse contemporary audiences. "Through live streaming, shadow puppetry breaks free from the constraints of time, space, and fixed audiences; as viewers' interactions multiply, the performance shifts from a static two-dimensional plane to a dynamic, multi-dimensional space, evolving from a purely offline model to a hybrid online-offline mode, and transforming from static transmission of plays into dynamic cultural dissemination."

## 5. CONCLUSION

Chinese shadow play emerged and evolved within the milieu of agrarian culture-truly a "culture grown from the land". As one of China's designated intangible cultural heritages, shadow puppetry embodies the pre-industrial agricultural way of life. Safeguarding Huan County Daoqing shadow play therefore demands not only the conservation and revitalization of its intrinsic vitality but also the establishment of pathways for its sustainable development and broad dissemination in contemporary society. While current protection efforts rightly emphasize field surveys, documentation, and archival preservation, equal emphasis must be placed on strategies that facilitate its ongoing transmission, inheritance, and revitalization in today's social and cultural contexts.

The contemporary transformation of Daoqing shadow play demonstrates that the vital core of intangible-heritage revitalization lies not in the rote replication of tradition, but in converting cultural signs into a "meaning-operation system" through the continual expansion of the paradigmatic axis and the diversified recombination of the syntagmatic axis. The plurality of choices along the paradigmatic axis allows for the integration and substitution of various elements and forms within Daoqing performance. This diversity enables the art form to innovate and evolve continuously, preserving its vibrancy and resonance. Moreover, the development of Daoqing shadow play must strike a balance between populist appeal and artistic integrity, as well as between historical

continuity and contemporary relevance. It must both reflect the cultural needs and aesthetic sensibilities of the people and maintain the performative efficacy and distinctive character befitting the present era.

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# A Review of Second Language Sentence Processing Among Chinese EFL Learners

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**Abstract:** This paper systematically outlines the developmental trajectory of research on second language (L2) sentence processing among Chinese English learners, beginning with conceptual definitions and core characteristics. It delves into five key dimensions for analysis: individual differences and learner characteristics, cognitive mechanisms, target language structural properties, cross-linguistic transfer, and methodological innovations, followed by an introduction to the academic evolution of this research field. Finally, the conclusion highlights current limitations: insufficient integration of multimodal data, unclear mechanisms of Chinese semantic construction transfer, oversimplified modeling of individual cognitive differences, and the need to revise theoretical models to incorporate Chinese linguistic features. Future research is called for to construct integrative models that merge native language characteristics, cognitive resources, and target language structures. By combining neurocognitive techniques with large-scale corpus analysis, such research aims to drive theoretical breakthroughs from descriptive accounts of phenomena to mechanistic explanations, providing cognitive-scientific foundations for L2 teaching practices.

**Keywords:** L2 sentence processing; cognitive mechanisms; cross-linguistic transfer; Chinese English learners; second language acquisition

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As an interdisciplinary field of psycholinguistics and applied linguistics, second language (L2) sentence processing examines how bilinguals dynamically integrate and compute syntactic structures, semantic information, and contextual cues when comprehending or producing a second language. For Chinese native speakers, processing English sentences follows general second language acquisition principles but is profoundly shaped by typological differences between Chinese and English—such as Chinese being a topic-prominent language versus English a subject-prominent language, and Chinese having fewer grammatical markers compared to English's overt morphological changes—thereby forming unique cognitive mechanisms. Its core characteristics include: Multilevel interaction, where lexical retrieval, syntactic parsing (e.g., subject-verb agreement, relative clause embedding in English), semantic integration (e.g., metaphor interpretation), and

pragmatic inference operate synergistically; Cognitive resource competition, as learners must allocate additional attention to overcome syntactic conflicts caused by L1 transfer (e.g., Chinese word order interfering with parsing English complex clauses), constrained by working memory capacity and L2 proficiency; Dynamic adaptability, whereby processing strategies optimize with language experience—for example, low-proficiency learners rely on lexical literal translation, while high-proficiency learners develop automated syntactic processing abilities (Clahsen & Felser's 2006 "shallow structure hypothesis"). Systematically reviewing research in this field is crucial for uncovering the unique patterns of L2 sentence processing among Chinese native speakers and refining second language acquisition theories [6].

## 2. KEY ISSUES IN L2 SENTENCE PROCESSING FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

### 2.1 Individual Differences and Learner Characteristics

#### 2.1.1 The Impact of Individual differences on L2 sentence processing

##### Neurocognitive Mechanisms of Individual Differences:

In studies of L2 sentence processing, an increasing number of scholars have focused on how individual differences influence electrophysiological components and cognitive strategies. Bian and Zhang (2021)[1] demonstrated that within the same learner group, distinct EEG effects are elicited across individual participants, indicating that grand average analyses fail to authentically reflect real-time sentence processing due to the superimposed effects of individual variability. Sheng and Qiao (2021)[17] further supported this view through experimental evidence showing that working memory capacity and L2 proficiency modulate learners' performance in resolving relative clause attachment ambiguities. Additionally, Shi and Yang (2021)[18] found significant disparities between native and L2 speakers in processing verb syntactic frame information: advanced L2 learners exhibited greater syntactic autonomy, while lower-proficiency learners relied more on lexical-semantic cues for predictive processing [3].

##### Influencing Factors and Theoretical Explanations:

Beyond neurocognitive mechanisms, multiple factors contribute to individual differences in L2 sentence processing. For instance, Zeng and Zhao (2021)[23] proposed that differences in the mental representation of verb syntactic frames between native and L2

speakers may underlie processing divergences. Hong et al. (2021)[8] investigated semantic integration abilities among Chinese L2 learners, revealing that such abilities are proficiency-dependent: high-proficiency learners approximate native-like semantic integration, whereas intermediate learners lag significantly. These findings collectively suggest that L2 sentence processing is not merely the application of linguistic knowledge but a dynamic interplay of cognitive resources and individual experiences (Bian & Zhang, 2021; Sheng & Qiao, 2021; Shi & Yang, 2021)[1,17,18].

### 2.1.2 The influence of L2 proficiency on sentence processing strategies

**Characteristics of Beginner Learners:** Beginner L2 learners often exhibit strong lexical reliance due to insufficient syntactic knowledge to support effective sentence analysis when encountering complex structures. Hao (2018)[7] compared the roles of argument structure constructions and verbs in sentence comprehension between Chinese native speakers and L2 learners, revealing that argument structure constructions exerted weaker influence on L2 learners, who relied more heavily on lexical-semantic information for interpretation. Similarly, Dai (2016)[5] noted that Chinese learners prioritize lexical factors (e.g., word type) when resolving relative clause attachment ambiguities. These findings underscore the challenge for beginners in effectively integrating lexical and syntactic cues (Hao, 2018; Dai, 2016) [5,7].

**Characteristics of Advanced Learners:** In contrast, advanced learners develop stable sentence processing patterns. Li et al. (2018)[13] employed ERP techniques to investigate Chinese English learners' cognitive processing of the subjunctive mood across proficiency levels [11]. Their results indicated that high-proficiency learners predominantly adopted syntax-driven strategies (e.g., rule-based parsing), while low-proficiency learners relied on semantics-driven strategies (e.g., meaning-based inference). Advanced learners also activated ERP components (e.g., P600) resembling those of native speakers, reflecting higher automation levels in syntactic integration. Thus, as L2 proficiency increases, learners gradually transition toward mature and stable processing modes (Li et al., 2018) [13].

## 2.2 Cognition and Processing Mechanisms

### 2.2.1 The Role of working memory in L2 sentence processing

**The Impact of Working Memory Capacity on Syntactic Comprehension:** Working memory capacity is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing L2 sentence processing. Ren (2013)[16] investigated how working memory capacity affects Chinese EFL learners' comprehension of complex sentences, demonstrating that higher capacity not only enhances reading speed but also improves comprehension accuracy. Similarly, Yao et al. (2013)[21] found that under low working memory demands, high-capacity

learners utilized verb preference information more effectively than low-capacity learners. These findings collectively indicate that working memory capacity modulates L2 learners' ability to process complex or less frequent syntactic structures (Ren, 2013; Yao et al., 2013)[16,21].

**The Relationship Between Working Memory and Sentence Comprehension:** Regarding the interplay between working memory and sentence comprehension, Xu (2017)[20] synthesized recent research, highlighting two key dynamics: (a) robust working memory facilitates efficient sentence comprehension, and (b) temporary information generated during comprehension consumes working memory resources. Zhao and Wang (2012)[29] further emphasized working memory's critical role in immediate sentence recall tasks, noting its differential impacts on implicit versus explicit sentence processing. Overall, existing studies have preliminarily elucidated the multifaceted contributions of working memory to L2 sentence processing (Xu, 2017; Zhao & Wang, 2012)[20,29].

### 2.2.2 Predictive processing mechanisms and their applications

**Core Operations of Predictive Processing:** Predictive processing refers to the brain's ability to anticipate future events based on prior experience. Yue et al. (2021)[22] synthesized advancements in predictive sentence processing research, particularly highlighting the roles of the N400 and anterior positivity ERP components in revealing semantic and lexical-form predictions. They emphasized that these components provide critical insights into how the brain utilizes prior knowledge to guide real-time information processing. Additionally, Zhao (2018) [27] explored how telicity and transitivity in verb event structures influence L2 learners' immediate sentence comprehension, further enriching our understanding of predictive mechanisms [28].

**Theoretical Models and Future Directions:** According to Yue et al. (2021) [22], dominant theoretical frameworks for predictive sentence processing include the Shallow Structure Hypothesis and the Unified Competition Model. The former posits that late L2 learners heavily depend on lexical-semantic and pragmatic cues for sentence parsing, while the latter argues for L1 syntactic strategy transfer influencing L2 processing. Though differing in focus, both models have collectively advanced the field. Future research should investigate predictive processing across diverse language pairs to establish more robust cognitive-neural theoretical frameworks (Yue et al., 2021; Zhao, 2018)[22,27].

## 2.3 Linguistic Structural Features

### 2.3.1 The impact of syntactic structural properties on L2 sentence processing

**Processing Mechanisms of Temporarily Ambiguous Sentences:** Temporarily ambiguous sentences are those that permit multiple interpretations initially but

resolve to a single correct interpretation as processing unfolds. Zeng and Zhao (2021)[23] employed a moving-window technique to investigate how L2 learners of varying proficiency process such sentences. Their findings revealed that high-proficiency learners integrate multiple information streams (e.g., syntactic, semantic) at early processing stages to resolve ambiguity, whereas low-proficiency learners predominantly rely on lexical-semantic cues for prediction. Similarly, Lu and Wu (2021)[15] examined the reanalysis difficulty of two syntactic structures (NP/S vs. NP/Z) using self-paced reading tasks, demonstrating that NP/S structures impose greater parsing challenges than NP/Z structures. Both studies underscore the critical role of syntactic structural properties in L2 sentence processing (Zeng & Zhao, 2021; Lu & Wu, 2021)[23,15].

**Cognitive Processing Features of Specialized Syntactic Forms:** Beyond common temporarily ambiguous structures, specialized syntactic forms pose unique challenges for L2 learners. Ji and Li (2018)[10] investigated Chinese learners' cognitive processing of English present participles using ERP techniques. Their experiments showed that both high- and low-proficiency learners are influenced by syntactic and semantic factors, despite the absence of typical ERP components (e.g., LAN, P600). This suggests not a lack of syntactic sensitivity but rather the engagement of general cognitive functions in processing L2-specific complex structures. Additionally, Dai (2016)[5] explored relative clause attachment ambiguities in English, emphasizing the centrality of syntactic factors in disambiguation. These findings highlight the importance of understanding cognitive mechanisms underlying specialized syntactic forms for refining pedagogical approaches (Ji & Li, 2018; Dai, 2016)[10,5].

**2.3.2 Semantic integration in L2 sentence processing**  
**Developmental Trajectory of Semantic Integration Ability:** As L2 proficiency increases, learners' semantic integration ability gradually strengthens. Hong et al. (2021)[8] investigated Chinese L2 learners and found that advanced learners achieved near-native performance in sentence reading comprehension, while intermediate learners generated limited mental simulation effects despite partial success. This suggests that higher L2 proficiency enables learners to more effectively integrate newly acquired information with existing knowledge systems, facilitating smoother and more efficient semantic integration processes (Hong et al., 2021)[8].

**Semantic Prediction and Dynamic Adjustment:** Semantic prediction is another critical focus. Yue et al. (2021)[22] developed a predictive sentence processing model based on ERP data, illustrating how the human brain generates anticipations from contextual cues and rapidly matches or revises them upon receiving actual input. Zhao (2013)[26] corroborated this through studies on logical metonymy interpretation, revealing

that even beginner learners undergo a temporal progression from lexical prioritization to contextual dependency, reflecting the gradual maturation of semantic integration mechanisms during L2 acquisition. Thus, semantic prediction and its dynamic adjustment mechanisms constitute indispensable components of L2 sentence processing (Yue et al., 2021; Zhao, 2013)[22,26].

**2.4 Cross-linguistic Transfer and Bilingual Interaction**  
**2.4.1. Cross-linguistic transfer phenomena and their impacts**

**The Influence of L1 on L2 Sentence Processing:** Research indicates that the native language (L1) influences L2 sentence processing to varying degrees. Chang (2011)[2] explored the psychological mechanisms of L2 sentence processing in English learners, revealing three distinct ERP components-P200, N400, and P600-during passive sentence processing. The P200 component may reflect L2 learners' unique cognitive monitoring processes. Additionally, syntactic structural similarity between L1 and L2 has been shown to modulate processing efficiency; for instance, positive transfer effects occur when core syntactic properties align across languages (Chang, 2011)[2]. However, observable transfer phenomena are not universal, highlighting the need to investigate underlying mechanisms further [12].

**Potential Interactions Between L2s:** In multilingual contexts, interactions between L2s may also occur. Wang et al. (2016) [19] examined clause attachment preferences in Chinese-English bilinguals and Chinese-English-German trilinguals during syntactic ambiguity resolution tasks. Their findings suggest that typological distance between languages influences cross-linguistic transfer of ambiguity resolution strategies, with language proficiency serving as another critical variable. These results imply that even within the same target language, learners at different proficiency levels may adopt distinct processing pathways, offering new perspectives for understanding multilingual language behavior (Wang et al., 2016) [19].

**2.5 Research Methodologies and Technological Innovations**

**2.5.1 Advancements in technical approaches and their contributions**

**Current Applications of ERP Technology:** As a non-invasive neuroimaging technique, event-related potentials (ERP) have played a pivotal role in unraveling the neural dynamics of L2 sentence processing. Li and Ji (2014)[14] reviewed decades of ERP applications in sentence processing research, identifying key research directions such as semantic P600, contextual influences on sentence processing, and cross-linguistic differences in L2 mechanisms. Huang and Tang (2018)[9] further conducted a statistical analysis of ERP-based language processing studies in China over the past decade, revealing that syntactic processing remains the most investigated

topic, followed by L2 acquisition and code-switching. These advancements have not only deepened our understanding of the neurocognitive mechanisms underlying L2 sentence processing but also laid a robust foundation for future research (Li & Ji, 2014; Huang & Tang, 2018)[14,9].

Emerging Technologies in the Field: Beyond ERP, novel technologies like functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) are increasingly applied to L2 sentence processing research. Zhang et al. (2015)[24] summarized fMRI-driven breakthroughs in exploring the neural substrates of foreign language learning difficulties, including critical period hypotheses, competition models, and declarative/procedural models. Although still in its infancy, these technologies offer innovative tools and perspectives for uncovering deeper principles of L2 sentence processing, promising more comprehensive insights in the future (Zhang et al., 2015)[24].

### 3. PHASED SUMMARY

As a pivotal research domain, the academic evolution of "second language (L2) sentence processing" can be categorized into the following stages:

#### 3.1 Early conceptual introduction and preliminary exploration

In the initial phase of L2 sentence processing research, scholars focused on introducing foundational concepts and methodologies while preliminarily exploring the characteristics of L2 processing. For instance, Jiang et al. (2016) formally defined the concept of second language processing, emphasizing its interdisciplinary roots in psychology and its connections to theoretical linguistics, child language development, and neuroscience. Concurrent studies also investigated the role of working memory in L2 sentence comprehension (Xu, 2017)[20], laying theoretical and methodological groundwork for subsequent in-depth research.

**3.2 Emergence of neurolinguistic mechanism research**  
With the widespread adoption of ERP (event-related potential) technology, researchers began probing the neurocognitive mechanisms underlying L2 sentence processing. Chang et al. (2009)[4] employed ERP techniques to investigate Chinese university students' cognitive processing of English simple sentences (e.g., active voice), identifying key ERP components such as the Early Left Anterior Negativity (ELAN), N400, and P600. This marked the first systematic characterization of neural activity patterns in L2 sentence processing. Simultaneously, Zhao (2013)[26] utilized self-paced reading experiments to explore Chinese learners' cognitive mechanisms in interpreting English logical metonymy, providing empirical insights into semantic mapping during L2 processing. These findings paved the way for detailed investigations into the nuances of L2 sentence processing [25].

**3.3 Individual differences and working memory**  
emerged as a prominent research focus.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the impact of individual differences and working memory on L2 sentence processing emerged as a focal point of inquiry. Bian and Zhang (2021)[1] highlighted that even within homogeneous learner groups, distinct ERP effects (e.g., N400, P600) were elicited across individual participants, indicating that individual differences significantly shape sentence processing outcomes. Furthermore, Sheng and Qiao (2021)[17] empirically validated the interplay between working memory capacity and L2 proficiency in Chinese EFL learners' processing of relative clause attachment ambiguities, proposing the "cognitive capacity limitation in L2 processing" theory to explain how resource constraints modulate syntactic resolution strategies. These studies not only deepened the understanding of individual variability in L2 sentence processing but also provided a theoretical foundation for personalized pedagogy tailored to learners' cognitive profiles (Bian & Zhang, 2021; Sheng & Qiao, 2021)[1,17].

#### 3.4 In-depth exploration of syntactic structural features and semantic integration capabilities

During this period, research on syntactic structural properties and their impact on L2 sentence processing deepened significantly. Zeng and Zhao (2021)[23] employed a moving-window technique to investigate how L2 learners of varying proficiency levels process temporarily ambiguous sentences, revealing divergent strategies between high- and low-proficiency learners. Specifically, high-proficiency learners demonstrated rapid ambiguity resolution through syntactic integration, while low-proficiency learners relied heavily on lexical-semantic cues. Lu and Wu (2021)[15] further enriched our understanding of syntactic features by comparing the reanalysis difficulty of NP/S and NP/Z garden-path sentences among Chinese learners, showing that NP/S structures imposed greater cognitive demands due to their deviation from L1 syntactic preferences.

Meanwhile, Hong et al. (2021)[8] explored semantic integration abilities in Chinese L2 learners during sentence reading. Their findings indicated that advanced learners approached native-like semantic integration proficiency, whereas intermediate learners exhibited significant limitations, particularly in reconciling conflicting semantic cues. These studies not only expanded the cognitive scope of L2 sentence processing research but also provided novel perspectives for assessing learners' linguistic competencies, emphasizing the interplay between syntactic complexity and semantic adaptability (Zeng & Zhao, 2021; Lu & Wu, 2021; Hong et al., 2021)[23,8,15].

#### 3.5 Expansion of research on cross-linguistic transfer and predictive processing mechanisms

In recent years, cross-linguistic transfer phenomena and predictive processing mechanisms have emerged as new focal points in L2 sentence processing research.

Wang et al. (2016)[19] investigated clause attachment preferences in Chinese-English bilinguals and Chinese-English-German trilinguals during syntactic ambiguity resolution tasks, revealing the influence of typological distance on the selection of ambiguity resolution strategies. Specifically, learners exhibited stronger reliance on L1 syntactic strategies when processing languages with greater structural divergence.

Additionally, Yue et al. (2021)[22] synthesized advancements in predictive sentence processing research, emphasizing the roles of the N400 and anterior positivity ERP components in decoding semantic and lexical-form predictions. Their work highlighted how the brain dynamically generates anticipations based on contextual cues and rapidly adjusts them upon encountering new input. These findings not only deepen our understanding of cross-linguistic transfer and predictive mechanisms but also provide robust empirical support for constructing more explanatory cognitive-neural theoretical frameworks (Wang et al., 2016; Yue et al., 2021)[19,22].

#### 4. REVIEW SUMMARY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

Through a systematic analysis of existing literature, the current research on "L2 sentence processing" reveals critical limitations in methodologies, mechanisms, individual variability, and theoretical frameworks, as outlined below:

##### 4.1 Methodological Limitations

**Overreliance on Single Techniques:** Although ERP (event-related potentials) technology has been widely applied in L2 sentence processing studies, its singular use fails to comprehensively unravel complex cognitive processes or capture multi-dimensional information (e.g., spatial neural dynamics or real-time behavioral adjustments).

##### 4.2 Unclear cross-linguistic Transfer Mechanisms

**Insufficient Multilingual Insights:** While prior research has explored L1 influences on L2 processing (e.g., syntactic transfer), cross-linguistic interactions in multilingual contexts-particularly predictive processing patterns across diverse language pairs (e.g., Sino-German vs. Sino-English)-remain poorly understood.

##### 4.3 Superficial Characterization of Individual Differences

**Lack of Depth:** Current studies predominantly describe surface-level differences among proficiency groups (e.g., high vs. low) but neglect deeper cognitive mechanisms (e.g., working memory subcomponents) and psychological traits (e.g., inhibitory control), limiting explanations for individual variability in L2 processing.

#### 5. INADEQUATE THEORETICAL MODELS

**Gaps in Explanatory Power:** Existing frameworks like the Shallow Structure Hypothesis and Unified Competition Model struggle to account for

phenomena such as advanced learners' syntactic automation or typology-driven processing strategies, failing to provide universal theoretical explanations.

To address these gaps, the field should prioritize the following directions:

##### 5.1 Enrich Methodological Approaches

**Adopt Multimodal Methodologies:** Integrate complementary tools (e.g., ERP for temporal precision, fMRI for spatial resolution, eye-tracking for real-time behavioral data) to holistically map cognitive processes across neural, behavioral, and temporal dimensions.

##### 5.2 Deepen cross-linguistic transfer research

**Focus on Multilingual Contexts:** Investigate how typological distance (e.g., analytic vs. synthetic languages) modulates predictive processing (e.g., N400/P600 profiles) and transfer effects in trilingual learners, offering insights into L2-L3 interactions.

##### 5.3 Refine individual difference analyses

**Design Granular Experimental Tasks:** Develop hierarchical paradigms (e.g., graded syntactic complexity) to dissect underlying cognitive mechanisms (e.g., phonological loop efficiency) and psychological traits (e.g., metacognitive awareness) that drive individual variability.

##### 5.4 Optimize theoretical model construction

**Build Integrative Frameworks:** Synthesize factors such as syntactic-semantic interactions, cross-linguistic transfer, and individual cognitive profiles to construct universal theoretical models that reconcile conflicting empirical findings and guide pedagogical innovations.

By advancing these strategies, future research can overcome current limitations, deepen mechanistic understanding, and ultimately enhance both theoretical rigor and practical applications in L2 sentence processing.

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# Interpretation of Qingyang Sachet from a Semiotic Perspective

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**Abstract:** Qingyang sachet is an important folk handicraft in northwest China, boasting profound cultural connotations and unique artistic value. This paper commences from Saussure's semiotic theory and applies the analytical framework of "signifier" and "signified" to systematically interpret the symbolic characteristics of Qingyang sachet. Through an analysis of the "signifier" aspects of the sachet's shapes and colors, it reveals the "signified" connotations at the material, institutional, and spiritual levels. The study reveals that, at the signified level, Qingyang sachet has profound cultural connotations at the material, institutional, and spiritual levels. At the material level, the sachet has practical functions, meeting various needs in people's lives, such as repelling insects, warding off evil spirits, decorating, expressing love, and serving as gifts. At the institutional level, Qingyang sachet is closely linked to the local folk culture and has become an important carrier of folk culture. At the spiritual level, Qingyang sachet carries people's totem worship and expression of beliefs, and also embodies people's rich emotions and beautiful aspirations. In total, Qingyang sachet is not only a combination of practicality and aesthetics but also an important carrier of the folk culture in the Qingyang area. Its symbolic system reflects the life philosophy and cultural heritage of people in Qingyang.

**Keywords:** qingyang sachet; Saussure's semiotics; signifier; signified; cultural symbol

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a treasure of Chinese folk art, Qingyang sachet carries profound historical and cultural heritage, serving as a vivid embodiment of the folk culture in the Qingyang area. With its rich shapes, exquisite patterns, and unique craftsmanship, it has become a significant object for studying folk cultural symbols. Beyond being a practical item in the lives of people in Qingyang, it is a symbolic system with deep cultural meanings.

"Symbols are perceived as carriers of meaning; meaning can only be expressed through symbols, and the purpose of symbols is to convey meaning" (Zhao, 2013: 7). Saussure's semiotic theory of "signifier" and "signified" is powerful in the interpretation of the meaning of symbols. "Signifier" refers to the material form of a symbol, such as sounds or images, while "signified" represents the concept or meaning denoted by the symbol. This theory reveals that the

generation of symbolic meaning is not natural but stems from social conventions. Applying Saussure's "signifier" and "signified" to the study of Qingyang sachet, and systematically analyzing its signifier and signified from a semiotic perspective, can more comprehensively and profoundly reveal its cultural connotations and values.

Currently, from a semiotic perspective, scholars have primarily focused on the cultural studies of Qingyang sachet. Duan, Cao, & Liu (2023)[2] examined the characteristics and symbolic meanings of sachet characters and pattern symbols based on Saussure's "signifier" and "signified", and analyzed the characteristics of patterns and colors in terms of Peirce's symbols. Zhao, Li, & Zhang (2010)[6] regarded Qingyang sachet as the folklore symbol and explored its underlying cultural, philosophical, historical, aesthetic, and inheriting meanings. Cao & Zhang (2007)[1] examined the philosophical implications of procreation worship in Qingyang sachet patterns and wuxing viewpoints embedded in its colors.

Although, the aboved literature on Qingyang sachet mainly focuses on the its symbolic attribute, little investigates Qingyang sachet's signified at material, institutional, and spiritual levels. This study aims to use Saussure's "signifier" and "signified" to deeply analyze Qingyang sachet as a folk cultural symbol, revealing its rich cultural connotations and unique artistic values. Through the analysis of the signifier (forms and colors) and the exploration of the signified (at material, institutional, and spiritual levels), this study comprehensively demonstrates the important role of Qingyang sachet in inheriting regional culture and reflecting people's lives and emotions, hoping contributing to its protection, inheritance, and development.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF SAUSSURE'S "SIGNIFIER" AND "SIGNIFIED"

Saussure's "signifier" and "signified" is the core of his structural linguistics, providing a crucial framework for understanding the essence of symbols and the mechanism of meaning generation. In Saussure's view, language is a symbolic system, and a symbol is a unity of two elements: the signifier and the signified.

"Linguistic symbols connect not things and names, but concepts and sound-images" (Saussure, 2009: 95). The signifier, as the "sound-image" in linguistic symbols, is the material form of a symbol—directly

perceivable by human senses, characterized by materiality and intuitiveness. For example, in linguistic symbols, the signifier manifests as sound-images or written forms. The form of the signifier is not fixed; different languages may use different sounds or written forms to denote the same concept, illustrating the diversity and variability of signifier selection across different linguistic and cultural systems, which is determined by social conventions rather than the essential attributes of things.

The signified is the “concept” or “meaning” denoted by the symbol, an abstract mental concept existing in human mind. This concept or meaning is not isolated but is defined through its relationships with other meanings or concepts within the linguistic system.

The arbitrariness of the relationship between “signifier” and “signified” is a key point in Saussure’s theory. Arbitrariness means there is no inherent or necessary connection between them; their association is based on social conventions. The diversity of signifiers for the same signified in different languages fully demonstrates this arbitrariness, endowing linguistic symbols with great flexibility and diversity—different languages can construct symbolic systems in various ways to express identical or similar concepts and meanings.

### 3. HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF QINGYANG SACHET

Qingyang sachet, commonly known as “Chuchu” or “Shuahuo” (Edited by Qingyang Cultural Publication Bureau & Qingyang Culture Center, 2012: 1), have a long history tracing back to ancient times, deeply intertwined with Qibo, the ancestor of traditional Chinese medicine. Legend has it that in ancient times, when diseases ravaged the land, Qibo, a native of Qingyang, often carried medicine bags filled with herbs like realgar, mugwort, agastache, and atracylodes to prevent epidemics and repel snake venom. These herb-filled bags, emitting a strong fragrance, gradually became known as “sachet”. Over time, the custom of wearing sachets spread in Qingyang, serving as a way to prevent diseases and pray for health.

During its long development, Qingyang sachet was continuously integrated into the local folk culture, expanding its functions from pure epidemic prevention to diversified roles such as decoration and blessing. By the Warring States period, sachets had become ornaments. In the Han Dynasty, it was common for young men and women to wear sachets, expanding the usage. In the Jin Dynasty, sachets gradually became exclusive to women and children, with their decorative and symbolic meanings becoming more prominent. During the Tang and Song dynasties, men began wearing pouches mainly for carrying things. The Ming and Qing dynasties marked a peak in the development of Qingyang sachet, with increasingly sophisticated craftsmanship,

richer shapes, and more exquisite patterns, making them popular accessories and gifts. In the Qing Dynasty, sachets were endowed with the special meaning of love tokens, further enriching their cultural connotations.

In modern times, Qingyang sachet has mostly functioned as decorations of the Dragon Boat Festival, carrying people’s wishes for good fortune and exorcism. During this period, sachet production has emphasized the inheritance and innovation of traditional craftsmanship while becoming closer to daily life, solidifying their status as an important carrier of Qingyang’s folk culture. Today, Qingyang sachet continues to innovate centered on the traditional craftsmanship, gradually entering national and international arenas. It is not only a cultural symbol of Qingyang but also a treasure of Chinese traditional culture, carrying millennia of historical memory and rich cultural connotations, and continuing to radiate unique charm.

### 4. ANALYSIS OF QINGYANG SACHET’S SIGNIFIER

#### 4.1 Shapes

##### 4.1.1 Stylistic characteristics

“In essence, symbols carry the cultural heritage of different nations in their diverse forms, reflecting national cultural psychology and showcasing their historical origins and cultural connotations” (Cao & Zhang, 2007: 34). Qingyang sachet features a rich variety of shapes, including animals, plants, and figures, each with unique characteristics and profound cultural connotations.

Animal-shaped sachets hold a significant position in Qingyang sachet. Inspired by various natural animals, they exhibit unique artistic charm through exaggerated and deformed artistic techniques. The tiger sachet is a typical example: its shape is often highly exaggerated, with an enlarged head to highlight majesty, round and piercing eyes as if capable of discerning all evil, and a wide-open mouth with sharp teeth to emphasize fierceness. The body is outlined with simple, smooth lines to stress agility. This exaggeration is not arbitrary but carries deep cultural implications. In folk culture, the tiger is seen as a symbol of courage and power, capable of warding off evil forces.

Plant-shaped sachets are equally splendid, with the peony sachet as a representative. Peony sachets are designed to be noble and gorgeous, featuring large, plump petals in bright colors. As “King of Flowers”, the peony symbolizes wealth and auspiciousness, embodying people’s yearning for a better life. During production, artisans use various embroidery stitches and rich colors to vividly showcase the peony’s beauty and nobility.

Figure-shaped sachets are modeled on characters from myths, legends, and historical stories, exuding unique cultural charm. The Sun Wukong sachet, with its lively and agile image, is widely beloved.

Depicted as wearing a golden headband, holding a golden cudgel, and with piercing eyes, it embodies valiance. As a heroic figure in Chinese mythology, Sun Wukong represents wisdom, courage, power, and unyielding spirit. The Sun Wukong sachet is not just an ornament but also a tribute to bravery, wisdom, and justice.

#### 4.1.2 Structural design

Qingyang sachet is of ingenious and unique structural designs, mainly including single-unit structures and composite structures, each closely linked to the sachet's functions, aesthetics, and cultural implications. Single-unit sachets are complete and independent, often with simple shapes and practical functions. Common examples include fragrant pouches, typically round or square, filled with spices and decorated with embroidery. The round sachet's design emphasizes symmetry and integrity, with a plump shape symbolizing reunion and perfection. Artisans embroider auspicious patterns like dragons and phoenixes (symbolizing harmony) or blooming flowers (symbolizing wealth) on their surfaces. Square sachets are more regular and grand, focusing on practicality and stability. Their shape facilitates carrying and placement, with internal space to hold spices for long-lasting fragrance. Different patterns are embroidered on each of the four sides, echoing each other to form a unified artistic style. Composite-structure sachets consist of a main sachet combined with one or more subsidiary sachets, creating rich layers and diversity. The zodiac string sachet is a typical example, featuring multiple vividly shaped zodiac sachets connected in series.

#### 4.2 Colors

Qingyang sachet exhibit unique color usage, based on the three primary colors (red, yellow, cyan) and the two neutral colors (black and white), forming a distinct color system. This color scheme is not accidental but deeply influenced by Chinese traditional culture and local folk customs. Red, one of the primary colors, holds a central position in Qingyang sachet, symbolizing celebration, prosperity, and enthusiasm—reflecting people's yearning for a good life. Yellow symbolizes wealth, nobility, and the land, often used in auspicious patterns like dragons and phoenixes. Cyan, less commonly used, conveys freshness and tranquility, creating unique visual effects when paired with other colors. Black and white play important regulatory roles: black enhances the sachet's solemnity and depth, often used for outlining edges or patterns to make them clearer; white symbolizes purity and holiness, brightening the color palette.

Qingyang sachet is characterized with bold, high-contrast color schemes, fully showcasing the charm of folk art. Artisans often use complementary colors like red and green, or yellow and purple, to create visual impact. For example, the "Fushou Wawa" (patterned dolls symbolizing blessings and

longevity)sachet uses red as the main color for the doll's clothes and hat, embodying red's auspicious symbolism and people's longing for happiness. The green peach held by the doll symbolizes vitality and hope, representing both health and the continuation of longevity. The combination of red and green creates a strong contrast yet harmonious unity, conveying the wish for both fortune and longevity.

### 5. ANALYSIS OF QINGYANG SACHET'S SIGNIFIED

#### 5.1 Material-Level signified: practical functions

The practical functions of Qingyang sachet permeate all aspects of life, serving as insect repellents, evil wards, decorations, love tokens, and gifts. In terms of insect repellency, the spices filled inside—such as realgar, mugwort, and agastache—emit unique odors that effectively drive away mosquitoes and insects.

Evil warding is another key practical function. In traditional culture, sachets are widely believed to possess mysterious powers to dispel disasters. This belief stems from reverence for nature and the pursuit of a good life; people believe wearing sachets can fend off evil and pray for safety and health. During festivals like the Dragon Boat Festival, people wear the "Wu Du" sachet (shaped as a toad or frog or crabs with patterns of a poisonous combination of scorpions, centipedes, spiders, geckos), believing it can "combat poison with poison" to repel evil. This function embodies spiritual sustenance and reverence for the unknown.

As decorations, Qingyang sachet adds beauty to daily life. With its exquisite shapes, vibrant colors, and rich patterns, it holds high artistic values. It can be hung in living rooms or bedrooms as interior decorations, adding warmth and artistic flair to homes.

As love tokens and gifts, sachets serve as important carriers of emotional communication. In ancient times, sachets were often used as love tokens, a tradition that continues today in some regions where couples exchange sachets to express affection. They are also ideal gifts for relatives and friends, conveying blessings and care—for example, exchanged during the Dragon Boat Festival to wish for safety and health, or given at a child's full-month celebration to bless healthy growth.

#### 5.2 Institutional-level Signified: Norms and Traditions In Folk Culture

Qingyang sachet plays a vital role in folk culture, closely tied to traditional festivals and rituals as important carriers of folk culture. Wearing sachets has become an indispensable custom during the Dragon Boat Festival in Qingyang. This tradition originates from historical and cultural roots: the festival falls in summer, a time of heat, mosquitoes, and disease. Lacking methods of effective pest control and epidemic prevention in ancient times, people relied on sachets for protection. The herbs inside provided insect-repelling, evil-warding, and health-preserving effects. Wearing sachets also

symbolized praying for safety. Children wear various sachets, such as tiger-shaped ones (symbolizing courage to dispel evil) or the Wu Du sachet (to combat evil with poison). Passed down through generations, this custom embodies people's pursuit of a good life and health.

In marriage customs, Qingyang sachet carries significant cultural meanings as love tokens and dowry items. In ancient times, men and women expressed love by exchanging sachets; a woman accepting a sachet signified her acceptance of the man. This tradition continues today, with couples still exchanging sachets as symbols of love. At weddings, sachets are important dowry items: brides prepare exquisite sachets embroidered with auspicious patterns (like dragons and phoenixes for harmony or mandarin ducks for conjugal love) as gifts, symbolizing marital happiness. The use of sachets in marriage customs reflects cultural values and traditions surrounding love and family.

In birthday rituals, Qingyang sachet expresses respect and blessings for elders through longevity-themed designs, such as cranes and pine trees (symbols of longevity), hundred butterflies (symbolizing longevity and blessings), or the five blessings (longevity, wealth, health, virtue, and a good death). These sachets embody the Chinese tradition of respecting elders and wishing them long, healthy lives.

The use of sachets in these folk activities reflects deep cultural norms and traditions, embodying local lifestyles, values, and aesthetics. The Dragon Boat Festival custom reflects people's adaptation to the environment, emphasis on health, and inheritance of traditions; marriage customs reflect longings for love and family harmony; birthday rituals reflect traditional virtues of respecting elders and wishing them a health and long life.

### 5.3 Spiritual-Level Signified

#### 5.3.1 Totem worship and faith expression

"Located in China's northwest, in the Loess Plateau gully region of the Yellow River's middle reaches, Qingyang has been less influenced by external cultures. Its unique geographical position has endowed Qingyang sachet with a strong primitive charm, preserving much totemic culture" (Li, 2013: 134). Qingyang sachet contains rich elements with regard to totem worship, reflecting ancestors' reverence for natural forces, yearning for a good life. It demonstrates their faith. Totemic sachets featuring dragons, phoenixes, and tigers hold significant cultural roles as artistic creations and carriers of heritage.

As a Chinese national totem, the dragon symbolizes authority, auspiciousness, and holiness in Qingyang sachet. Often depicted as majestic, with a strong body, neat scales, and sharp claws, dragon sachets are used in important ceremonies like sacrifices or celebrations, where they are believed to bring good

luck and prosperity. In traditional rituals, dragon sachets may be placed before ancestral tablets to pray for blessings and family prosperity. This worship stems from ancient beliefs in the dragon's power to control weather and ensure harvests, making dragon sachets spiritual anchors for people's hopes.

The phoenix symbolizes beauty, nobility, and auspiciousness in Qingyang sachet, often portrayed as elegant, colorful, and feathery. Phoenix sachets are used to praise women's beauty and bless marriages, such as those worn by brides to symbolize beauty and happy unions. Linked to sun worship, the phoenix as a solar messenger represents light and hope, embodying people's pursuit of brightness.

These totemic sachets remain significant in modern society as parts of Chinese traditional culture, equipped with historical and cultural information that helps people understand ancient beliefs and lifestyles, while serving as emotional and symbolic tools.

#### 5.3.2 Emotional sustenance and beautiful visions

"Using symbolism to convey emotions and meanings is the primary cultural feature of Qingyang sachet" (Edited by Qingyang Cultural Publication Bureau & Qingyang Culture Center, 2012: 2-3). As unique folk art, Qingyang sachet bears people's rich emotions and aspirations. In love and marriage, it symbolizes affection and marital happiness—for example, the "Shuangyu Xi Lian" (two fishes swimming in water under the lotus) sachet, where the fish represents yin-yang harmony and love, and lotus symbolizes purity. This pattern blesses couples with sweet love and happy marriages, often gifted at weddings to reflect cultural ideals [7].

In terms of praying for safety, Qingyang sachet also embody people's beautiful wishes for security, reunion, harmony and good fortune. The "Suisui Pingan" (every year be safe) sachet is one of the representatives of this type. Such sachets are usually embroidered with words "Suisui Pingan" and patterns symbolizing safety, such as vases and Ruyi (a scepter representing good luck). The vase implies safety, while the Ruyi symbolizes smoothness and satisfaction. By wearing the "Suisui Pingan" sachet, people hope to stay away from disasters and lead a peaceful life. During traditional festivals like the Spring Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival, people wear or hang such sachets to pray for safety and good luck in the new year.

Qingyang sachet integrates people's emotional sustenance and beautiful visions by unique patterns and symbolic meanings. Whether sachets for love and marriage or those for praying for safety, they all bear people's yearning for and pursuit of a better life, becoming important anchors of the spiritual world. These sachets are not only artworks but also cultural inheritances, closely connecting the folk culture of the Qingyang area with people's emotions. They are passed down from generation to generation and remain indelible.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study employs Saussure's "signifier" and "signified" to deeply analyze Qingyang sachet as a unique folk cultural symbol, revealing its rich cultural connotations and unique artistic values from multiple dimensions.

At the signifier level, the shape and color of Qingyang sachet constitute its unique external symbolic system. In terms of shapes, sachets are diverse, including animals, plants, and figures. Each shape demonstrates unique artistic charm by artistic techniques such as exaggeration and deformation, embedding profound cultural implications. For example, the mighty shape of the tiger sachet symbolizes exorcism and protection. In terms of colors, Qingyang sachet is based on the three primary colors (red, yellow, cyan) and two neutral colors (black and white), with bold and high-contrast color schemes that emphasize harmony. These colors not only offer visual beauty but also embody the local people's emotions and cultural conceptions. For instance, the red-green color pairing in the "Fushou Wawa" sachet vividly conveys the wish for both happiness and longevity.

At the signified level, Qingyang sachet embodies profound cultural implications in material, institutional, and spiritual dimensions. Materially, sachets serve practical functions such as insect repellence, evil warding, decoration, love tokens, and gifts, meeting diverse needs in daily life. During the Dragon Boat Festival, its insect-repelling and evil-warding functions are highlighted as people wear them to prevent diseases and pray for safety; in love and marriage, sachets act as love tokens to convey deep affection. Institutionally, Qingyang sachet is closely linked to local folk culture, serving as important carriers of folk traditions. Customs such as wearing sachets during the Dragon Boat Festival, using them as love tokens and dowry in weddings, and gifting longevity-themed sachets at birthday ceremonies reflect rich cultural norms and embody people's lifestyles, values, and aesthetic tastes.

Spiritually, Qingyang sachet illustrates totem worship and faith expressions—totemic sachets like dragons and phoenixes symbolize authority and auspiciousness, reflecting reverence for natural forces and wishing for a better life. They also embody people's emotional sustenance and beautiful visions: the "Shuangyu Xi Lian" sachet expresses sweet love, while the "Suisui Pingan" sachet conveys a prayer for safety.

This study might contribute to a profound understanding of Qingyang sachet's high cultural and artistic values as a unique folk cultural symbol. However, it merely analyzes a selection of representative sachets, and future research could expand to more cases of sachets.

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# A Review of Research on English Derived Pseudowords

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**Abstract:** English derived pseudowords are a crucial tool in linguistics, cognitive psychology, and second language acquisition research, used to explore mechanisms of morphological processing, morphological awareness in L2 learners, and the underlying neural cognitive basis. This paper integrates and synthesizes nine key studies, analyzing their research questions, methodologies, and conclusions. It examines both the consistent findings across studies and the existing disagreements, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state and future directions of derived pseudoword research in English language learning and cognitive studies.

**Keywords:** Derived Pseudowords, Morphological Awareness, Morphological Processing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Derived pseudowords represent a specific linguistic phenomenon, such as the examples "drimbful" and "lamply," which are pseudowords created by combining legitimate affixes (like "-ful", "-ly") with either fictional or real word root (like "drimb," "lamp"). They are widely used to investigate: (1) Morphological decomposition strategies of native and second language speakers; (2) The temporal course of affix processing; (3) The impact of linguistic level on morphological awareness. Furthermore, serving as a key tool for morphology, second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, and neurolinguistics, derived pseudowords reveal core mechanisms of language processing. By controlling morphological structure and non-semantic or weak semantic association, they provide insights into fundamental processes. In the context of English language learning and cognitive studies, they enable researchers to gain a deeper understanding of learners' cognitive processing regarding morphological structure, stress rules (such as the stress placement of neutral/non-neutral suffixes), semantic inference, and related aspects. Based on nine experimental studies, this paper reviews the current core findings and controversies, aiming to provide a theoretical reference for future research.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 2.1 Morpheme and stress awareness

In the field of second language derived word acquisition, multiple studies have focused on English learners' morpheme and stress awareness regarding derived pseudowords. Firstly, Li (2018) conducted

research on English learners to examine whether they possess morpheme and stress awareness, and delved into the relationship between these two types of awareness and English proficiency levels [7]. Similarly, Chung and Jarmulowicz (2017) shifted their focus to adult English learners whose native language is Mandarin (AELs) [3], exploring their judgment and production abilities concerning English derived word stress (e.g., neutral suffixes like -ness versus non-neutral suffixes like "-ity"), as well as the relationship between these abilities and English word reading skills (real word recognition and pseudoword decoding). They paid particular attention to the impact of cross-linguistic prosodic differences (Chinese tones vs. English stress) on second language acquisition. These two studies collectively established the foundational role of morpheme and stress awareness in derived word processing, providing important theoretical starting points for subsequent research.

### 2.2 Differences in identification processing

Building upon the aforementioned research, Li et al. (2019) further expanded the research dimensions by shifting the focus to differences in identification processing [8]. This study sampled high-level English learners whose native language is Chinese, examining whether there are differences in the identification processing of prefix- and suffix-derived pseudowords, and exploring the association between these differences and English proficiency levels.

### 2.3 Contextual understanding and morphological knowledge

When the research perspective shifts from the internal mechanisms of morphological processing to the role of external context, Laufer's (2024) study holds significant importance [6]. This research focuses on the comprehension process of derived pseudowords within textual context, investigating whether a complete understanding of morphemes is required for comprehending such vocabulary. It further explores the relationship between derived word comprehension and learner proficiency levels, as well as the relationship with contextual cues. This study combines morphological knowledge with context dependence, providing empirical evidence for revealing how second language learners integrate morphological information with contextual cues in real language environments.

### 2.4 Morphological knowledge and processing mechanisms

In the existing literature, over half of the studies have centered on morphological processing mechanisms, forming the core research trajectory in this field. Deng et al. (2016) utilized Event-Related Potentials (ERPs) to investigate the influence of morphological knowledge on the processing of second language derived words, specifically focusing on whether adult second language learners employ decomposition mechanisms when processing derived words and which factors might influence their processing patterns [4]. Special attention was paid to the relationship between second language morphological knowledge and the online processing of morphologically complex words. Following the research path of morphological decomposition mechanisms, Beyersmann et al. (2011) specifically addressed two key questions [1]: Firstly, whether morphological decomposition is independent of lexicality and semantic association, i.e., whether it can still be triggered under non-word priming conditions (e.g., combining a transposed letter non-word stem with a real word suffix, such as "wranish"); Secondly, whether morphological decomposition occurs at the early stage of lexical identification (pre-lexical stage) and is synchronized with letter position encoding mechanisms. Subsequently, Beyersmann et al. (2016) further validated a core hypothesis of the morphological orthographic theory [2]. Through experimental designs, they demonstrated that the orthographic structure of affixes can trigger automatic decomposition, strongly refuting the criticism by Baayen et al. (2011) that the priming effect of pseudo-suffixes originates from implicit semantic functions. This study not only continued the exploration of the independence of the decomposition mechanism but also, through empirical data, supported the orthographic basis of morphological decomposition, thereby refining theoretical models of morphological processing. From a cross-linguistic perspective, Li, Taft, and Xu (2017) focused on bilinguals [9], analyzing their sensitivity to morphological processing of English derived words, exploring the relationship between this sensitivity and English proficiency levels as well as cross-linguistic influences. Notably, Kemp (2006) shifted the research focus to the child population [5], examining whether they utilize morphological relationships when spelling base words, inflectional words, and derived words, and investigating how morphological awareness (the cognitive understanding of morpheme structure) influences their spelling abilities.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

#### 3.1 Lexical judgment and masked priming tasks

In empirical research on second language derived word processing, the lexical judgment task and masked priming experiment represent the most core methodological frameworks. These methods systematically examine learners' cognitive processing

mechanisms for morphologically complex words by manipulating the presence or absence of morpheme structures and the type of prime word. Firstly, in Experiment 1 of his study, Li (2018) employed a lexical judgment task using pseudo-derived words and designed 120 real words as fillers [7], asking participants to identify and judge pseudo-derived words with and without morpheme structures. Building on this foundation, Li et al. (2019) further expanded the methodology [8]. In Experiment 1, they used a masked priming experiment task, selecting pairs of real words and pseudo-words as experimental materials to investigate the priming effect of prefixes/suffixes on their root words. Experiment 2 returned to the lexical judgment task, requiring participants to make lexical judgments regarding pseudo-derived words with morpheme structures (bearing prefixes or suffixes) and their corresponding pseudo-derived words without morpheme structures, comparing the processing differences between the two.

Following the masked priming paradigm, Beyersmann et al. (2011) employed two consecutive experiments comparing the priming effect of transformational letter (TL) pseudo-words (e.g., "wranish") with a substitution letter (SL) control condition (e.g., "whunish") on target words (e.g., "WARN") [1]. Experiment 1 validated the priming effect of monomorphemic TL pseudo-words. Experiment 2 further combined TL pseudo-words with real suffixes (e.g., "-ish") or pseudo-ends (e.g., "-el") to distinguish whether morphological decomposition depends on the presence of affixes. This study analyzed reaction times and error rates using linear mixed-effects models, controlling for variables (e.g., letter position frequency), to ensure the robustness of the results. Beyersmann et al. (2016) employed a masked priming lexical judgment task [2], comparing the facilitatory effects of three types of primes (genuine suffix words like "hunter-HUNT", fully semantically opaque pseudo-suffix words like "corner-CORN", and non-suffix control words like "cashew-CASH") on base word recognition. Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) was used to screen for pseudo-suffix words with no semantic association, and variables such as word frequency and orthographic overlap were matched. Reaction times and error rates were analyzed using a linear mixed-effects model (LMM), controlling for random effects of participants and items. Finally, Li, Taft, and Xu (2017) used a lexical judgment task in Experiment 2 to construct 30 suffix-bearing pseudo-words (e.g., "animalful") and 30 control pseudo-words (e.g., "animalfil"), along with 15 derived words and 15 prefix words or monomorphemic words as distractors [9]. This study examined the differences in recognition between bilinguals for suffix-bearing pseudo-words and non-suffix-bearing pseudo-words, assessing their



morphological decomposition ability.

### 3.2 Reading aloud task, auditory judgment task, and spelling task

In addition to visual processing tasks such as lexical judgment and masked priming, reading aloud tasks, auditory judgment tasks, and spelling tasks also play a significant role in derived word processing research. In empirical studies on stress awareness, Li's (2018) Experiment 2 replicated and improved upon the experimental tasks of Wade-Woolley and Heggie (2015) [7]. Participants were asked to read aloud pseudo-derived words constructed with neutral or non-neutral suffixes to investigate their stress awareness. This task established clear stress judgment criteria: the stress position of neutral suffixes had to align with that of the suffixless pseudo-words, while non-neutral suffixes required stress on the syllable preceding the affix. This systematically examined learners' prosodic processing abilities for different types of suffixes, providing behavioral data support for the interaction between morpheme structure and phonological representation.

Unlike the stress processing research on adult learners, Kemp's (2006) Experiment 2 involved 75 fourth and fifth-grade students as participants [5]. Based on their WORD spelling subtest scores, they were divided into groups with varying spelling abilities. The study used 48 monosyllabic base pseudo-words containing long vowels and final /z/ sounds, which were ambiguous in spelling, and transformed them into experimental pseudo-words by adding suffixes. These were presented in three different types of sentence contexts for participants to complete spelling tasks. At the same time, analogy tasks were used to measure students' morphological awareness, exploring how children utilized base pseudo-words to spell inflectional and derived words and the relationship between this process and their morphological awareness. Meanwhile, Chung and Jarmulowicz (2017) constructed a model linking stress ability to lexical reading in adult learners [3]. Their study employed a mixed-task design: first, an auditory judgment task (distinguishing stress patterns of pseudo-words with neutral/non-neutral suffixes) and a derived word generation task (correctly pronouncing the stress position of the root + suffix) were used to assess prosodic processing abilities. Simultaneously, the Woodcock Reading Test was employed to measure lexical identification and pseudo-word decoding abilities, while working memory tests and standardized vocabulary assessments were used to control for individual differences.

### 3.3 Semantic comprehension tests

Laufer (2024) designed an experiment that provided key evidence for the interaction between morphological knowledge and contextual cues [6]. The study involved English learners from three grade levels with varying proficiency, who were asked to

provide definitions for 22 derived word pseudo-words formed by non-word stems and 22 common affixes (e.g., "stacency", "gummmful") under three cue conditions (no cues, syntactic cues, syntactic and semantic cues). By comparing test performance, the study analyzed the factors influencing comprehension.

### 3.4 Event-Related Potentials (ERPs)

When exploring the real-time neural mechanisms of second language derived word processing, Deng et al. (2016) employed event-related potential (ERP) technology [4]. In their study, 80 correct derived words (e.g., "statement") and 80 pseudo-words (e.g., "stateness") were embedded into semantically plausible sentences, and participants were asked to read the sentences. Using morphological knowledge tests (including derived word generation and judgment tasks), 36 participants were divided into high- and low-morphological knowledge groups (18 per group). Finally, the N400 (300–500 ms, reflecting semantic integration) and P600 (600–900 ms, reflecting rule detection) components were recorded to compare the neural response differences between the two groups in the processing of pseudo-derived words.

## 4. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 Morphology and stress awareness

At the basic processing level of second language derived words, research has established important conclusions regarding morphology and stress awareness. Li (2018) found that English learners possess morphological awareness [7], which is unrelated to their English proficiency level, whereas stress awareness is significantly correlated with English proficiency. Chung and Jarmulowicz (2017) further refined the differences in suffix type processing for stress [3]. Their study found that learners could effectively judge (with accuracy significantly above chance level) and produce the stress in English derived words, but the production accuracy for non-neutral suffixes (e.g., "-ity") was significantly lower than that for neutral suffixes (e.g., "-ment"). Stress judgment for non-neutral derived words independently predicted real word recognition, while the production ability for neutral suffixes significantly predicted real word and pseudo-word decoding. These results indicate that learners rely on lexical storage to process stress rules for non-neutral suffixes, differing from the automatic morphological-prosodic calculation mechanism of native speakers, highlighting the challenges in acquiring prosodic cues during second language acquisition.

### 4.2 Differences in identification processing

At the specific processing level of morphological decomposition, Li et al. (2019) pointed out that high-level English learners exhibited morphological decomposition processes in identifying both prefix and suffix-derived words [8], but prefix identification

was found to be more difficult than suffix identification. Furthermore, prefix processing was related to English proficiency, whereas suffix processing was unrelated to English proficiency.

#### 4.3 Contextual understanding and morphological knowledge

At this level, Laufer's (2024) research results showed that both learner proficiency and contextual cues influenced the understanding of derived word pseudo-words [6]. The addition of syntactic cues significantly improved comprehension scores. Even when learners' receptive morphological knowledge was incomplete, they could understand the forms of derived words from familiar bases.

#### 4.4 Morphological knowledge and processing mechanisms

In the study of deep-level morphological processing mechanisms, experiments from different perspectives have provided multi-dimensional evidence for "how morphological knowledge modulates the processing of second language derived words." Firstly, Deng et al.'s (2016) ERP study found that the high-morphological knowledge group exhibited a significant P600 response to pseudo-derived words [4], indicating sensitivity to rule violations and the application of rule-based decomposition. In contrast, the low-morphological knowledge group showed a significant N400, suggesting that this group relied more on whole-word processing mechanisms. Therefore, morphological knowledge is a key variable in regulating the neural mechanisms of L2 derived word processing, with high-level learners tending towards rule-driven processing similar to that of native speakers. Meanwhile, Beyersmann et al.'s (2011) masked priming study found that TL non-words with affixes facilitated the identification of the stem target word [1], whereas TL non-words without affixes did not, indicating that affix stripping occurs automatically in the pre-lexical visual word recognition stage and is unrelated to semantics. Concurrently, morphological decomposition is based on early automatic affix identification, with morphemic structure and letter position coding occurring at the same stage before lexical access.

Beyersmann et al. (2016) further found that both real affixes and fully semantically opaque pseudo-affixes significantly facilitated target word identification (priming effects of 25 ms and 23 ms, respectively), whereas control (non-affix) conditions showed no effect [2]. These results support the automatism of the morpho-orthographic decomposition mechanism in early lexical identification, operating without semantic involvement and challenging the theoretical claim that "morphological effects depend on semantic association" (e.g., NDR model), thereby reinforcing the plausibility of the affix stripping hypothesis. At the cross-linguistic dimension, Li, Taft, and Xu (2017) found in Experiment 2 that all bilingual groups exhibited longer reaction times and higher error rates

in conditions with derived word pseudo-words compared to control conditions, indicating that Chinese-English bilinguals possess general sensitivity to the morphological structure of English derived words [9]. However, this sensitivity is modulated by second language proficiency and influenced by the cross-linguistic effects of the native orthographic system. Finally, Kemp's (2006) Experiment 2 demonstrated that children aged 7-9 could recognize and utilize the morphological links between base pseudo-words (e.g., "mease", "taise") and their inflectional/derived forms (e.g., "meased", "taiser") for spelling. Specifically, children retained the /z/ spelling when given base pseudo-word prompts as they did when directly copying the inflectional/derived forms [5]. Additionally, children's performance on oral morphological analogy tasks effectively predicted the accuracy of retaining morphological relationships in their spelling. The study also found that the derived relationship is not necessarily harder to understand than the inflectional relationship, contrary to some spelling models.

### 5. CONSENSUS VIEWS

#### 5.1 The influence of English proficiency on processing mechanisms is selective

Stress awareness (Li, 2018) [7], prefix processing (Li et al., 2019), and levels of morphological knowledge (Deng et al., 2016) were all significantly correlated with English proficiency [4,8]. This indicates that high-level learners perform closer to native speakers in rule-driven processing mechanisms (such as morphological decomposition and stress judgment).

Low-level learners may rely on whole-word storage or semantic associations (e.g., the N400 effect in the low-morphological knowledge group, Deng et al., 2016 [4]; the reliance on lexical storage for the stress production of non-neutral suffixes, Chung & Jarmulowicz, 2017) [3].

#### 5.2 The universality and automaticity of morphological decomposition

Both for real words and pseudo-words, learners (including high-level learners and children) demonstrate sensitivity to morphological structure (e.g., Li et al., 2019; Beyersmann et al., 2011, 2016; Kemp, 2006)[1,2,5,8]. For example, affix stripping can occur automatically in the pre-lexical stage of visual word recognition and does not require semantic involvement (Beyersmann et al.). The sensitivity of bilinguals to the morphology of derived words is also reflected in their reaction times and error rates (Li, Taft & Xu, 2017) [9].

Children can use morphological links (even for the derived or inflectional forms of pseudo-words) for spelling (Kemp, 2006) [5], indicating that the ability for morphological decomposition has a certain degree of universality.

#### 5.3 Differences in processing between suffixes and prefixes

Suffix processing (especially for neutral suffixes, such as -ment) is relatively independent of English proficiency (Li et al., 2019; Chung & Jarmulowicz, 2017) [3,8], whereas prefix processing is more sensitive to proficiency, and prefix-derived words are harder to identify than suffix-derived words (Li et al., 2019) [8].

## 6. CURRENT DISAGREEMENT

### 6.1 The relationship between morphological awareness and English proficiency

Li (2018) argued that morphological awareness is little affected by English proficiency, with only stress awareness showing a correlation with level [7]. However, Deng et al. (2016) pointed out that morphological knowledge (which includes the ability for morphological decomposition) is a key variable in regulating processing mechanisms [4]. Their study found that the high-morphological knowledge group relied more on rule-driven decomposition (P600 effect), while the low group relied on whole-word processing (N400 effect). The disagreement between these two perspectives may stem from differences in the definitions of “morphological awareness” and “morphological knowledge”: the former may focus on basic identification abilities, whereas the latter emphasizes deeper rule application abilities.

### 6.2 Processing mechanisms for non-neutral suffixes

Chung & Jarmulowicz (2017) found that learners had low accuracy in producing stress for non-neutral suffixes (such as “-ity”), relying on lexical storage rather than automatic morpho-prosodic computation (differing from native speakers) [3]. In contrast, Beyersmann et al. (2016) argued that affix stripping (including pseudo-affixes that are completely semantically opaque) occurs automatically in the early stage and does not require semantic involvement [2]. While these two findings do not directly contradict each other, the former focuses on stress rules, and the latter focuses on morphological decomposition, highlighting the separation between prosodic and morphological processing.

### 6.3 The difficulty of derivational vs. inflectional relationships

Traditional spelling models assume that derivational relationships are more difficult than inflectional relationships. However, Kemp (2006) found that children demonstrated comparable abilities in processing the morphological links of both types, with no significant evidence that derivational relationships were harder [5]. This challenged the traditional assumption, suggesting that the morphological transparency of derivational and inflectional forms may influence processing difficulty, rather than the category itself.

### 6.4 Whether Morphological Effects Depend on Semantic Association

Beyersmann et al. (2016) found that pseudo-affixes (which are semantically opaque) could still facilitate the identification of target words [2], supporting the

claim that “morphological - orthographic decomposition does not require semantic involvement.” This directly challenges the theoretical claim that “morphological effects depend on semantic association” (e.g., the Neighborhood Density Reduction (NDR) model). In contrast, Deng et al. (2016) observed that the low-morphological knowledge group relied on whole-word processing (which may involve semantic memory), indicating the role of semantic association in low-level processing [4]. This disagreement reflects the differences in semantic dependence among learners at different proficiency levels.

## 7. SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

Overall, research on derived pseudowords has yielded certain achievements in multiple aspects, including morphological and stress awareness, differences in processing mechanisms, contextual understanding, and processing dynamics. However, there remain disagreements and limitations in existing studies. Future research could further expand sample sizes to encompass learners of different ages, English proficiency levels, and linguistic backgrounds. Experimental designs should be optimized by integrating multiple research methods to more comprehensively investigate the processing of derived pseudowords.

Furthermore, it is essential to delve deeper into the interactive mechanisms among factors such as morphological awareness, stress awareness, and morphological knowledge, as well as their practical applications in language learning and teaching. Additionally, more advanced technological means, such as brain imaging techniques, could be employed to uncover the cognitive processing of derived pseudowords at the neural level. By continuously refining and expanding research in these areas, we can better understand the cognitive patterns of English learners in processing derived pseudowords, thereby providing more targeted guidance for English teaching and learning.

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# A Research of Love in Song Lyrics on Martinich's Pragmatic Theory of Metaphor

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**Abstract:** On Martinich's Pragmatic Theory of Metaphor, this research conducts an in-depth corpus analysis of the top 20 lyrics of the Hot 100 Songs on USA Billboard in 2023. Based on the theory of Martinich, this research focuses on the salience, relevance and truth-conditional presupposition--three prerequisites--to analyze lyrics' metaphors of love, aiming to reveal the profound expression of the love conveyed behind the linguistic form. Through detailed data analysis, this study finds that the metaphors in the lyrics mainly revolve around two core concepts of love: first, empirical love, which stems from the physical proximity and physical interaction of lovers; and second, cultural love, which is based on one lover's possession of and identification with another lover. These two concepts are intertwined in the lyrics, forming a rich and complex network of metaphors.

**Keywords:** Martinich; Pragmatic Theory of Metaphor; Lyrics Metaphor; Love

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Popular music has emerged as a global cultural phenomenon that transcends national borders, languages, and cultures. It exerts a unique allure and profoundly shapes both people's daily lives and their inner worlds. As the primary vehicle for conveying emotion and meaning in song, lyrics are typically crafted in a manner readily accessible to listeners, thereby ensuring that themes and moods are easily apprehended. Yet in certain instances, lyricists employ more poetically rich language to heighten interest or to evoke imagery, and when literal expression proves insufficient, metaphors often serve as an auxiliary device. Beyond the straightforward communication of feeling and intent, metaphorical language in lyrics invites deeper reflection and resonance, endows songs with an additional aesthetic dimension, and opens up space for imaginative and multiple interpretations--ultimately rendering the music more engaging while granting listeners greater conceptual latitude.

Romantic love has long been a central preoccupation of many popular songs. As Starr and Waterman observe, this tendency first emerged during America's Tin Pan Alley era of the 1920s and '30s and persisted through the 1940s and '50s, a period marked by exponential growth in the entertainment industry--annual record sales in the United States rose from \$191 million in 1951 to \$514 million in 1959. 0 Indeed, the commercial imperative driving popular-music creation is evident in its capacity to evoke the sensation of

falling in (or out of) love, a theme with universal appeal across audience demographics. However, as Machin notes, "it is clear that love songs have undergone change over the years, and one would therefore expect that, in relation to discourses around gender and sexuality, they reflect wider cultural shifts."0 Despite the linguistic significance of popular-music lyrics, they have historically received scant attention from linguists. Although there has been an uptick in empirical studies in recent years, analyses of metaphor in popular-song discourse remain rare, especially from a pragmatic standpoint. Metaphor plays a crucial role in apprehending the experience and significance of emotions--such as love--primarily because "a large part of our understanding of emotion appears to be based on metaphor".0

The present study aims to examine the top twenty entries on Billboard's Hot 100 Songs chart for 2023, analyzing their lyrics within Martinich's pragmatic framework of metaphor theory. Its goal is to uncover how metaphors in these songs extend our understanding and experience of love and emotional life.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In linguistics, metaphor is not merely a rhetorical device but a profound cognitive mechanism through which individuals perceive and make sense of the world. Martinich's theory of pragmatic metaphor offers a novel perspective for examining and interpreting metaphorical phenomena. In his seminal works 00, Martinich explores the semantic functions of metaphor from a pragmatic standpoint, arguing that metaphor should not be confined to the semantic level; rather, it operates as a pragmatic mechanism and serves as the source of metaphorical meaning.0 Following the foundational theories of metaphor proposed by Grice and Searle, Martinich's framework constitutes a third influential model within the field of pragmatics.0 According to Martinich, context--conceived as the container of meaning--is closely intertwined with the relevance of perceived relationships. It profoundly shapes both the speaker's linguistic choices and the listener's interpretation of discourse.0

Sun Yi notes that Martinich's theory of pragmatic metaphor builds upon Grice's maxim of relevance while proposing a more flexible approach to the maxim of quality.0 In Grice's framework, the maxim of quality requires speakers to provide information that is truthful and well-founded. However, Martinich

argues that this constraint can hinder both the generation and comprehension of metaphor. By relaxing this maxim, Martinich creates greater interpretive latitude for metaphor, thereby offering a more comprehensive account of how metaphor functions in communication.

Martinich further distinguishes between *standard* and *non-standard* metaphors, situating metaphorical language within specific contextual categories. *Standard metaphors* are defined fundamentally as those that violate the maxim of quality. In other words, these metaphors are literally untrue, yet they convey meaning or information within the communicative act. Such metaphors are pervasive in everyday language and often involve novel or figurative descriptions of things. Understanding them requires the hearer to possess a degree of contextual knowledge and inferential capacity to grasp the speaker's intended meaning. For example, in the sentence "He is a sun," the literal interpretation is clearly false-no human can be the sun. Yet in this context, "sun" operates metaphorically, potentially signifying warmth, vitality, or central importance. The hearer must draw upon contextual clues to unpack the metaphor's intended implications. Compared to non-standard metaphors, standard metaphors are typically more recognizable and accessible. Their structural deviation from literal language often signals to the listener that a metaphor is in play, thus prompting interpretive reflection. *Non-standard metaphors*, by contrast, are those that remain literally true. These expressions do not violate the maxim of quality because their surface descriptions are accurate. Nonetheless, within specific contexts, they may acquire additional metaphorical meanings. The comprehension of non-standard metaphors is more cognitively demanding, as it requires the hearer to negotiate both literal truth and figurative implication. A representative example is the statement "He is a screw." Literally, this can be considered true in metaphorical usage, referring to someone who plays a crucial role within a machine or system. However, depending on the context, the phrase might also imply that the person is monotonous or lacks creativity. Decoding non-standard metaphors demands greater contextual sensitivity and inferential effort, as their meanings are often more subtle and implicit, relying heavily on background knowledge and discourse environment for interpretation.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to conduct a more in-depth analysis of metaphorical phenomena in the lyrics-and to comprehensively explore the linguistic forms, pragmatic strategies, and communicative functions of these metaphors-this study aims to uncover the deeper expressions of love conveyed through such language. Based on this aim, the study formulates the following two core research questions:

(1) Martinich posits that metaphor is a pragmatic rather than semantic phenomenon. How, then, are

metaphors employed in pop song lyrics to express meaning and emotion through contextual cues?

(2) How does metaphorical salience manifest through specific linguistic strategies in lyrics, enabling metaphors to stand out and evoke listener attention and resonance?

To investigate metaphorical language in song lyrics, this study draws its data from the lyrics of the top 20 songs listed in the 2023 Hot 100 Songs as published on the official website of Billboard in the United States. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, authoritative sources were used, and the data underwent careful selection and processing.

Specifically, the research began by downloading the lyrics of the top 20 songs from the *2023 Hot 100 Songs* chart on the official Billboard website. Each lyric was then analyzed line by line to identify and annotate instances of metaphorical expression. Based on the characteristics of these metaphors, a classification was conducted. The identified metaphors were further examined in relation to the songs' overarching themes and emotional contexts, with the aim of exploring their pragmatic functions and how they contribute to the emotional expression of the lyrics. In addition, each metaphorical sentence was interpreted and evaluated to uncover its actual communicative function and its potential resonance with listeners. A more in-depth analysis was conducted regarding the distribution and frequency of metaphorical expressions, as well as the roles of *salience*, *relevance*, and *truth-conditional grounding*. This involved quantifying the proportion of metaphorical sentences in the overall corpus, analyzing their distribution across different thematic categories, and investigating how salience, relevance, and the presuppositional basis for metaphor interact and influence one another in the interpretive process.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Context and metaphor in song lyrics

In Martinich's theory of pragmatic metaphor, metaphor is regarded not as a semantic phenomenon but as a pragmatic one. The meaning of a metaphor emerges as the result of inferential analysis within conversational implicature, rather than as the basis for the metaphor's possibility. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of metaphorical expressions in the lyrics of each song in the dataset. As shown, metaphorical content accounts for an average of 30% of the lyrics, confirming the prominent role metaphor plays in songwriting. Notably, songs within the country music genre exhibit the highest proportion of metaphorical language, averaging 40.5%. This finding may be attributed to the distinctive emotional expression and thematic patterns typical of country music. Originating in the southern United States in the 1920s and evolving from British folk traditions, country music is considered a hallmark of white American folk culture. Its defining characteristics include simple melodies, steady rhythms, narrative structure, a strong rural sensibility, and a tone that is both intimate and

emotively expressive, while still maintaining popular appeal.

The notion that metaphor must be interpreted and analyzed within its specific context to ensure accurate and appropriate meaning is clearly reflected in the lyrics of contemporary pop songs.<sup>0</sup> Among the 17 love-themed songs in this study, 9 are centered on the motif of heartbreak. Consider, for example, several of the songs with the highest density of metaphorical expressions. Ranked 19th, Morgan Wallen's *Thinkin' Bout Me* narrates a man's longing and emotional attachment to his lover, reflecting a persistent emotional inquiry within the relationship. Ranked 13th, Zach Bryan's *Something In The Orange*, a melancholic ballad, explores the sorrow of separation, deepened through references to concrete images and shared memories: dusk approaches, the light fades, and the speaker struggles to hold on. Bailey Zimmerman's *Rock and a Hard Place*, ranked 16th, presents a man facing the imminent end of a relationship, using the metaphor of being "caught between a rock and a hard

place" to evoke a sense of emotional entrapment. Meanwhile, SZA's *Snooze*, ranked 9th, reminisces about the dizzying feeling of falling in love, before shifting to a more vulnerable emotional space in its closing lines: "How you threatenin' to leave and I'm the main one cryin'?"

Within these specific emotional and narrative contexts, metaphor not only intensifies the emotional resonance of the lyrics but also facilitates a deeper understanding of the song's themes and sentiments for listeners. The use of metaphor is tightly interwoven with each song's emotional tone. For instance, in songs focused on heartbreak, metaphors often carry connotations of sorrow and pain. In contrast, songs centered on themes of self-love tend to use metaphors that convey positive emotions related to self-growth and personal redemption. These emotional undertones, fused with metaphorical language, enrich the expressive depth of the songs, rendering their affective power more layered and compelling.

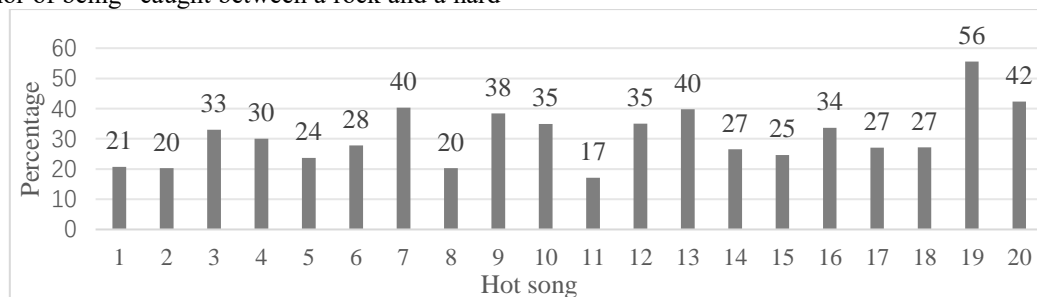


Figure 1 The proportion of metaphorical lyrics in the top 20 songs on the Billboard Hot 100 songs

#### 4.2 The three necessary conditions and metaphors in song lyrics

This study draws on the categorization of love-related metaphors in song lyrics as proposed by Salvador Climent and Marta Coll-Florit, dividing metaphors into ten conceptual types: LOVE IS CLOSENESS, THE OBJECT OF LOVE IS A SMALL CHILD, LOVE IS POSSESSION, THE HEART IS THE

CONTAINER OF LOVE, LOVE IS UNITY, THE OBJECT OF LOVE IS APPETIZING FOOD, LOVE IS PHYSICAL CONTACT, LOVE IS A PLACE, LOVE IS BONDAGE, and LOVE IS A JOURNEY.<sup>0</sup> Based on this classification, the identified metaphors in the corpus were systematically categorized and quantified. The detailed distribution is presented in Table 1.

Number	Conceptual Types	Total
1	LOVE IS POSSESSION	11
2	LOVE IS PHYSICAL CONTACT	10
3	LOVE IS CLOSENESS	9
4	THE OBJECT OF LOVE IS A SMALL CHILD	8
5	THE HEART IS THE CONTAINER OF LOVE	7
6	LOVE IS UNITY	7
7	LOVE IS BONDAGE	6
8	THE OBJECT OF LOVE IS APPETIZING FOOD	5
9	LOVE IS A JOURNEY	3
10	LOVE IS A PLACE	2

Table 1 10 conceptual types in the top 20 songs on Billboard Hot 100 songs

##### 4.2.1 Salience and metaphor in lyrics

Salience refers to the degree to which a particular concept or attribute involved in a metaphor is highlighted within a given context. In metaphorical

expressions, speakers often foreground a specific aspect or property while downplaying or omitting others, thereby directing the listener's attention toward the emphasized feature and eliciting corresponding

associations and imaginative responses. In song lyrics, salience is typically achieved through specific linguistic strategies that render the metaphor more prominent, drawing listeners' attention and evoking emotional resonance.

i. Enhancing salience through direct description:

When lyrics employ explicit and emotionally charged language to describe a particular feeling or state, the salience of the metaphor is significantly intensified. For example, in metaphors categorized under LOVE IS POSSESSION, lines such as "I know where you ought to be" or "If I can't have you, no one should" articulate an overt sense of possessiveness. This level of directness amplifies the metaphor's prominence and readily triggers empathetic responses from listeners.

ii. Using vivid and concrete imagery to realize metaphors:

Metaphor serves as a powerful linguistic device by linking abstract concepts with concrete images, thereby making the metaphor more vivid and tangible. For instance, when a romantic partner is compared to a type of food - "Girl, you sweet like Fanta, Fanta"-the metaphor not only becomes more animated but also engages the listener's sensory experience, thus intensifying their emotional connection to the lyrics.

#### 4.2.2 Relevance and metaphor in song lyrics

Relevance refers to the degree of connection between a metaphor and the subject matter or contextual background in which it is embedded. In metaphorical expressions, the speaker draws associations between seemingly disparate entities, thereby enabling the listener to establish cross-domain mappings that facilitate metaphor comprehension.

i. Deepening thematic understanding:

Metaphors can bridge the gap between the thematic core of a song and the listener's everyday experiences, rendering abstract or complex ideas more tangible and accessible.

(1) Cut the headlights, summer's a knife. (from *Cruel Summer*)

In this line, the metaphor links "cutting headlights" with "summer's a knife," capturing the emotional anguish and disillusionment experienced during a doomed summer romance. The juxtaposition of a cheerful melody with this poignant imagery encapsulates the pain of unattainable love, suggesting that summer-typically associated with vitality-is here reimagined as something sharp and wounding.

ii. Triggering emotional resonance:

Metaphors often carry strong emotional overtones. By projecting emotion onto concrete objects or scenarios through figurative language and symbolism, they evoke emotional responses in the listener.

(2) Last night we let the liquor talk. (from *Last Night*)

Here, the metaphor personifies "liquor," attributing it the human ability to "talk." This reflects a widely shared social experience in which alcohol facilitates emotional expression and interpersonal communication, thereby fostering a sense of intimacy

or vulnerability.

iii. Enhancing artistic expression:

The use of metaphor requires creativity and imagination. Such artistic treatment enhances the aesthetic dimension of lyrics by introducing novel comparisons and vivid imagery. These metaphorical constructions not only elevate the artistic value of the song but also increase its emotional appeal and expressive power.

iv. Enriching emotional background:

Metaphors help construct the emotional backdrop and atmospheric setting of a song, providing listeners with a more vivid and immersive emotional environment.

(3) The distance and the time between us. (from *Die for You*)

By conceptualizing love as a journey or spatial distance, this metaphor creates a dynamic and purposeful emotional landscape. It allows listeners to engage more deeply with the emotional narrative, enhancing immersion into the song's affective world.

#### 4.2.3 Truth-conditional presuppositions and metaphor in song lyrics

Within Martínich's pragmatic theory of metaphor, the notion of truth-conditional presuppositions refers to the contextual and background knowledge upon which metaphor interpretation depends. Such presuppositions are essential for the comprehension of metaphorical meaning.

To begin with, the interpretation of each metaphor requires not only an understanding of its literal and figurative dimensions but also familiarity with the contextual and cultural background in which it is embedded. For instance, in the metaphor LOVE IS POSSESSION, lyrics such as "Girl, I know where you ought to be" and "If I can't have you, no one should, I might" convey a sense of exclusivity and possessiveness in romantic relationships. The interpretation of this metaphor relies heavily on shared social cognition and cultural conceptions of love and ownership.

Similarly, in the metaphor LOVE IS PHYSICAL CONTACT, expressions like "I kiss your lips" and "And your arm felt nice wrapped around my shoulder" evoke specific scenes of physical intimacy. Understanding these lines necessitates background knowledge regarding the correlation between physical touch and emotional connection. Other metaphorical conceptualizations, such as LOVE IS CLOSENESS and THE HEART IS THE CONTAINER OF LOVE, also involve distinct perspectives on love and emotional experience. These metaphors, too, depend on the audience's cognitive and experiential understanding of love, emotion, and interpersonal relationships.

In the interpretive process of metaphor, truth-conditional presuppositions play a pivotal role. These presuppositions-rooted in our social cognition, cultural background, and lived experiences-provide the contextual scaffolding required to decode



metaphorical meaning. Without such presuppositions, the metaphor's intended significance would remain opaque or inaccessible to the listener

## 5 CONCLUSION

This study has examined metaphors in song lyrics using authentic data, drawing on Martinich's pragmatic theory of metaphor-specifically the three necessary conditions of salience, relevance, and truth-conditional presuppositions-to uncover the deeper expressions of love conveyed through linguistic form. The metaphorical analysis reveals two dominant conceptualizations of love: one experiential, grounded in the physical proximity between lovers; the other cultural, shaped by the notion of possession within romantic relationships.

The investigation of love metaphors in popular lyrics is not limited to a single language or cultural context; rather, it may be extended across different cultures and languages to reveal both the diversity and universality of metaphorical representations of love. Moreover, focusing on a recent corpus offers valuable insight into the conventionalization and evolving patterns of metaphor usage in contemporary songwriting.

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# Constructing Ecological Awareness Through Transitivity: A Systemic Functional Analysis of Chinese Senior High School English Textbooks

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**Abstract:** This study investigates ecological discourse embedded in Chinese senior high school English textbooks published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP), employing the transitivity framework from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Through a detailed categorization of process types, the study finds that material, relational, and mental processes are predominant in the ecological segments, while behavioral, verbal, and existential processes occur less frequently. The prevalence and linguistic realization of these processes are interpreted as reflections of the ecological awareness shaped by the textbooks. This research aims to offer a fresh analytical perspective for understanding how ecological values are constructed and disseminated through pedagogical discourse. It further suggests that enhancing students' sensitivity to ecological issues can be achieved through conscious engagement with the linguistic structures that represent environmental phenomena. By combining ecological linguistics with systemic functional grammar, this study contributes to the growing field of ecolinguistic inquiry in educational contexts.

**Keywords:** Transitivity System; Ecological Discourse; Senior High School English Textbooks; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Ecolinguistics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, environmental degradation and the climate crisis have led to an increasing awareness of the need for sustainability, not only in policymaking and scientific research but also in education and language practices. Language is more than a medium of communication; it is a social semiotic system that encodes ideologies, values, and worldviews<sup>[3]</sup>. As such, the way environmental issues are represented in language significantly shapes public understanding and behavioral responses. Educational discourse, particularly in school textbooks, plays a pivotal role in cultivating ecological literacy among adolescents.

English textbooks are not only language learning tools but also cultural and ideological carriers. In China, senior high school English textbooks undergo rigorous national vetting processes, which ensure alignment with educational goals, including moral and civic education. In light of China's increasing emphasis on

ecological civilization, it becomes essential to examine whether and how this ideological shift is reflected in language education materials.

This study sets out to explore how ecological consciousness is constructed in senior high school English textbooks through transitivity patterns—a core aspect of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Specifically, we ask: What types of processes dominate ecological discourse? How do these linguistic choices reveal underlying ecological values? And how might these choices influence students' ecological perception?

By investigating the intersection between language form (grammar) and ecological content (meaning), this study aims to bridge applied linguistics, discourse analysis, and environmental education. It not only contributes to ecolinguistics as an emerging field but also offers pedagogical insights for educators and textbook developers interested in fostering ecofriendly mindsets through language instruction.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 The Transitivity System in Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics, developed by M.A.K. Halliday<sup>[3]</sup>, conceptualizes language as a system of choices that individuals use to construct meaning in context. One of its central components is the ideational metafunction, which captures how language represents the external and internal worlds. The transitivity system, nested within the ideational metafunction, offers a means of categorizing experiences into six process types<sup>[3]</sup>: material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential. Each process type is associated with a particular configuration of participants and circumstances:

Material processes denote actions and events, involving an Actor and often a Goal (e.g., "The farmer plants the crops").

Mental processes capture perception, cognition, and emotion, typically involving a Senser and a Phenomenon (e.g., "She fears pollution").

Relational processes serve to define or describe, expressed through CarrierAttribute or IdentifiedIdentifier roles (e.g., "The air is clean").

Behavioral processes describe physiological or habitual behaviors that border material and mental

realms (e.g., "He listens to the rain").

Verbal processes are processes of saying or communication (e.g., "They said the forest must be protected").

Existential processes assert the existence of phenomena (e.g., "There is a lake in the valley").

Through transitivity analysis, researchers can uncover not only what is represented but also how representation choices reflect ideological positions, agency distributions, and implicit values. In ecological discourse, such analysis can expose whether humans or nature are granted agency, whether environmental degradation is foregrounded or backgrounded, and whether ecological relationships are framed symbiotically or hierarchically.

## 2.2 Ecolinguistics: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Ecolinguistics, sometimes referred to as ecological linguistics, has evolved from the ecological turn in the humanities and the increasing recognition of the linguistic dimension of environmental discourse. Although initially informed by Haugen's (1972) metaphorical analogy between languages and ecosystems<sup>[4]</sup>, the field gained momentum in the 1990s with the works of Fill and Mühlhäusler<sup>[2]</sup>, and more recently with the applied ecolinguistic models proposed by Stibbe<sup>[6]</sup>.

Ecolinguistics studies how language contributes to environmental degradation or protection. It scrutinizes the narratives, metaphors, framing devices, and grammatical choices that perpetuate either ecologically destructive or constructive worldviews. Its objectives include identifying stories we live by - dominant cultural narratives encoded in language-and offering alternative discourses that promote sustainability<sup>[6]</sup>.

As an interdisciplinary field, ecolinguistics draws on environmental science, critical discourse analysis, social semiotics, and educational linguistics. Its applications range from policy discourse analysis to green advertising critique and from ecopoetry to textbook evaluation. The integration of SFL's transitivity system with ecolinguistics offers a powerful toolset for analyzing how environmental meanings are structured, who is positioned as responsible for environmental change, and what kinds of ecological values are reinforced.

## 3. ECOLOGICAL DISCOURSE IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS-A TRANSITIVITY-BASED ANALYSIS

This section provides a comprehensive transitivity analysis of ecological discourse found in China's senior high school English textbooks. Drawing on Halliday's typology, each process type is explored not only in terms of its frequency but also its semantic roles, functional positioning, and pedagogical implications. This refined analysis identifies linguistic patterns that frame humannature relationships and uncovers implicit value orientations embedded in language choices.

### 3.1 Material Processes: Highlighting Human and NonHuman Actions

Material processes are highly salient in ecological discourse, emphasizing physical actions and their consequences. These verbs construct environmental change as a result of either human intervention or natural dynamics. The actor-goal configuration in material clauses often determines who is represented as active or passive in environmental interactions.

Example 1: This knowledge is passed down through families, which means that new generations continue to use ancient methods of agriculture to maintain the terraces.

Here, the Actor role is assigned to "new generations," who "use" and "maintain" traditional practices. The Goal is implicitly "the terraces," and the process verbs emphasize continuity, cultural heritage, and sustainability. Notably, the first clause is in passive voice ("is passed down"), foregrounding the knowledge itself rather than its human transmitters. This may enhance the perceived authority and neutrality of the ecological knowledge being transferred.

The clause also aligns with the ecolinguistic principle of "the story of care"-a narrative that positions human behavior as protective, respectful, and embedded within ecological systems<sup>[6]</sup>. This narrative fosters empathy and may implicitly guide learners toward valuing traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).

Example 2: Dogs were first domesticated over 14,000 years ago.

This clause, although superficially descriptive, positions animals in a subordinate role. The passive construction suppresses the human agent and highlights the outcome-domestication. Such elision of agency is a typical example of what Stibbe (2015) calls "erasure"<sup>[6]</sup>-a discursive move where the agent responsible for ecological disruption is obscured or erased. In this case, the focus is shifted from human domination to the historical event, naturalizing anthropocentrism and weakening the reader's critical awareness of power asymmetries.

From a pedagogical angle, material processes invite discussion on the ethics of action: who acts, who is acted upon, and what consequences ensue. Teachers could prompt students to reframe such clauses with active voice or reverse agency to critically assess ecological implications.

### 3.2 Mental Processes: Engaging Ecological Cognition and Affect

Mental processes construct internal experiences such as perception, feeling, and belief, typically realized by the Sensor and the Phenomenon. These processes are essential for embedding ecological affect and ethical judgment into discourse, thus influencing students' attitudinal stance.

Example 1: Summer sees the mountains turn bright green with growing rice.

Although metaphorical, this clause animates the

season "Summer" as a sentient observer. The metaphor is crucial-it constructs an ecopoetic relation where nature is no longer inert but endowed with perception<sup>[1]</sup>. The choice of "sees" as a mental verb ascribes consciousness to nonhuman entities, reinforcing a biocentric worldview.

This aligns with the ecolinguistic principle of "reframing"<sup>[1]</sup>, where dominant anthropocentric narratives are replaced by ecocentric ones. In the classroom, students could be asked to contrast literal vs. figurative uses of mental processes, discussing how personification reshapes humannature relationships.

Example 2: More and more people feel that by using natural dyes, we can remind ourselves of the nature's beauty and protect the natural world.

Here, the mental process verb "feel" conveys shared belief and affect, while the embedded clause encodes a causal logic: feeling leads to action. This clause reflects affective alignment, positioning learners to empathize with those who prefer natural over synthetic materials. Such alignment is not neutral-it constitutes evaluative framing, where emotional resonance supports ideological direction<sup>[5]</sup>.

Textbooks thus function not only as conveyors of information but also as emotional socializers. Students may internalize certain ecological affect norms-e.g., that using natural products is morally superior-not through argument but through shared feeling structures.

### 3.3 Relational Processes: Asserting Definitions, Values, and Significance

Relational processes express identity (intensive), classification (identifying), or attribution (descriptive properties). In ecological discourse, they are frequently used to: classify species or habitats; highlight threats or vulnerabilities; connect abstract values with concrete entities.

Example 1: The more we know about this lovely creature, the greater the chance it will survive and keep its place in the natural world.

This hypothetical relational construction equates knowledge with survival probability. The grammatical parallelism ("the more... the greater...") foregrounds a conditional logic of responsibility: if humans acquire knowledge, then species benefit. This shifts the burden of action to human epistemic responsibility, a crucial framing device in environmental education.

Example 2: The main reason for its inclusion is its biological diversity...

This clause makes diversity the token of value and justification. In Halliday's terms, it is a relational identifying process, used to define the entity's worth<sup>[3]</sup>. The syntactic foregrounding of diversity-rather than aesthetic or economic considerations-favors a conservationist ideology.

Textbooks rely heavily on relational processes to shape the ecologies students are exposed to: what makes a species worthy of protection, what qualities are valued, and who gets to define ecological importance.

### 3.4 Behavioral, Verbal, and Existential Processes:

#### Marginal but Ideologically Loaded

Though these process types occur less frequently, their ecological implications can be significant when examined through a critical lens.

#### Behavioral Processes

Example: With water falling off its thick brown hair, the bear stared back at me.

This vivid scene uses behavior to construct animal agency. The bear's gaze indicates awareness, challenging the idea of animals as passive or unthinking. In SFL, behavioral processes sit between material and mental-showing action that reveals psychological state. The clause blurs species boundaries, reinforcing ecoempathy.

In pedagogy, such clauses can be used to discuss animal sentience and rights, using grammar to initiate bioethical discussion.

#### Verbal Processes

Example: People recorded weather forecasts on animal bones...

This clause historicizes ecological knowledge systems. The verb "recorded" ties language to environmental interpretation. However, it also raises ethical dilemmas-if animal remains were sourced violently, does the act count as ecological wisdom?

This is a good case for critical ecolinguistics-pushing students to explore contradictions within "ecopositive" discourse<sup>[6]</sup>.

#### Existential Processes

Example: There is no month in the whole year in which nature wears a more beautiful appearance than in August.

Existential processes like this affirm presence and uniqueness. They serve aesthetic validation-inviting appreciation and, implicitly, protection. However, they risk romanticizing nature while erasing its vulnerabilities.

Teachers might contrast such idealized descriptions with data on August droughts or species extinction, to sharpen critical ecological thinking.

### 3.5 Pedagogical Discussion: From Transitivity to Ecological Literacy

The textbook discourse analyzed here performs dual pedagogical functions: It teaches language form-introducing learners to different process types, clause structures, and thematic development. And it subtly promotes ideological content-embedding ecological values within grammatical choices.

By mapping process types to their ideological orientations, educators can guide students to: recognize hidden assumptions about nature (e.g., passivized animals, erased human agents); reflect on how grammar shapes responsibility (e.g., who acts and who suffers); reimagine ecological discourse through grammatical transformation (e.g., active vs. passive voice, reattribution of agency). For example, rewriting "Forests were destroyed for farmland" as "People cleared forests to expand farmland" restores human accountability. Similarly, reclassifying "Plastic is

harmful” as “Human use of plastic causes harm” foregrounds behavioral change.

In this way, grammar becomes a tool for ecological empowerment, not just description<sup>[6]</sup>.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study applied transitivity analysis within the SFL framework to examine ecological discourse in senior high school English textbooks. The findings demonstrate that ecological values are not randomly scattered but systematically encoded through grammatical choices. Material processes dominate, indicating a focus on action and consequence. Relational and mental processes support knowledge construction and affective engagement.

Implications for textbook developers include: increasing the visibility of nature as an Actor to promote ecocentric perspectives; balancing scientific knowledge (relational processes) with affective and ethical engagement (mental processes); reducing instances of passive constructions that obscure human responsibility for ecological harm.

For educators, the study suggests: designing activities that engage students in identifying process types and evaluating their ecological implications; encouraging critical reading of texts, particularly ambiguous examples; integrating ecolinguistic awareness into language instruction to nurture environmentally

literate citizens.

By bringing together SFL and ecolinguistics, this research offers both theoretical insight and practical guidance. As climate concerns grow, the role of language education in promoting sustainable thinking becomes increasingly vital. Transitivity analysis thus becomes not only a linguistic tool but an ecological one.

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# Affective Stance and Self-Positioning in Movie Reviews on Weibo

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**Abstract:** This study examines the affective stance of online reviewers and their self-positioning constructed through speech acts based on Weibo users' reviews on the movie *Ne Zha 2*. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis of 278 valid data points, the study found that reviewers' affective stances can be categorized into positive (50%), neutral (12%), and negative (31%), corresponding to the identity positions of "supporters," "rational analysts," and "critics," respectively. The study validated the critical role of stance objects in affective classification, revealing the connection between affective expression and identity construction on social media, and providing empirical references for stance research in online interactions.

**Keywords:** Weibo Movie Reviews; Affective Stance; Self-positioning

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As one of China's largest online social media platforms, Weibo is where many people post and discuss a wide range of topics, such as TV shows, books, individuals, or social events, sharing similarities with Reddit and Twitter. Such online social media platforms provide a vast space for users to instantly share their views, emotions, and stances on topics of interest. Additionally, users engage in comment-based interactions on this platform, which functions similarly to a "message board." This includes posting their own reviews and replying to others' posts (the original poster or other users may respond to these reviews). In this process, users express their emotions and opinions while also engaging in social interaction with others. Although some users may not be certain whether their reviews will receive responses from others when posting, they are already prepared for the possibility of being replied to when publicly reviewing on the platform. Through this method, users can not only express their personal affective stances but also highlight their identity and positioning through interaction with others.

Stance plays a crucial role in communication. Du Bois emphasizes that choosing a stance is a core element of language use<sup>[1]</sup>. Stance is not only the discourse function of language forms in specific contexts but also a reflection of the speaker's subjectivity and personal style. Once people express their thoughts through language, they inevitably reveal their personal attitudes and stances<sup>[2]</sup>. This study focuses on discussions about the movie *Ne Zha 2* on Weibo,

exploring the affective stance and self-positioning expressed by users when sharing their views on the movie and engaging in comment interactions with others in the online public space. This study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how individuals express emotions and engage in social participation through online social platforms, as well as how they position their identities in online social activities.

## 2. AFFECTIVE STANCE

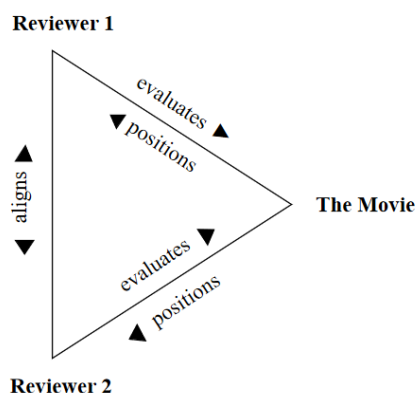
Affective stance refers to evaluations of attitudes, feelings, and moods<sup>[3]</sup>, also known as attitude stance. Emotions expressed through language constitute affective stance (emotional stance)<sup>[3]</sup>. Emotion is a multidimensional, comprehensive category encompassing inner expressions and subjective experiences, including internal mental and physical states, perceptible expressive variations, and evaluative processes of judging the world<sup>[4]</sup>. Gong combined Langlotz & Locher's conflict discourse and affective stance theory with Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model to propose a pragmatic explanatory framework for the affective stance in conflictive online reviews, and analyzed the affective stance in conflictive online reviews within this framework<sup>[5]</sup>.

Biber & Finega first introduced the concept of "stance," defining it as "the speaker's explicit expression of emotions, attitudes, judgments, and the truthfulness of propositions"<sup>[6]</sup>. They later refined this concept, defining stance as "the attitude, feelings, judgments, and vocabulary and grammatical expressions used toward the content of propositional information"<sup>[7]</sup>. Du Bois defines stance as "a public act performed by social actors through dialogue and external communicative means, which simultaneously evaluates the object, positions the subject, and establishes connections with other subjects across any significant dimension of the social-cultural field"<sup>[8]</sup>. Biber et al. note that in addition to communicating propositional content, speakers often express personal feelings, attitudes, value judgments, or evaluations<sup>[9]</sup>. Position expression is fundamentally an interactive, co-constructed communicative act, whose core feature lies in the dynamic negotiation at the discourse level between communicative subjects (speakers and listeners) to jointly construct a positional meaning network characterized by intersubjectivity<sup>[10]</sup>. Yuan proposed the "pragmatic stance cone" model, extending stance interaction theory to new media

contexts, providing a new analytical tool for examining stance expression mechanisms in social media platforms like Weibo <sup>[11]</sup>. Luo conducted an empirical study on courtroom discourse, which revealed that this interactive stance manifests in institutional discourse through four dimensions: 1) evaluative stance (value judgments on facts); 2) affective stance (expression of subjective emotions); 3) cognitive stance (presentation of propositional certainty); and 4) (in) consistency stance (explicit markers of view negotiation) <sup>[12]</sup>.

### 3. AFFECTIVE STANCE AND SELF-POSITIONING IN ONLINE INTERACTIVE REVIEWS

This study takes posts and reviews on the movie *Ne Zha 2* on the Weibo platform as its research object (as shown in Figure 1). Based on Biri's "online fans group" stance triangle analysis framework, it explores the affective stance and self-positioning of online reviewers. In the context of this study, the subject is Weibo users participating in this discussion, and the object is the movie. The identification of the subject and object facilitates specific analysis. Specifically, Weibo users express their views on movie-related content through active posting or participating in reviews, and under the premise of interactive expectations (i.e., preparing to respond to others or accept others' replies), they form a non-immediate affective co-construction mechanism.



**Figure 1. Affective Stance Triangle in Weibo Movie Reviews**

### 4. RESEARCH METHODS

In the context of online public space communication practices, reviews serve as a typical form of interaction and have garnered official attention from the academic community. Huang categorized online reviews into three standardized types based on differences in media form and interactive characteristics: 1) online review columns (review forms dominated by professional media); 2) message board replies (user-generated hierarchical interactions); 3) Online forum reviews (topic-oriented community-based discussions) <sup>[13]</sup>. This study focuses on the second type, namely the nested-structure

review thread interactions on message boards. In terms of stance analysis, this study adopts Biri's definition, which defines affective stance as a system of meaning presented through the distributional characteristics and pragmatic functions of affective stance markers. These linguistic forms both represent the author's subjective evaluative orientation and construct semantic associations with the stance object <sup>[14]</sup>.

This study selected Weibo as the data source, entering the movie title *Ne Zha 2* into the search bar to collect posts and reviews from Weibo users in the review section below the posts. The reason for using reviews under this movie as corpus is that it was released during the 2025 Chinese New Year and has sparked significant discussion and controversy, with people holding both positive and negative views on it, making it suitable for the study of diverse affective stances and self-positioning. This study randomly selected ten Weibo posts containing the keywords *Ne Zha 2*, chose posts with over 1,000 likes, and further selected 300 reviews ranked by Weibo likes. After excluding reviews violating social ethics, involving political stances, or unrelated to the movie, the final dataset comprised 278 valid reviews. To protect user privacy, the reviewers' information was anonymized in the data presentation.

The data for this study was manually annotated by two researchers, both of whom were graduate students in linguistics, ensuring a certain level of professional expertise in the annotation process. We selected 250 annotated data points for analysis to ensure the objectivity of affective attitude classification and stance object categorization, as well as the accuracy of the annotations. Affectively charged words were underlined, and content unrelated to the analysis in this study was omitted.

As shown in Table 1, the content of movie viewers' reviews can be categorized into six types based on the stance objects they focus on in user reviews. The first four categories focus on movies, while the last two focus on real-life people or events. Since a single review in the valid corpus may contain multiple utterances, which may correspond to multiple stance objects or express different emotions, the number of stance objects identified in the statistics will exceed the number of valid reviews.

Based on the above steps, this study employs qualitative and quantitative analysis to explore Weibo users' attitudes toward stance objects, categorize and analyze affective stances and self-positioning, and attempt to answer the following two research questions: (1) What speech acts do Weibo movie reviewers employ to express different affective stances across different stance objects? (2) What kind of self-positioning do Weibo movie reviewers' different affective stances reflect?

**Table 1. The Categories of Stance Object in Reviews**

Categories of Stance Object	Description	Example
Charatcers	Reviews on characters in the movie	<u>Shen Gongbao's</u> is so interesting!
Plot	Reviews on plots in the movie	I think the <u>plot</u> is completely implausible.
Creators	Reviews on creators in the movie (director, screenwriter, etc.)	It was clearly the <u>director's</u> plot to deliberately mislead us viewers into misunderstanding Shen Gongbao.
The Movie as a whole	Not focusing on specific aspects, but rather providing an overall evaluation of the movie.	<u>Ne Zha 2</u> is really great!
Other reviewers	Reviews directed at the original poster or other reviewers personally	Admit that <u>Ne Zha 2</u> has flaws, but it feels like <u>someone is just criticizing him for the sake of criticism.</u>
Real life	From movies to reviews on real life	After watching <u>Ne Zha 2</u> , <u>I feel that Chinese animated movies are on the rise.</u>

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Distribution of Affective Stances and Speech Acts

The analysis of stance and evaluation need consider the speech acts in stance expression. Based on the analysis and categorization of the corpus, movie

reviewers use eight types of speech acts to express positive, neutral, and negative emotions, reflecting diverse affective stances. The specific distribution is shown in the table below:

**Table 2. Distribution of Affective Stance and Speech Acts adopted by movie reviewers**

Affective Stance	Speech Acts	Description	Examples	Number	Percentage
Positive Affective Stance	Praise	Direct praise for the movie.	The fact that it achieved this result proves that <u>the movie is excellent.</u>	68	27%
	Expectation	Express anticipation for a movie.	I <u>hope</u> there will be more sequels to the <u>Ne Zha</u> series of movies.	13	5%
	Comparison	Highlight the strengths of this movie through comparison.	<u>Better than other movies released at the same time.</u>	10	4%
	Supporting others' affirmation	Express support for other reviewers' positive reviews.	<u>What an awesome analysis!</u>	36	14%
Total				127	50%
Neutral Affective Stance	Expressing an objective opinion	Objective analysis (which may include both positive and negative aspects of the movie)	<u>It is evident that Chinese people are quite patriotic.</u>	32	12%
Affective Stance	Negation	Completely rejecting the movie	I'm pretty shallow, so first of all, <u>I can't stand how he looks...</u>	48	19%
	Supporting others' negation	Express support for other reviewers' negative reviews.	<u>Yeah, the movie is terrible.</u> So what?	25	10%
	Rebuttal	Refuting others' positive reviews of the movie	The high box office was <u>because some people were curious and went to see it even though they knew they were being tricked.</u>	22	9%
Total				95	38%

This study analyzed Weibo reviews on 254 stance objects and found that positive affective stances accounted for the highest proportion (50%, 127 reviews), with "praise" behavior accounting for 27%

(68 reviews), significantly higher than "expectation," "comparison," and "Supporting others' affirmation" behaviors. Neutral stances accounted for 12% (32 reviews), while negative stances accounted for 31%



(58 reviews), primarily manifested through three types of behaviors: "negation" (19%, 48 reviews), "Supporting others' negation" (25 reviews), and "rebuttal" (22 reviews), with a relatively balanced distribution. The results indicate that Weibo movie reviewers tend to express positive affective stances, with the quantity and types of their verbal behaviors significantly outnumbering those of negative and neutral affective stances.

**5.2 Self-positioning Represented by Affective Stances**  
Positioning, as a contextual identity constructed through discourse<sup>[15]</sup>, manifests in Weibo reviews as users' attitudes toward the work.

**5.2.1 Positive Affective Stances and Supporter Self-positioning**

Weibo users who post positive reviews demonstrate positive affective stances, reflecting their identification with the "supporter" self-positioning. Here are a few examples:

(1) The movie *Ne Zha 2* is about how everyone's different experiences and perspectives lead to different worldviews and insights. Even without discussing its plot, its cinematography is excellent, incorporating rich traditional cultural elements, and its action effects are even more impressive.

(2) I hope *Ne Zha 2* can compete for an Oscar.

(3) Isn't it normal for the official team to be thrilled that *Ne Zha 2* has surpassed the 10 billion mark? This is a historic moment breaking the monopoly of Disney and Marvel, and it's truly something to be proud of.

(4) Yes, such high box office numbers actually reveal a lot...

These examples correspond to the speech acts used by Weibo users when reviewing, namely praise, expectation, comparison, and support for others' affirmation. The review in (1) uses the speech act of praise to commend the movie from multiple angles. The review in (2) expresses expectations for the movie, hoping it can win higher awards. The review in (3) compares the movie to Disney and Marvel movies, suggesting that it can rival them. It also expresses support for Chinese movies. The review in (4) uses the phrase "Yes," expressing support and affirmation of the original poster's support for the movie, and provides its own reasons (omitted due to space constraints).

**5.2.2 Neutral Affective Stance and Rational Analyst Positioning**

Weibo users post objective reviews, reflecting a neutral affective stance and aligning with their self-identification as "rational analysts." While they may exhibit some positive or negative emotions toward the movie, their reviews include both affirmation and negation, indicating that their affective stance is not purely positive or negative. This 'partiality' highlights their self-identification as "rational analysts."

(5) *Ne Zha 2* is not a perfect movie; there are some aspects I dislike. I believe these can be singled out for criticism, but there is no need to dwell on them or use

them to dismiss the entire movie.

(6) In fact, the affective value this movie series provides is quite good. I hoped for a good box office performance due to its high production quality, but I don't understand why it has reached such a high level. In the above two examples, (5) reflects partial negation, acknowledging flaws in the movie but also expressing a positive affective stance, arguing that the entire movie should not be dismissed. (6) reflects partial affirmation, praising the movie's production quality while rejecting its thematic intent and value.

**5.2.3 Negative Affective Stance and Critic's Self-Positioning**

Weibo users who post negative reviews demonstrate a negative affective stance, reflecting their identification with the self-positioning of a "critic."

(7) The script feels like it was hastily written and then modified by AI.

(8) Let's defend it—I feel like it's about to get criticized.

(9) Setting aside the controversies, the plot is really cliché... Why is it being hyped up so much?

The above three examples illustrate three types of linguistic behaviors reflecting negative emotions in Weibo users' reviews: negation, supporting others' negation, and rebuttal. The review in (7) completely negates the movie's plot, deeming it careless. The review in (8) uses the term "defend," showing support for the original poster's negative feelings toward the movie. The review in (9) refutes those with positive feelings toward the movie, arguing that they are exaggerating its merits.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study, based on Weibo movie reviewers' reviews on the movie *Ne Zha 2* employs content analysis to explore reviewers' affective stances and the self-identity reflected in their verbal behavior. The findings reveal that reviewers' affective stances can be categorized into three types: positive affective stances reflect a 'supporter' self-identity, neutral affective stances indicate a "rational analyst" self-identity, and negative affective stances construct a "critic" self-positioning. The study indicates that the object of the stance plays a crucial role in the classification and understanding of affective stances. Despite limitations in sample size and research depth, this study provides a preliminary theoretical basis for research on reviewers' affective stances and self-positioning in online contexts.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Pragmatic Identity Construction of Speakers in TED Popular Science Talks

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**Abstract:** TED Talks are highly acclaimed for their global influence, skillfully blending academic rigor with popular appeal to form a distinctive discourse style. Based on Searle's refined classical theory of speech acts, this study focuses on how speakers in TED popular science talks employ specific speech acts to construct distinct pragmatic identities during their presentations, thereby aiding non-specialist audience in comprehending abstract scientific knowledge. Through this lens, the study reveals that TED popular science speakers utilize particular speech acts to build three primary identities: as moderator, as educator and expert, and as conversational facilitator and guide. This strategic identity construction serves to promote the popularization and acceptance of scientific knowledge among non-specialist audience.

**Keywords:** TED Popular Science Talks; Identity Construction; Speech Acts

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the increasing application of social constructivist theory in language studies, scholars have shifted their research focus from static speaker and audience identities to the dynamic process of identity construction, emphasizing the dynamic evolution of identity during communication and its mechanisms of influence on communication goals and outcomes. This identity selection process manifests as a complex dynamic system where conscious and unconscious factors interact. Communicators continuously adjust their discourse strategies to adapt to specific contextual parameters, ultimately achieving their predefined communicative objectives<sup>[1]</sup>. In this process, the selection of discourse behavior essentially becomes a rhetorical practice of identity positioning—when communicators establish a particular social identity through specific discourse forms rather than other possibilities, their identity representation acquires significant rhetorical attributes. Leech defines this phenomenon as “identity rhetoric” or “interpersonal rhetoric”<sup>[2]</sup>. TED science popular talks are a typical example of this rhetorical practice, where speakers employ diverse linguistic strategies to construct multiple identity coordinates, thereby reducing the cognitive difficulties non-specialist audience face in understanding abstract scientific concepts from multiple dimensions.

This study, based on Searle's speech act theory framework, systematically examines how TED popular science speakers strategically construct a

composite identity system of “host-educator-expert” through specific speech act modalities, as well as the guiding identity of “dialogue coordinator,” ultimately achieving the communicative intent of popularizing scientific knowledge. In existing TED talk research, the interactive mechanisms between speech acts and identity construction have not yet yielded systematic research outcomes. This study aims to expand the research scope in this field.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Pragmatic Identity Construction

Regarding identity, Stryker proposed identity theory, defining identity as all the roles an individual play in society<sup>[3]</sup>. In pragmatics research, Chen first defined pragmatic identity as the conscious and strategic mobilization of resources by individuals in communication to achieve specific communicative goals. Pragmatic identity represents the specific manifestation of an individual's “particular social identity within a linguistic communicative context, and is the contextualized and pragmatic manifestation of their social identity”. Speech acts are one type of discourse practice through which communicators construct pragmatic identity. Communicators can use the selection of speech acts to indicate their own or the other party's identity, such as criticism, praise, suggestions, or declarations<sup>[4]</sup>.

Research on pragmatic identity theory has been growing in recent years. In the context of academic defense, Ren explored in depth the three pragmatic identities—authority, erudition, and humility—constructed by experts through suggestive speech acts<sup>[5]</sup>. This study emphasizes that the construction of expert identity is a dynamic process aimed at adapting to communication needs and responding to the challenges posed by different contextual elements. Cheng & Guo conducted a systematic analysis of the speech act strategies employed by teachers at different stages of the classroom, highlighting the key role of speech acts in shaping teachers' pragmatic identities<sup>[6]</sup>. Wang Yan found that in his speech at the University of Hong Kong's degree conferment ceremony, Jack Ma effectively achieved the dual goals of precise information transmission and emotional resonance with the audience by constructing diverse pragmatic identities such as “honorary doctor,” “entrepreneur,” “supporter,” and “visionary for the future”<sup>[7]</sup>.

Studies on identity construction in TED talks also encompass multiple perspectives: Wang Jianing compared the identity construction of male and female

TED speakers<sup>[8]</sup>; Chen investigated the identity construction of the first-person singular forms “I” and “me”<sup>[9]</sup>; Wu examined TED pragmatic identity construction from an interactive metadiscourse perspective<sup>[10]</sup>; Mu examined the pragmatic identity construction of first-person expressions in TED talks<sup>[11]</sup>.

This study focuses on pragmatic identity theory, examining how science popularization speakers in TED talks construct their identities through speech acts.

## 2.2 Speech Acts Theory

The theory of speech acts was first proposed by Oxford philosopher Austin in his renowned philosophical work *How to Do Things with Words*<sup>[12]</sup>. Strawson criticized Austin for treating speech acts such as

naming and marriage as typical ways in which language fulfills its functions, and proposed a theory of speech acts centered on intention<sup>[13]</sup>. Bach & Harnish<sup>[14]</sup> built on Strawson’s ideas, dividing illocutionary acts into conventional illocutionary acts and communicative illocutionary acts. American philosopher Searle further developed the theory of speech acts, arguing that all linguistic communication consists of speech acts, with action at its core. He systematized the principles and classification of speech acts. According to Searle’s classification of speech acts, speech acts are divided into five categories: assertive speech acts, directive speech acts, commissive speech acts, declarative speech acts, and expressive speech acts<sup>[15]</sup>. The specific categories and description are shown in the table 1 below:

**Table 1. Searle’s (1976) Classification of Speech acts**

Speech Acts	Definition	Language Examples
Assertives	State facts or beliefs	Assertions, descriptions, conclusions
Directives	Try to get the audience to do something	Commands, requests, suggestions
Commissives	Commit the speaker to some future course of action	Promise, swear, guarantee
Declarations	Promise future action	Announcement, appointment, judgment
Expressives	Express mental state	Thanks, apologies, congratulations

This study draws on speech act theory and uses TED popular science talks as corpus to explore the types and distribution of identity construction by speakers. It analyzes how speakers construct speech act related to identity in order to achieve their communicative goal of helping non-specialist audience understand scientific knowledge.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODS

The eight speech corpora in this study were selected from the official TED talks website ([www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)). The duration of each speech ranges from 6 to 15 minutes. The criteria for selecting the corpora are as follows:

first, the topics covered by TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) have expanded significantly in recent years, with speech content aligning with contemporary trends. These speeches integrate diversity, contemporaneity, entertainment, appealing to a broad audience.

Secondly, most TED talks are concise in length, and science popularization talks are vivid and easy to understand, providing practical evidence for speech pragmatics research. Additionally, if the speech corpus is too short, there is limited information about identity selection and dynamic changes, making it difficult to highlight the role of identity construction in speech communication.

Finally, this study selected knowledge-based popular science speeches spanning multiple fields, facilitating

the exploration of more diverse speech acts and the identities constructed by science popularization speakers.

This study extracts the portions where speakers use speech acts to help construct identity from the corpus, then categorizes these contents based on speech acts and their role in identity construction, and studies the identities constructed by speech acts in these portions of the speeches. Due to space constraints, some content that does not affect the research analysis has been omitted.

This study attempts to address the following two research questions:

- (1) What speech acts do TED science popularization speakers employ in their speeches?
- (2) What kind of identity do TED science popularization speakers construct through specific speech acts?

## 4. SPEECH ACTS AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN TED POPULAR SCIENCE TALKS

### 4.1 Speech Acts in TED Popular Science Talks

According to the analysis of the corpus, speakers in TED popular science talks use a variety of speech acts, which serve different functions and communication purposes and construct different identities. The frequency and distribution of speech acts are shown in the table 2 below:

Table 2. Frequency and Distribution of Speech Acts

used by Speakers

Speech Acts	Number	Percentage
Assertives	632	87.00%
Directives	80	11.00%
Commissives	2	0.03%
Declarations	0	0%
Expressives	14	1.97%
Total	728	100%

The data shows that assertives dominate (87%), which is consistent with the essential characteristics of popular science discourse. The core function of TED talks is to convey knowledge and state facts, which is highly consistent with the definition of assertives as “committing to the truth of discourse” (e.g., “Vision is the most important sense,” “Dopamine receptors control fly behavior”). At the same time, popular science talks must avoid subjective speculation. The high proportion of 87% confirms the reliance of science popularization discourse on empirical evidence and information density, aligning with Searle’s characterization of assertive speech acts as “pointing to the objective world.”

Directive speech acts (11%) rank second, reflecting speakers’ strategic use of them. These speech acts focus on guiding audience participation (e.g., “Raise your hand if...”) and directing thought (e.g., “Let’s think about...”), reflecting the “attempt to make the audience act” aspect of illocutionary force. Additionally, through questions (e.g., “What did you see?”) and directives (e.g., “Keep your eyes on the prize”), speakers construct a dialogic framework, lowering the barrier to information reception.

Expressive speech acts rank third in terms of proportion, but their share is very small (1.97%). These fall under the category of ritualistic social conventions, and in the data, such speech acts are almost entirely ceremonial expressions (e.g., “Thank you” at the beginning and end), serving the interpersonal function of the speech [16], but without deep emotional disclosure, highlighting the professional distance control in popular science talks. This also aligns with the nature of science popularization as the purpose of the speech, where speakers lack in-depth descriptions of subjective experiences (e.g., “I feel...”), reflecting the maintenance of emotional neutrality in popular science talks.

The results for commissives and declarations are constrained by the pragmatic context. Commissives account for only 0.03% of speech acts because popular science talks do not require commitments to future actions (e.g., “I will solve this”), as their purpose is to explain rather than intervene. The absence of declarations is because such speech acts require

institutional authority, and speakers lack the identity to alter social reality, so there is no need to employ such speech acts.

## 4.2 Identities in TED Popular Science Talks Constructed by Speech Acts

### 4.2.1 Moderator

Generally speaking, science popularization speakers tend to make their presentations sound more objective, scientific, and formal. In TED science popular talks, speakers generally aim to create a more relaxed atmosphere, not only to ease the audience’s tension about receiving scientific knowledge but also to highlight their role as hosts, control the pace and flow of the talk, reduce the psychological distance between themselves and the audience, and introduce the talk’s theme. They typically use directive speech acts, ask questions, and engage in “ice-breaking” activities with the audience before delivering formal scientific explanations. For example, in a speech on the scientific basis of exercise for weight loss:

(1) “We often hear that exercise can help with weight loss by speeding up or boosting our metabolism. So is it true? Can we use exercise to control our metabolism?”

In this example, the speaker first uses an imperative speech act to pose a question, attract the audience’s attention, reduce the psychological distance between themselves and the audience, introduce the topic of the speech, and establish their role as a host.

(2): “If you ask evolutionary biologists when humans became humans, some of them... Others will say that...”

In this example, the speaker primarily uses assertive speech acts to express interest or curiosity about the connections between these viewpoints, while also providing scientific knowledge to the audience and introducing some perspectives, laying the groundwork for the subsequent main content of the speech and establishing the host’s identity.

### 4.2.2 Educator and expert

In fact, it is well known that expert opinions are more easily accepted. Science popularization speakers use language to establish their expert status, demonstrating authority on specific topics to gain trust. At the same time, they may also act as educators, imparting scientific knowledge to the audience and teaching them how to approach certain scientific phenomena. In the data of this study, speakers primarily employ assertive behavior to construct this identity, which is the most commonly used speech act and identity construction among science popularization speakers.

(3) “...your actions stem from these deeply ingrained reflexes...”

The example in the example is a scientific principle explained by the science communicator to the audience. It is a statement of fact that does not require derivation, has a clear communicative intent, and belongs to the typical category of assertive speech acts. It allows the audience to directly accept scientific knowledge, thereby constructing the identity of an

expert and educator.

(4) "I am a researcher at the MIT Media Lab, part of the Opera of the Future group, and my research focuses on the relationship people have with their own voice and with the voices of others."

This example is a speaker's self-introduction during a talk on the topic of sound, asserting their identity, profession, and research focus on sound-related topics. It establishes their authority, making the audience more convinced of the talk's content and constructing the identity of an expert.

#### 4.2.3 Conversational facilitator and guide

Establishing the role of a conversationalist and guide helps speakers maintain a good relationship with their audience, preserve the audience's negative face, and satisfy interpersonal communication needs, thereby encouraging the audience to adopt the speaker's suggestions.

(5) "So I'd like you to imagine for a moment that you're a soldier..."

This example means "I want you to imagine that you are a soldier..." It is the speaker's suggestion to the audience, employing an imperative speech act to help the audience immerse themselves in the context, making it easier for non-specialist audiences to relate the speaker's concepts to knowledge they can understand.

(6) "So please raise your hand if you don't like the sound of your voice when you hear it on a recording machine."

In this example, the speaker issues an instruction, asking the audience to raise their hands based on the situation. Such an imperative speech act captures the audience's attention, bridges the gap between the speaker and the audience, and sets the stage for the subsequent content of the speech.

(7) "But it doesn't always have to be unpleasant."

In this example, the speaker expresses their emotions or attitude: "However, dreams are not necessarily always unpleasant." In the original text, this sentence is located in the section on dream theory ("We dream to rehearse"), serving to balance the previous emphasis on "dangerous dreams" and instead point out that dreams can also be neutral or positive. This logical supplement is a typical knowledge-based assertion, contributing to the informational completeness of the science popularization discourse. The speaker uses such assertive speech acts not only to state facts but also to establish an emotional connection with the audience, evoke resonance, and facilitate deeper understanding.

(8) "...which makes you wonder: What does it say about the human mind..."

In this example, the speaker poses a question, expressing their belief that this issue will arouse curiosity among the audience: "This makes you wonder: What does it say about the human mind?" This imperative speech act also guides the audience to feel curious and think, establishing a connection.

(9) "If I take a little snippet of your voice and I analyze it, I can know whether you're talking to your mother, to your brother, your friend or your boss."

In this example, the speaker says, "If I take a small sample of your voice and analyze it, I can tell whether you're talking to your mother, brother, friend, or boss." Through inference, one can understand the speaker's meaning: your voice is also related to how you build interpersonal relationships. You will exhibit different voices when speaking to different people. Such imperative speech acts not only establish a dialogue-like exchange with the audience but also guide them to think.

(10) "But until that time arrives, we'll just have to keep on dreaming."

In this example, the sentence uses an assertive speech act and appears at the end of the speech. Based on the context established by the speaker at the beginning of the speech, which details humanity's persistent exploration of dreams, the closing sentence echoes the opening. This sentence indirectly encourages people to continue exploring and dreaming, establishing a dialogue and guiding role.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

This study delves into how TED popular science speakers skillfully employ speech acts to construct multiple identities as hosts, educators, experts, and facilitators of dialogue and guidance. Through an analysis of the speakers' speech acts, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the study found that the speakers utilized four types of speech acts: assertive, directive, expressive, and commissive speech acts to construct three kinds of identities: moderator, expert and educator, and conversational facilitator and guide. These speech acts effectively established connections with non-specialist audience, promoting the dissemination and acceptance of scientific knowledge. Additionally, the study found that TED popular science speakers construct appropriate identities through the use of specific speech acts at specific points in their talks. This not only enhances the academic rigor and accessibility of the talks but also guides audience reflection, thereby improving the effectiveness of knowledge dissemination. This study offers new perspectives and methods for science communication. The findings hold significant academic value for understanding the discursive practices of science communication and provide practical guidance for enhancing public scientific literacy.

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# Classroom Interaction in English Teaching of Senior High School

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**Abstract:** Classroom interaction can stimulate students' interest in English learning and allow students to really participate in classroom teaching to improve their learning efficiency and promote their comprehensive development, which can realize the purposes of English classroom teaching. This paper first looks back to the literature review of classroom interaction. Then it illustrates the five types of classroom interaction as well as the functions of classroom interaction in English teaching. It also gives some suggestions about how to improve the classroom interaction in senior high school's English classes.

**Keywords:** English Teaching; Classroom Interaction; Teacher-student Interaction

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of language communication, interaction is the core of communication<sup>[3]</sup>, and the classroom interaction is the most essential and important interpersonal communication in English classroom teaching. The classroom interaction has a positive effect on teachers and students in the classroom teaching, which can make changes in the psychology and behavior of teachers and students. Allwright<sup>[2]</sup> mentioned that "classroom teaching is only carried out through an interaction process." That means the classroom interaction, as a language communication activity, is an excellent way for students to practice language. If students can participate in the classroom interaction, they will directly learn and acquire the English knowledge, and at the same time, they will also manage their own learning process, which can make their learning attitude more conscientious and positive.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION

With the development of the researches on interaction, the definition of interaction extends in two directions: one direction develops towards the macroscopic direction, which extends the interaction to the interaction and influence of all material existence; the other

direction develops towards the microscopic direction, which refines the interaction to various specific situations, such as classroom interaction. In the classroom teaching, the interaction between teachers and students or between students and students is a special social interaction. Classroom interaction is a special interactive form that only exists in a special environment-the classroom teaching.

Since the 1980s, different scholars have had various definitions about the classroom interaction. Allwright<sup>[2]</sup> pointed out that the classroom interaction was a teaching process, which teachers were in the classroom with a teaching plan, including the syllabus, the teaching methods, and the classroom atmosphere. Allwright and Bailey<sup>[1]</sup> believed that classroom interaction was generated between curriculum planning and knowledge output, when these teaching plans were practiced, classroom interaction occurred and students were exposed to more input and practice through teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction. Brown<sup>[3]</sup> thought that classroom interaction could be explained as follows: classroom interaction referred to the process of information exchange between two or more participants in classroom teaching. Wu Kangning, Wu Yongjun, and Cheng Xiaoqiao<sup>[7]</sup> mentioned in Sociological Research on Classroom Teaching that the roles in the classroom were mainly teachers and students, and classroom interaction was the process of interaction and influence between the teachers and students.

From a narrow perspective, Zuo Bin<sup>[8]</sup> pointed out that classroom interaction referred to the process of interaction and mutual influence between teachers and students and between teachers and student groups in class. Chen Hong<sup>[4]</sup> believed that classroom interaction referred to the process of cognition, emotion, attitude, values and other aspects of interpersonal communication, and the interaction between teachers and students with the help of various intermediaries in the class, and also



referred to the psychological and behavioral changes formed by the exchange of information and behavior between teachers and students. He Jia<sup>[5]</sup> thought that classroom interaction was the interaction between teachers and students or between students and students, such as teaching contents, emotions, attitudes and so on, which was under the help of speech, body language, gestures and auxiliary materials in the classroom teaching environment.

Based on the above mentioned by scholars' viewpoints, it is considered that classroom interaction as a dynamically developing process of teaching and learning, in which the classroom interactions take place between teachers and students, students and students, students and teaching material, which arouses changes in the behavior, emotion and psychology of teachers and students.

### 3. TYPES OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION

Classroom interaction holds significant importance during the process of teaching and learning. Students learn better when they participate in direct classroom activities. Therefore, the quality of classroom interaction directly influences the effectiveness of learning. The following is an explanation of some types of classroom interaction. It can be categorized into five types of classroom interaction within the classroom, with the objective the target language of teaching:

#### 3.1 Teacher Speaking to the Whole Class

The teacher engaging with the entire class serves to set the tone for the lesson, provide important information, and establish a conducive learning environment. This form of interaction typically takes place at the very beginning of the class when the teacher greets students, introduces the day's learning objectives, and presents key materials. By addressing the entire class, the teacher can capture students' attention, create a sense of unity, and convey essential instructions or announcements effectively. This interaction sets the stage for the lesson, helping to focus students' attention and prepare them for the upcoming learning activities.

Take a senior high school English reading class for example, the teacher starts the lesson by greeting the students and introducing the theme of a Shakespearean play they will be studying. By engaging with the whole class, the teacher sets the stage for a discussion on the play's characters and plot, sparking curiosity and encouraging active participation from all

students.

#### 3.2 Teacher Speaking to an Individual

Teacher-student interactions on an individual basis are crucial for personalized guidance, feedback, and support. This type of interaction is often utilized during activities such as checking student attendance, providing one-on-one assistance, guiding students through tasks, or asking questions in conversational engagements like ice-breaking activities. By addressing students individually, the teacher can cater to specific needs, offer targeted assistance, and build friendly relationship with each student. This personalized interaction fosters a supportive learning environment, where students feel relaxed, engaged, and motivated to participate actively in class activities.

For example, during a writing class, the teacher notices a student struggling with structuring an essay. The teacher provides individual guidance to the student, offering tips on organizing ideas effectively and providing constructive feedback on the student's draft. This personalized interaction helps students improve their writing skills and boosts their confidence in writing, no matter it is an application writing or a continuous writing task.

#### 3.3 Teacher Speaking to Group of Students

Group interactions led by the teacher are instrumental in promoting collaboration, teamwork, and peer learning. This type of interaction commonly occurs during speaking activities conducted in role-plays or group discussions, serving as simulations of real-world communication scenarios. By engaging students in group activities, the teacher prompts students' communication skills development, critical thinking, and the exchange of ideas among peers. Group interactions provide students with opportunities to practice speaking, listening, and collaborating with their classmates, fostering a sense of community and enhancing their overall learning experience.

If in a senior high school English class, the teacher organizes a reading circles activity where students are divided into small groups to discuss a selected text, such as a short story or poem. Each student of a group is assigned a specific role to analyze, interpret, and discuss the reading material. The teacher facilitates the activity by guiding the groups, encouraging participation, and posing thought-provoking questions to stimulate discussion. Through this group interaction, students collaborate, share

insights, and deepen their understanding of the text's themes, characters, and literary techniques. The reading circles activity promotes autonomous learning, cooperative learning, critical thinking, active engagement, and effective communication skills development in a supportive and interactive setting.

#### 3.4 Student Speaking to Teacher

Student-initiated interactions with the teacher play a vital role in promoting active participation, clarifying doubts, and seeking academic guidance. Instances where students ask questions, seek clarification, or engage in discussions with the teacher fall under this category. By encouraging students to voice their thoughts, express their opinions, and seek assistance when needed, the teacher creates a supportive learning environment where students feel empowered to engage with the learning material and actively participate in class discussions.

For example, in a grammar review lesson, a student approaches the teacher with questions about complex sentence structures. The student and teacher engage in a dialogue, where the student seeks clarification on grammar rules and practice constructing sentences together. This interaction not only helps the student understand the grammar rules better but also encourages active participation and fosters a supportive learning environment in the classroom.

#### 3.5 Student Speaking to Student

Peer interactions, such as pair work activities, provide students with opportunities for collaboration, language practice, and social learning. During activities like imitation exercises or communicative play tasks, students engage in conversations, practice language skills, and work together to complete tasks. Peer interactions foster language development, communication skills, and teamwork among students, allowing them to learn from each other, share ideas, and build relationships in the classroom setting.

Take a pair work activity on vocabulary learning part for example. Students work together to make conversations using new words learned in class. Through this peer interaction, students practice using the vocabulary in context, provide feedback to each other, and reinforce their language skills through collaborative learning. This type of interaction enhances language proficiency, promotes peer learning, and cultivates a supportive learning community in

the classroom.

Utilizing various forms of classroom interaction, including whole-class discussions, individualized feedback, group activities, student-teacher dialogues, and peer interactions, high school English teachers can create engaging and inclusive learning environments that cater to students' diverse needs, foster active participation, and enhance overall learning outcomes. These high school teaching scenarios demonstrate how different types of interactions can promote student engagement, personalized learning experiences, critical thinking, and effective communication skills development in the English classroom.

### 4. FUNCTIONS OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION

#### 4.1 Organize Classroom

Classroom interaction is a cornerstone of effective teaching practices, enabling teachers to gauge students' English proficiency levels and learning abilities. By engaging in dialogues with students, teachers can gain valuable insights into individual learning styles, preferences, and challenges. This understanding allows for the customization of teaching methods, ensuring that lesson plans are tailored to meet the diverse needs of students in the classroom.

Through interactions with students, teachers can identify areas where students may require additional support or enrichment, allowing for the implementation of differentiated teaching strategies. By creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment through interaction, teachers can effectively cater to the varying academic abilities and learning preferences of their students. This not only enhances student engagement but also promotes a sense of belonging and involvement in the learning process.

Furthermore, classroom interaction facilitates effective communication between teachers and students, fostering a collaborative atmosphere where ideas can be shared, questions can be asked, and feedback can be provided. This open exchange of information creates a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions. By promoting active participation and engagement through interaction, teachers can create a vibrant and stimulating classroom environment that encourages student learning and growth.

#### 4.2 Inspire Students Learning

Classroom interaction plays a crucial role in inspiring students to take ownership of their learning journey. By actively participating in discussions, group activities, and collaborative projects, students develop essential communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and problem-solving techniques. Classroom interactions provide students with opportunities to express their thoughts, share their perspectives, and engage in meaningful dialogue with their peers.

Through interaction with their teachers and classmates, students are encouraged to set learning goals, engage in independent study, and take responsibility for their academic progress. Teachers can foster a culture of self-directed learning by providing students with the tools and resources they need to succeed, including guidance on effective study habits, time management strategies, and learning techniques. By empowering students to take charge of their own learning, teachers instill a sense of autonomy and initiative that can benefit students both inside and outside the classroom.

Additionally, classroom interaction promotes a sense of community and collaboration among students, encouraging teamwork, cooperation, and mutual support. By working together on group projects, engaging in peer-to-peer discussions, and sharing ideas with one another, students develop important social and interpersonal skills that are essential for their future success. Classroom interactions also provide students with opportunities to build relationships, establish connections, and network with their peers, creating a supportive learning community where all students can thrive.

#### 4.3 Answerer of Doubts

Teachers play an essential role in addressing students' doubts, questions, and learning challenges. Classroom interaction provides a platform for students to seek clarification on difficult concepts, receive feedback on their work, and engage in meaningful discussions with their teachers. By fostering open lines of communication and creating a supportive learning environment, teachers can ensure that students feel comfortable asking for help and seeking assistance when needed.

Classroom interactions allow teachers to identify areas where students may be struggling and provide targeted support to help them overcome difficulties. By engaging in one-on-one discussions, small group activities, and

collaborative projects, teachers can offer personalized guidance that meets the individual needs of each student. Additionally, teachers can utilize online platforms, such as WeChat group, email, studying applet, and so on, to provide ongoing support and assistance to students outside of the classroom.

By actively engaging with students, listening to their concerns, and addressing their questions, teachers can create a positive and nurturing learning environment that promotes academic success and personal growth. Classroom interactions enable teachers to connect with students on a personal level, build close relationship and trust, and create meaningful learning experiences that inspire curiosity, creativity, and lifelong learning.

In conclusion, classroom interaction plays a fundamental role in enhancing the educational experience for students and promoting a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Through effective interaction, teachers can assess students' needs, adjust instruction to meet individual learning styles, and foster collaboration in the classroom. By promoting student engagement, encouraging self-directed learning, and providing targeted support, teachers can empower students to succeed academically, develop essential skills, and achieve their full potential. Classroom interaction is not just a teaching strategy; it is a catalyst for student growth, learning, and achievement.

#### 5. SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL'S ENGLISH CLASS

Based on the current situation of English classroom interaction, some suggestions for improving English classroom interaction in senior high school are put forward as follows, and they will be mainly for teachers and students.

##### 5.1 For Teachers

##### 1) Transform the Role of Teachers and Provide More Opportunities for Students

Teachers should transform the role of teachers from imparting knowledge to becoming guides and facilitators, stimulating students' interest and creativity in learning. Teachers should adopt multiple teaching methods and strategies to meet the learning styles and needs of different students. For example, using interactive teaching methods such as group discussions, role-playing, and problem-solving activities can stimulate

students' interest and participation. Choose interesting and engaging content that is closely related to students' interests and daily life. By using real-world examples, multimedia resources, case studies, etc., teachers can attract students' attention and stimulate their interest in learning. Teachers should also establish the concept of "students are the main body of learning", pay attention to cultivating students' language application ability and autonomous and cooperative learning ability. Teachers can effectively apply cooperative learning and group learning based on cooperative principles to classroom activities. In this process, teachers should change the traditional role of instructor, use humorous language and interesting communication tasks or activities to alleviate students' learning pressure in the classroom, stimulate students' creative and flexible thinking, and enhance their interest in learning.

Through the design of interactive activities, different students' interests and hobbies are reasonably designed into activities, and organizational activities are covered in teaching. It's also very important to establish trust and respect between teachers and students. Establishing good relationships with students can promote effective interaction, and students are more willing to participate and share. On the basis of equality between teachers and students, students are concerned and encouraged to learn English. Large class teaching may limit the interaction between students and teachers. The solution includes group activities, group discussions, etc., and promoting student participation through small-scale interactions. Encourage students to actively participate in classroom activities, ask questions, express opinions, share experiences, etc. Provide students with sufficient time and opportunities to express their opinions, and respect different opinions and perspectives.

2) Respect Students' Individual Differences and Pay Attention to the Learning Needs of Students  
Under the requirements of classroom interaction, teachers should respect students' individual differences. In teaching, teachers should recognize, respect and study differences, think and guide students' learning from the perspective of each student. Every student has his unique personal potential, teachers should dig it out and carry it forward. Ignoring individual differences will inevitably lead to the rejection of students' individual acceptance differences, the ignorance

of students' subjectivity in learning, and the suppression of students' personality development. The result is bound to make students lose interest in learning English. Therefore, in interactive activities, teachers should respect the individual differences of students and encourage students to actively participate in interactive teaching activities, such as questioning, discussion, and group activities. At the same time, ensure equal opportunities for participation for each student and avoid some students being overly dominant or being overlooked. When encountering shy and self-confident students, they should give priority to encouragement, first cultivate their self-confidence, and gradually lead them to participate in interactive teaching activities.

Every student has learning needs, and every teacher must pay attention to meet students' meaningful learning needs. Senior high school English teachers face students with different levels of English and knowledge. Senior high school English teachers should meet the learning needs of students at different levels according to the differences of students' learning levels. To meet the different needs of students, teachers should establish students' learning level information in advance, and then set and implement learning goals in turn. Individual learning planning and goal setting can stimulate students to study hard. By fully mobilizing students' interest in English learning, teachers make students more actively participate in teaching activities, learn to think independently, develop their own good English communication skills, and ensure that students can think independently. Only by scientifically creating a warm classroom atmosphere can teachers mobilize students' learning initiative, consolidate students' English learning ability, and finally achieve the effectiveness of interactive teaching. The key is to pay attention to the needs of students, provide positive feedback and support, and create a learning environment that encourages students' participation.

3) Strengthening the Discipline Management of English Classroom

Class teachers deal directly with students through interaction and can therefore contribute significantly to student discipline. In addition to teaching knowledge, management is also a part of teachers' teaching activities. Senior high school English teachers should properly manage problem behaviors in the English classroom to

ensure the smooth progress of classroom teaching activities. Teachers' careful design of classroom teaching structure is an effective method to control students' disciplinary violations. As long as students focus on learning, they will not be distracted and engage in other disciplinary activities. Senior high school English teachers must pay more attention to improve their academic level and educational wisdom. Teachers should start from two aspects when carrying out classroom discipline management: the first aspect is that teachers should establish the concept of "student-centered". In the classroom, teachers should be student-centered and regard everyone as an independent individual. Teachers advocate adopting differentiated teaching and management to meet the needs of each student, and always show a high respect for students' individual lives. Another important aspect is to remember that the maintenance of classroom discipline is not only a unilateral act, but also the mutual participation of teachers and students. In the management of classroom discipline, a good and harmonious relationship between teachers and students is conducive to the formation of orderly classroom discipline.

Only when teachers have rich cultural knowledge, use novel and flexible teaching strategies, and make the teaching process more attractive, can let students actively participate in the classroom under the influence of teachers' guidance, so as to stimulate students' interest in learning English and take part in the class, and then achieve the purpose of letting students consciously abide by classroom discipline and mention the effect of classroom teaching. The purpose of classroom discipline management is to enable students to better learn knowledge content, rather than punish students in disguise. Therefore, teachers should actively guide students who are at fault in the classroom, and use diversified methods to euphemistically express their dissatisfaction with students' behavior, so that students can consciously correct existing mistakes. Teachers should fully respect students' personal dignity in classroom discipline management, take care of students' self-esteem, and often provide positive encouragement and establish a good classroom atmosphere to make students feel happy and safe, so that students can feel the warmth and love of teachers, so as to consciously restrict their behavior in the classroom, fully participate

in the classroom learning. Discipline management in interactive teaching is a continuous process that requires patience, perseverance, and constant adjustment from teachers.

## 5.2 For Students

1) Students should keep a correct learning belief to acquire English knowledge

The students' language learning belief is an extremely important factor affecting their language learning. It not only affects students' language learning process, attitude, motivation and behavior, but also has a huge impact on the language proficiency and final learning efficiency. Therefore, it is essential for students to have a correct learning belief. The students should fully realize that learning English is not only for high scores in the college entrance examination, but also to raise the comprehensive ability to use language in real situations. The students also should realize that they are the principal part of learning, not the passive learners, and the language acquisition should not be passively inculcated by the teacher or the teacher's sentence-by-sentence explanation, but be from the integration of students own new and old knowledge, that is, with their own understanding and experience to improve cognition. Just as Piaget pointed out that knowledge was not acquired through direct teaching, but students integrating and using resources with other peers in a specific environment<sup>[6]</sup>, which means the entire interactive process is also a process of constructing knowledge, not just acquiring knowledge. Therefore, students should actively take the initiative to interact with the teachers and other students to acquire English knowledge what they really want.

2) Students should make cooperative learning to improve learning efficiency

Cooperative learning is a mutual learning in which students study together and make each effort to complete common learning tasks. Cooperative learning provides students with an opportunity to communicate and learn English knowledge together. Although students have different personalities and academic performance level, they can express opinions bravely and passionately in the cooperative learning, because students can cooperate, negotiate and share knowledge with each other through classroom interaction, so that they can learn more from their peers who are better than

their own or not, and hence build new knowledge or rebuild their previous experience to promote the improvement of their cognitive level and interactive ability. Cooperative learning can create an equal, harmonious and relaxing atmosphere among students, so that some students who are shy, introverted and lack confidence can bravely share and state their opinions, reduce their learning anxiety in cooperative learning and raise their learning confidence that can greatly increase their interest in English learning. In addition, students can simplify and recreate the teaching contents and enrich classroom learning activities to arouse their interest in participating in the classroom and break the silence in the classroom with cooperative learning. In short, the cooperative learning can fully mobilize students' learning enthusiasm and make them truly participate in the classroom interaction to improve their learning efficiency.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

On the whole, senior high school English teachers need to make more efforts not only to improve themselves and their classroom interaction skills but also to create a more effective and productive interactive English class. Through the above analysis and suggestions, the effectiveness of interactive teaching in senior high school English class can be improved, promoting active participation and learning outcomes among students. At the same time, teachers also need to constantly explore and innovate in the teaching process, adjust flexibly according to the actual situation of

students, in order to achieve better interactive effects. However, specific improvement measures need to be adjusted and implemented according to the actual situation of different schools, teachers, and students.

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# The In-depth Application and Efficiency Enhancement of Questionnaire Survey Method in College Student Management

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, the scale of colleges and universities is constantly expanding, and students' demands are becoming increasingly diverse. The traditional way of managing students based on experience is no longer sufficient to meet the current needs. How to accurately understand students' demands, scientifically evaluate the effectiveness of services, and achieve dynamic management optimization has become the key to enhancing the management capabilities of colleges and universities. This article focuses on the application of questionnaire survey methods in student management in colleges and universities, analyzes its innovative applications, practical value, and optimization methods in various links, and hopes to provide a reference for establishing a more precise data-driven student management model.

**Keywords:** Questionnaire; Application; Student Management

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The questionnaire survey method has the characteristics of being structured, standardized and anonymous. It can also collect data on a large scale, which precisely meets the requirements of objectivity, systematicness and efficiency for student management in colleges and universities. Specifically, it has the following important roles.

**Accurate perception of needs:** Breaking through the limitations of managers' subjective judgments, directly collect students' genuine thoughts on learning support, life services, development resources, etc., such as understanding whether students are satisfied with the course settings and what inconveniences there are in the use of campus facilities[1].

**Objective policy assessment:** Evaluate the implementation effects of policies such as scholarship assessment, dormitory management, and mental health services in a quantitative manner, for instance, by using Likert scales to understand student satisfaction, providing practical grounds for policy adjustment or termination.

**In-depth diagnosis of problems:** By combining scales and open-ended questions, we can conduct a thorough analysis of the underlying causes of complex issues such as academic difficulties and interpersonal conflicts. For instance, using scales like the stress scale and the sense of belonging scale,

along with open-ended questions, enables a more comprehensive understanding of the situation[2].

**Scientific allocation of resources:** Through investigation, the specific needs of different student groups are identified, such as the differences in career guidance needs among students of different grades. This way, limited management resources can be utilized where they are most needed.

From a theoretical perspective, the new public management theory emphasizes "customer orientation" and performance evaluation as its core, while the service-dominant logic regards students as value co-creators. The questionnaire survey method is an important means to put these theories into practice.

## 2. APPLICATION PRACTICE OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY METHOD IN CORE SCENARIOS OF STUDENT MANAGEMENT

### 2.1 Academic Support and Development Management

The application scenarios mainly include collecting feedback on the quality of teaching in courses, diagnosing learning difficulties, and assessing the demand for academic resources[3].

**Key points for questionnaire design:** Focus on aspects such as the relevance of course content, the effectiveness of teaching methods, the fairness of assessment methods, the timeliness of teacher feedback, and the accessibility of learning resources. Use a 5-point scale to understand "the clarity of the teacher's answers to questions after class", and set open-ended questions, such as "What was the biggest obstacle you encountered in this course? Do you have any suggestions?"

**Data-driven decision-making:** During the semester, a university conducted a questionnaire survey and found that many freshmen failed their mathematics courses, mainly due to insufficient resources for tutorial classes. In response, the university specifically added tutorial classes, and as a result, the failure rate dropped by 15%.

### 2.2 Student Life Services and Community Management

**Application scenarios:** It is suitable for investigating dormitory satisfaction, evaluating the quality of cafeteria services, understanding campus safety perception, as well as analyzing student participation and preferences in activities.

**Key points for questionnaire design:** Design

questions around dimensions such as facility completeness and comfort, service response speed and attitude, environmental hygiene, price rationality, safety perception, activity attractiveness and convenience. Use a 7-point scale to measure "the response speed of maintenance personnel after dormitory repair". Additionally, through Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), identify the gaps between the importance students attach to various aspects of the cafeteria (taste, price, hygiene, queuing time) and their actual satisfaction levels, to determine the focus of improvement.

Data-driven decision-making: IPA analysis revealed that students were most dissatisfied with the queuing time during peak hours at the cafeteria. This aspect was of high importance but low satisfaction. Based on this result, the logistics department optimized the window settings and diversion plans.

### 2.3 Mental Health and Well-Being Care

Application scenarios: It is used for surveying stressors, assessing awareness of psychological services and barriers to their use, as well as measuring campus belonging.

Key points for questionnaire design: Standardized scales such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21), and the UCLA Loneliness Scale can be directly used. At the same time, core questions should be set to understand the main sources of stress for students (academic / economic / interpersonal / future employment), their understanding of psychological counseling services and concerns (such as stigmatization, privacy concerns), willingness to seek help and preferred channels. Special attention should be paid to protecting student privacy, ensuring anonymity, carefully wording sensitive questions, and providing information on psychological assistance resources.

Data-driven decision-making: Through questionnaire surveys, it was found that the uncertainty of employment prospects is the biggest source of stress for postgraduate students, and many students have insufficient understanding of the services provided by the school's career planning center. As a result, the school has strengthened the promotion of employment guidance and also added career planning workshops.

### 2.4 Employment Guidance and Career Development Services

The application scenarios mainly include tracking the employment status of graduates, assessing the internship needs and job-hunting skills of current students, and collecting feedback on employer satisfaction.

Key points for questionnaire design: For graduates, understand their employment destinations (industry / position / region), salary levels, degree of professional relevance, and their evaluations and suggestions for the school's cultivation process; for current students, understand their types of internship

opportunity needs (enterprise / research / public welfare), shortcomings in job-hunting skills (resume / interview / negotiation), and the career development resources they expect to obtain (industry lectures / alumni mentors / skills training); for employers, understand their evaluations of graduates' abilities (professional / communication / problem-solving), as well as suggestions for recruitment cooperation.

Data-driven decision-making: Employer feedback indicated that graduates lacked practical experience in projects. As a result, the college reformed its curriculum and incorporated more project-based learning (PBL) content.

## 3. CORE PROCESSES AND KEY TECHNICAL POINTS OF APPLYING QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY METHOD IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

### 3.1 Precisely Target the Goal

First, it is necessary to clarify the core issue encountered in management: is it to assess the current situation, diagnose problems, or predict trends? Based on the issue, determine the scope of the investigation: is it targeted at a specific group or all students in the school, and then determine the core content of the investigation.

### 3.2 Scientific Questionnaire Design

Structural optimization: The questionnaire logic should be clear, with questions arranged in a funnel-like sequence from general to specific. The length should be moderate. Online questionnaires are best kept within 15 minutes. At the same time, avoid leading or ambiguous questions.

Question type adaptation: Predominantly closed-ended questions (single-choice, multiple-choice, and scale questions) are used to facilitate quantitative analysis, while open-ended questions are employed to explore deeper thoughts.

Scale reliability and validity: Mature scales such as PSU and NSSE should be preferred. If a self-compiled scale is used, it must undergo a pretest to verify its reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) and validity.

Pilot Test: Conduct a test on a small scale to promptly identify and correct issues such as unclear expressions, missing options, and logical jumps.

### 3.3 Efficient Samples and Implementation

Sampling strategy: If it is a specific group, such as students in financial difficulty, a comprehensive investigation can be conducted; if it is a large group, such as all undergraduate students in the school, stratified random sampling should be adopted, dividing by grade and college to ensure that the sample can represent the overall situation[4].

Diversified distribution channels: Distribute questionnaires through official email systems, teaching platforms (such as Blackboard/Moodle), campus APP push notifications, targeted class group notifications, and other methods. Additionally, you can set up some small gifts or lottery activities to enhance students' participation enthusiasm.

Time window selection: Avoid special periods such



as exam weeks and holidays to ensure that students have sufficient time to fill out the questionnaire carefully.

### 3.4 Rigorous Data Processing and Analysis

Data cleaning: Eliminate invalid responses, such as those with regular patterns or contradictions, and handle missing values properly.

Basic analysis: Conduct frequency analysis, calculate the proportion of each option, and then perform descriptive statistics to compute the mean, standard deviation, etc.

In-depth exploration: Utilize cross-analysis to reveal differences among various groups (such as different majors and grades); employ correlation and regression analysis to explore the relationships between variables and predict key outcomes; apply factor analysis and cluster analysis to uncover latent dimensions and segment student groups; conduct text analysis on open-ended questions to extract high-frequency keywords and core viewpoints.

## 4. RESULT INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION CLOSED LOOP

Visual presentation: Use clear bar charts, pie charts, heat maps, and other graphs to display key findings, making the results immediately understandable.

Insight extraction: It is not only necessary to describe the data, but also to combine the actual management situation to analyze the underlying causes and impacts.

Translate into action: Based on the analysis results, formulate improvement plans, adjust policies, optimize processes, add new services, and set measurable goals.

Feedback and Communication: Share the survey results and the upcoming actions with the students to make them feel that their opinions are valued by the school and to enhance their sense of trust.

Effect tracking: Subsequently, the actual effect of the improvement measures is evaluated through small-scale questionnaires or key indicators, forming a complete cycle of "survey - analysis - decision - action - assessment".

## 5. PRACTICAL CHALLENGES AND OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES

### 5.1 Poor Quality of Questionnaire Design

Presentation: The problem statement is ambiguous, the options are incomplete, the logic is confused, and the scale design is not rigorous.

Countermeasures: Strengthen the training of managers in questionnaire survey methods, invite professional researchers or third-party institutions to assist in the design, and strictly conduct pre-tests.

### 5.2 Sample Bias and Low Response Rate

The survey participants were not representative. For instance, most of them were students who were prone to offer opinions or were particularly enthusiastic. As a result, the findings could not reflect the situation of all students.

Countermeasures: Conduct scientific sampling to ensure coverage of all student groups; repeatedly

remind through email, APP push notifications, and offline publicity; provide convenient filling channels, such as mobile device compatibility; set attractive but not excessive incentives; explain the significance and confidentiality of the survey to students.

### 5.3 Insufficient Data Analysis Capabilities

Performance: Only simple percentage statistics were conducted, without in-depth analysis of the correlations and causal relationships among the data.

Countermeasures: Introduce professional talents in data analysis, use tools such as SPSS, Python, and Tableau; strengthen the data analysis skills training for existing personnel; cooperate with the Statistics College and Computer College within the university.

### 5.4 Disconnection between Results Application and Lack of Feedback

The performance: The investigation ends after completion, and the results are not applied to actual management. Or the actions taken do not match the data results, and there is no feedback to the students.

Countermeasures: Incorporate questionnaire surveys into the essential process of management decision-making, establish a "data - decision - action" accountability mechanism, formulate a detailed plan for the application of results and publicly commit to it, and provide feedback on the survey results and subsequent actions to students through multiple channels.

### 5.5 Ethical and Privacy Risks

The performance shows that the anonymity protection of student information is insufficient, and there is a risk of sensitive data leakage, which may be misused.

Countermeasures: Strictly abide by ethical norms, do a good job in informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, safely store and destroy data; formulate a dedicated student data privacy protection policy; only collect necessary management data; conduct summary processing when releasing results to avoid identifying individuals.

## 6. FUTURE OUTLOOK: FROM TOOLS TO ECOSYSTEMS

The wide application of questionnaire survey methods marks the shift of student management in colleges and universities from experience-driven to data-driven. In the future, it will also have these development trends:

Technology integration: By combining data generated from campus one-card systems, online learning platforms, access control systems, etc., and conducting comprehensive analysis, a more comprehensive understanding of students can be achieved.

Dynamic monitoring: Shift from one-off surveys to a regular "Student Experience Monitoring System", which promptly identifies and resolves management issues through monthly mini-surveys or real-time feedback modules on the APP.

Intelligent upgrade: Utilize natural language processing (NLP) technology to automatically

analyze open-ended question feedback, enhancing the efficiency of qualitative data analysis; explore the use of AI to optimize questionnaire design.

Participatory governance: Make questionnaires an important channel for students to participate in school management, invite students to participate in the design of questions and discussions on the application of results, and enhance the democracy of management and students' sense of identification.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Questionnaire survey method is not merely a data collection but a bridge for communication between administrators and students. It offers students the opportunity to express their genuine needs and provides administrators with a basis for scientific decision-making. When college administrators master skills such as questionnaire design, sampling, and analysis proficiently and transform data insights into practical actions, student management can shift from passive response to proactive care and from reliance on experience to greater precision. Under the joint influence of data-driven approaches and

humanistic care, college student management can achieve a leap from "experience-based governance" to "evidence-based good governance", better promoting the all-round development of students.

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# Research on the Construction of Industry-education Integrated Practice Centers in Higher Vocational Education

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**Abstract:** The development of higher vocational education serves as a crucial human resource guarantee for facilitating the orderly advancement of industrial transformation and upgrading, with the construction of practical talent cultivation centers constituting a key initiative. Traditional vocational training bases, predominantly established solely by academic institutions, exhibit significant disparities from enterprise operational realities. This necessitates comprehensive integration of resources from social entities, governmental authorities, and industrial enterprises through tripartite collaborations. Joint establishment and utilization of practice bases via school-enterprise partnerships aim to create open regional school-based practical training centers while enhancing faculty application capabilities in emerging technologies and advanced equipment. Such collaborative efforts contribute to enriching pedagogical resources, reforming teaching methodologies, and optimizing disciplinary alignment. Investigation into the construction of industry-education integrated talent cultivation centers extends the theoretical framework for high-quality development in vocational colleges by exploring innovative models of campus practice center development. This research provides referential value for enhancing disciplinary program construction, clarifying specialty positioning, optimizing practical training infrastructure integration, and improving professional talent cultivation quality. Furthermore, it establishes foundational support for differentiated development in vocational education, addressing both theoretical paradigms and practical implementation strategies within the vocational education ecosystem.

**Keywords:** Vocational Education; Industry-Education Integration; Practice Centers

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the waves of economic globalization and rapid technological advancement, industrial structures are undergoing unprecedented transformation and upgrading. Emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, big data, and new energy are thriving, while traditional industries are accelerating their transition toward digitalization and intelligence. This revolutionary shift has

significantly reshaped labor market demands. As the educational form most closely intertwined with industrial development, higher vocational education bears the critical responsibility of continuously supplying society with highly skilled professionals[1].

Industrial transformation no longer solely prioritizes workers' mastery of foundational skills but imposes stringent standards for practical competencies. In intelligent manufacturing, for instance, enterprises require technicians proficient in operating advanced CNC equipment and resolving complex technical challenges in production workflows, necessitating hands-on experience in real-world environments. Furthermore, innovation has emerged as a core driver of industrial progress. In product development, industries urgently seek personnel capable of integrating novel technologies and concepts into design and manufacturing processes to create competitive advantages. Additionally, with the widespread adoption of technologies such as 5G communication and blockchain across sectors, talent's ability to master and apply emerging technologies has become indispensable[2].

Against this backdrop, industry-education integration—a pivotal model for talent cultivation in higher vocational education—has gained heightened prominence. As a critical platform for such integration, the efficacy of practice centers directly determines the quality of vocational education and its alignment with industrial needs. Historically, a disconnect has persisted between higher vocational education and industry, with graduates often inadequately prepared for actual workplace requirements. The establishment of robust industry-education integrated practice centers bridges this gap by fostering institutionalized collaboration. On one hand, educational institutions can incorporate enterprises' advanced production technologies and management methodologies into curricula, ensuring resource modernization. Conversely[3], enterprises engage deeply in the talent cultivation process, nurturing future human capital tailored to

their needs. This symbiotic interaction optimizes the allocation of educational and industrial resources, enabling higher vocational education to better serve socioeconomic development. Ultimately, such integration becomes an imperative strategy for advancing industrial upgrading and fostering synergistic growth between talent development and industrial evolution.

## 2. CURRENT CHALLENGES IN PRACTICE CENTER DEVELOPMENT

The construction of industry-education integrated practice centers in higher vocational education plays a pivotal role in advancing the high-quality development of vocational education and meeting industrial demands for highly skilled professionals. However, the current development of these practice centers faces formidable challenges. Issues such as the inherent limitations of traditional training base models, insufficient depth and breadth of industry-academia collaboration, and the constraints imposed by gaps in faculty's practical competencies on teaching quality have significantly hindered the realization of practice center objectives. Addressing these challenges necessitates in-depth analysis and the exploration of targeted solutions.

### 2.1 Limitations of Traditional Training Bases

Historically, vocational colleges established training bases independently, leading to significant disconnects between campus facilities and actual industrial workflows. Schools often lack deep insights into corporate production processes and technological requirements, resulting in outdated equipment and curricula disconnected from real-world applications. For instance, mechanical manufacturing programs in some institutions still emphasize obsolete machining techniques, while industries have widely adopted CNC systems and smart manufacturing technologies. This mismatch renders graduates uncompetitive in job markets, necessitating prolonged adaptation periods post-employment.

### 2.2 Superficial Industry-academia Collaboration

While many vocational colleges recognize the importance of industry partnerships, most engagements remain superficial—limited to sporadic internships or guest lectures. Enterprises rarely participate meaningfully in curriculum design or infrastructure development due to insufficient long-term collaboration mechanisms. Poor communication between schools and industries further impedes consensus on talent development goals and practical teaching standards, undermining the effectiveness of practice centers.

### 2.3 Insufficient Teacher Competency

Teachers' practical expertise directly impacts educational outcomes. However, many instructors in

vocational education lack industry experience and familiarity with cutting-edge technologies. Consequently, they struggle to integrate real-world case studies or operational skills into teaching, even when schools partner with enterprises. For example, in emerging fields like information technology, instructors' outdated knowledge hinders their ability to guide students in mastering advanced applications.

## 3. STRATEGIC MEASURES FOR PRACTICE CENTER CONSTRUCTION

To address the existing challenges in constructing industry-education integrated practice centers within higher vocational education, the formulation of comprehensive and actionable strategies is imperative. These strategies must leverage synergistic efforts from multiple stakeholders. Specifically, collaborative initiatives involving governments, enterprises, and educational institutions are essential to co-develop training bases that overcome the limitations of traditional models. Concurrently, establishing open regional practice centers will dismantle resource barriers and advance the integration of production, education, and research. Equally critical is prioritizing the enhancement of faculty practical competencies, thereby laying a solid foundation for ensuring the quality of practice-oriented instruction. Through comprehensive and in-depth strategy implementation, the construction of industry-education integrated practice centers in higher vocational education can be effectively standardized. This will align talent cultivation with industrial demands and drive the high-quality development of vocational education.

### 3.1 Multi-stakeholder Collaborative Development

(1) Government Policy Support: Governments should enact policies to incentivize corporate participation in training base development, such as tax breaks, financial subsidies, or dedicated funds for school-enterprise partnerships. Establishing industrial-academic exchange platforms can enhance resource sharing and alignment.

(2) Corporate Involvement: Enterprises must actively contribute equipment, technical expertise, and internship opportunities. Jointly designing curricula and embedding real-world projects (e.g., electronics R&D initiatives) into training programs can enhance students' problem-solving skills.

(3) Institutional Leadership: Colleges must integrate internal resources, align programs with industry trends, and innovate collaboration models. Strengthening faculty development and instituting robust management systems ensure sustainable center operations.

### 3.2 Open Regional Practice Centers

(1) Resource Sharing: Breaking institutional and sectoral barriers, open centers should serve students from multiple colleges and industry employees. A regional smart manufacturing practice center, for example, maximizes resource utilization by sharing

facilities and faculty across institutions while offering skill upgrades for local enterprises.

(2) Industry-Academia-Research Integration: Practice centers must link teaching, research, and industrial innovation. Collaborative projects (e.g., battery endurance R&D for new energy vehicles) allow students and faculty to address real corporate challenges, transforming academic insights into tangible productivity.

### 3.3 Enhancing Teacher Competence

(1) Corporate Immersion Programs: Regular faculty placements in enterprises enable instructors to master modern production techniques and management practices. For example, engineering teachers might engage in product development at partner firms, later integrating this experience into classrooms.

(2) Continuous Professional Development: Targeted training on emerging technologies (e.g., AI workshops) and exposure to global academic trends ensure instructors remain industry-relevant. Inviting industry experts for on-campus lectures further bridges the knowledge gap.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The development of industry-education integrated practice centers in higher vocational education constitutes a multifaceted and systematic undertaking, necessitating indispensable contributions from diverse stakeholders, including governments, enterprises, and educational institutions. Traditional training bases, plagued by disconnects from industrial realities, superficial industry-academia collaboration, and deficiencies in faculty practical competencies, have proven inadequate. In response, the synergistic co-construction of training bases—guided by governmental policy frameworks, deepened enterprise engagement, and the proactive role of schools—has effectively dismantled institutional constraints, infusing practice centers with industry-aligned dynamism. Complementary to this, the establishment of open regional school-based practice centers breaks through resource silos, fosters cross-sectoral resource sharing, and accelerates the integration of production, education, and research, thereby elevating the competitiveness and regional influence of vocational education. Simultaneously, prioritizing faculty practical capacity-building

addresses pedagogical core challenges, solidifying the foundational quality of practice-oriented instruction.

Building upon these advantages, the significance of industry-education integrated practice centers extends beyond immediate educational outcomes. They augment theoretical frameworks for the high-quality advancement of vocational institutions, offering novel theoretical underpinnings and strategic guidance. Innovatively reshaping the paradigms for practice center development, these initiatives uncover more agile and effective construction pathways. Notably, they enhance the efficacy of specialized talent cultivation, producing graduates with precision alignment to industry demands and heightened employability. Moreover, they underscore the distinctive strengths of vocational education by strengthening its integration with industrial imperatives, thereby fostering sectoral uniqueness.

Moving forward, as industries undergo continuous upgrading and socioeconomic evolution intensifies, demands for vocational talent will grow increasingly complex and rigorous. To meet these challenges, sustained efforts to advance industry-education integrated practice centers are imperative. Persistent innovation in collaborative mechanisms, holistic resource integration, and faculty development will inject renewed vitality into higher vocational education. Such efforts will not only align with transitional trajectories of industries but also supply a robust, skill-centric workforce to propel socioeconomic progression.

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# Curriculum Design for Advanced Manufacturing Technology Vocational Education

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**Abstract:** Currently, vocational education in our country is facing two major challenges: the disconnect between professional construction and industry demand, and the insufficient matching between majors and positions. To address these challenges, it is necessary to adhere to the educational philosophy of vocational education as a type of education that is accessible to all, and integrate the "engineering integration" education model into the development of vocational education curricula. This article aims to explore the design and research of the advanced manufacturing technology major and the "engineering integration" curriculum system.

**Keywords:** Advanced manufacturing; Vocational education; Integrated engineering; Curriculum design, Teaching reform

With the promotion of the national "the Belt and Road" strategy, China's manufacturing industry is undergoing transformation and upgrading[1]. The industrial structure is constantly optimized and adjusted, and the demand for professionals is growing, especially in the high-end, advanced, service-oriented and other fields of manufacturing. However, vocational education in our country still faces severe challenges: the gap between professional construction and industry demand has not been bridged, the matching degree between majors and positions is low, and it is difficult to meet the urgent demand of enterprises for high-quality talents. To solve this problem, it is necessary to adhere to the educational philosophy of vocational education as a type of education that is open to all, and integrate the "engineering integration" teaching model into the development of vocational education curriculum.

## 1. CURRICULUM DESIGN FOR ENGINEERING INTEGRATED VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

### 1.1 Teaching Mode Design

Curriculum design should first reach a consensus on the teaching philosophy, which is the concept of "integration of engineering and learning", that is, "integration of engineering and learning". The selection of teaching content should be closely aligned with industry needs, and the course content should be scientifically and reasonably determined

based on the precise requirements of the industry for talents. The organization of the teaching process should follow the principle of "learning by doing, learning by doing", so that students can master knowledge, skills, and professional ethics in the learning process. The selection of teaching methods should fully reflect the student-centered concept, aiming to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning. At the same time, closely integrating the characteristics of vocational college students, cleverly incorporating diversified teaching methods such as project practice, task driven, and project oriented, to ensure that students receive sufficient exercise in simulated or real professional environments[2]. Curriculum design should firmly adhere to the core concepts of vocational education and innovative development, and comprehensively promote educational reform and innovation around four dimensions: "matching job demands, optimizing course content, innovating teaching processes, and innovating evaluation methods". Only in this way can we cultivate high-quality skilled talents that meet the needs of social development and enterprise demands. Curriculum design should focus on cultivating students' comprehensive vocational abilities, allowing them to exercise and improve during the learning process, and thus achieve the combination of theory and practice.

### 1.2 Course Content Design

The course of "Advanced Manufacturing Technology and Applications" is a comprehensive course that covers knowledge and skills including electromechanical technology, electrical control technology, sensor technology, CNC machine tool operation and maintenance, industrial robots, advanced manufacturing equipment application and maintenance, advanced factory planning and construction, industrial big data, etc. This course includes core professional courses and elective courses. Core professional courses mainly cultivate students' vocational abilities, including theoretical knowledge and practical operation skills, such as sensor application and maintenance, CNC machine tool operation and maintenance, etc. Elective courses mainly cultivate students' self-learning abilities, such as advanced manufacturing

equipment and system applications, advanced manufacturing factory planning and construction, etc.

### 1.3 Teaching Implementation Design

The core of teaching implementation design lies in the fact that teachers need to closely integrate the learning characteristics of advanced manufacturing courses with professional job standards and students' personal development goals, carefully design the teaching process, and flexibly adjust teaching design and strategies during the implementation process. In the implementation of the curriculum, teachers should choose teaching methods that are suitable for students based on their different learning characteristics, and organize students to carry out targeted learning activities. The selection of teaching methods should be determined based on students' cognitive patterns and learning characteristics, taking into account the cognitive levels and learning characteristics of students from different majors, different age groups, and backgrounds. Teachers should actively utilize information technology and network resources to implement a blended learning model that combines online and offline teaching, while closely monitoring students' learning status and evaluating learning outcomes in a timely manner.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OF ADVANCED MANUFACTURING COURSE IN PRACTICE UNDER THE MODE OF "ENGINEERING INTEGRATION"

### 2.1 Optimize the Curriculum System and Integrate Teaching Content

The construction of the curriculum system, as the cornerstone of advanced manufacturing curriculum construction under the integrated engineering model, plays a crucial role in its overall development. Firstly, the construction of the advanced manufacturing curriculum system under the integration of engineering and technology should be determined based on factors such as talent training objectives, market demand, and student development needs. Through in-depth research on enterprise production positions and work tasks, it is necessary to clarify the guidance of job requirements, accurately position talent training objectives, and design courses accordingly, covering the skills, knowledge, and comprehensive qualities required for enterprise production positions[3]. Secondly, the construction of the advanced manufacturing curriculum system under the integration of engineering and technology should be guided by the integration of engineering and technology. Traditional professional courses should be organically integrated with engineering and technology courses to achieve the cultivation of students' professional knowledge and skills that match the actual work requirements of enterprise

production positions.

In the process of integrating teaching content, course content should be set according to the requirements of students' ability development goals, with comprehensive vocational ability development as the core. For example, research and practice on the curriculum system of higher vocational education have shown that the ability advanced curriculum system emphasizes the progressive, practical, and targeted nature of course content. Through phased and hierarchical teaching arrangements, students gradually improve their own abilities. At the same time, the teaching reform of project-based courses in manufacturing vocational colleges based on comprehensive vocational ability training proposes to construct a "three ability line" training mode through action oriented and task driven project-based models, to meet the new requirements of vocational ability training for manufacturing vocational college students. For example, in the advanced manufacturing course of CNC machine tool maintenance and management, project-based teaching content is organically integrated with traditional teaching content based on the original curriculum system. The practical operation part is taught in the first chapter, and the theoretical teaching is taught in the second chapter; For example, in the advanced manufacturing course of Electrical Control and PLC Technology Application major, project-based teaching content is organically integrated with traditional theoretical teaching content based on the original curriculum system, and the practical operation part is placed in Chapter 3. After comparing and analyzing the traditional curriculum system with the integrated engineering curriculum system, it is not difficult to find that there are many similarities between the construction of the advanced manufacturing curriculum system under the integrated engineering model and the integrated engineering model.

### 2.2 Strengthen School Enterprise Cooperation and Achieve the Co-construction and Sharing of Teaching Resources

In the integrated mode of engineering, students need to actively participate in practice while completing learning tasks, so as to better improve their comprehensive quality and lay a solid foundation for future work. To achieve this goal, schools need to actively cooperate with enterprises to promote the deep integration of theoretical knowledge and practical operations. In school enterprise cooperation, schools need to provide learning and practical venues as well as training equipment to enterprises, so that students can conduct practical training operations in enterprises, in order to better cultivate students' hands-on and innovative abilities. In addition, schools can also arrange for teachers to visit and learn from

enterprises, which can enable teachers to have a deeper understanding of the production processes, equipment, and techniques of the enterprises.

### 2.3 Improve Course Evaluation and Organically Integrate Evaluation with Teaching

The evaluation of the integrated engineering advanced manufacturing course is student-centered and assessed through various forms. Classroom assessment can introduce a group collaboration model, where students are grouped and teachers are responsible for evaluating the completion of tasks in each group. On a group basis, the quality, efficiency, and innovation level of task completion are used as evaluation indicators. Members of the group are responsible for the tasks completed by the group, and each person has the responsibility and obligation to complete their assigned tasks. In the classroom assessment stage, a process based assessment method can be introduced to encourage students to independently collect information and make simple products as display content. This evaluation method fully mobilizes students' subjective initiative, enabling them to independently acquire knowledge. At the same time, it can also transform students from passive to active in the learning process.

### 3. CONCLUSION

In practice, to achieve the integration of advanced manufacturing and engineering, it is necessary to follow the principle of process oriented work and professional competence as the core. Combining modern vocational education teaching concepts and methods, reforms are carried out from three aspects: building a vocational ability system, designing learning scenarios, and designing task modules. As shown in the research on advanced

manufacturing technology teaching reform under the engineering integration mode, this mode can effectively improve teaching effectiveness, increase students' intuitive understanding, and promote understanding of knowledge points[4]. In addition, when designing a curriculum system that integrates advanced manufacturing and engineering, it is necessary to deeply consider the diversified design ideas of advanced manufacturing technology and its impact on product development cycles, production costs, and product quality, ensuring that the course content is synchronized with the latest developments in advanced manufacturing technology, thereby cultivating technical and skilled talents that can adapt to future market demands.

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# Research on the Collaborative Mechanism and Efficiency Enhancement of College Student Management under the Concept of "Three Pronged Education": Empirical Analysis Based on the Developmental Support System

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**Abstract:** At a critical period of high-quality development in higher education, the traditional student management model has gradually exposed many drawbacks, with structural problems such as dispersed management entities, fragmented management processes, and fragmented management resources becoming increasingly prominent. The concept of "three pronged education" is like a bright light, which provides a solid theoretical basis for universities to reconstruct a scientific and reasonable student management system by strengthening the responsibility of all staff in education, connecting the entire process of education, and integrating comprehensive educational resources. This study focuses closely on the core of developmental support, deeply analyzes the actual situation and data of 35 universities, and creatively proposes a three-dimensional management model of "institutional collaboration data-driven service embedding". Practice has proven that this model has significant effectiveness, not only greatly improving students' academic completion rates and enhancing their psychological resilience, but also significantly improving their employment quality, providing a highly informative management model for promoting the modernization of university governance.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Mechanism; Three Pronged Education; Developmental Support System

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the continuous expansion of higher education, the demands of student groups are becoming increasingly diversified, and a structural tension is gradually forming between the two. According to the data released by the Ministry of Education in 2024, the student teacher ratio in undergraduate colleges has reached 18.7:1, which intuitively reflects the urgent need for refinement in student management in universities. The concept of "Three in One Education" emphasizes the shared responsibility of all staff in educating students, optimizes the entire education process throughout the entire cycle, and effectively integrates all essential resources. Its core

essence lies in using a systematic governance approach to effectively enhance students' development efficiency. This study focuses on two key issues for in-depth exploration: firstly, how to construct an effective "three pronged education" management practice framework in the context of non ideological and political education; Secondly, through what specific mechanisms can the successful transformation from management effectiveness to student development effectiveness be achieved[1].

## 2.CURRENT CHALLENGES IN STUDENT MANAGEMENT

### 2.1 Failure of Main Body Collaboration

In the current management of college students, the problem of fragmented responsibilities is very prominent. The teaching department mainly focuses on students' academic performance, the logistics department is responsible for ensuring students' daily life services, and the psychological counseling center focuses on dealing with students' emotional problems. Due to the lack of effective cross departmental collaboration mechanisms, each department operates independently, making it difficult to form a management synergy. Taking the research situation of a provincial university as an example, up to 73% of cases of students with academic difficulties were not promptly coordinated with the psychological support department for handling. At the same time, the participation of families in student management is seriously insufficient. According to statistics, only 12% of universities have established regular home school communication platforms. When dealing with crisis events, the proportion of parents' information lagging behind exceeds 40%, which makes it difficult for families to provide necessary support and assistance to students in a timely manner[2].

### 2.2 Process Connection Fracture

There is a clear disconnect between the management of college students at different stages. The lack of effective connection between the adaptation period for freshmen and the career planning period for senior students has led to about 23% of students experiencing "academic collapse" in their sophomore

year. In addition, there is a serious problem of data silos in the process of student management. The psychological assessment data, daily consumption behavior data[3], classroom attendance data, and other data of students are scattered in different management systems, and the data coverage that can be analyzed across different stages is less than 15%, which greatly limits the comprehensive understanding and accurate management of students' overall situation.

### 2.3 Imbalance in Resource Matching

There is a clear problem of dispersion in the supply of student service resources. For example, when students handle matters related to scholarships and loans, they often need to travel back and forth between five different departments, which takes an average of 3.2 hours (China Association of University Management, 2024). This not only increases students' time costs, but also reduces management efficiency. Meanwhile, the application effect of digital platforms in universities is not ideal. 87% of university apps only have basic query functions and fail to build a personalized support ecosystem around student needs, which cannot fully leverage the advantages of digital management.

## 3. RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK OF THE "THREE PRONGED EDUCATION" CONCEPT

### 3.1 Full Participation: Building a Grid Based Community of Responsibility

To achieve full staff education, universities need to build a grid based responsibility community that combines vertical responsibility chains with horizontal collaboration networks. At the vertical level, establish a five level management system consisting of "school level decision-making level - functional department coordination level - departmental execution level - class mentor level - student autonomy level". Taking Fudan University's "academy system" reform as an example, the reform endows the mentor team with comprehensive functions such as academic guidance, life coordination, and development consultation, enabling mentors to pay more comprehensive attention to students' growth needs. At the horizontal level, implement the "joint meeting system" to effectively integrate resources from multiple departments such as academic affairs, psychological counseling, employment guidance, and logistical support. The Qiushi College of Zhejiang University has significantly improved the response speed of academic warnings by holding monthly cross departmental meetings, achieving a 200% increase.

### 3.2 Whole Process Integration: Key Node Intervention Model

Targeted intervention measures should be implemented at different stages of students' learning careers to achieve holistic education throughout the entire process. During the adaptation period of

enrollment, the "Freshman Sailing Plan" is launched to help freshmen adapt to university life as soon as possible and reduce dropout rates through forms such as peer mentoring and adaptation workshops. After Xiamen University implemented the plan, the first-year dropout rate of new students decreased by 58%. During the professional development period, establish an "undergraduate research incubation system" to accurately match students with mentors and project resources, and encourage students to participate in research projects. The proportion of undergraduate students participating in scientific research projects at the University of Science and Technology of China is as high as 67%, far higher than the national average of 31%. During the transition period of employment, carry out the "Vocational Ability Certification Program" and collaborate with enterprises to develop practical training courses. The "micro majors" jointly established by Shenzhen University and companies such as Tencent have increased the employment rate of students to 89% [4].

### 3.3 Comprehensive Collaboration: Multidimensional Support System Integration

Build a comprehensive and multi-dimensional support system to provide students with comprehensive development guarantees. In terms of academic support, establish academic guidance centers to provide students with professional services such as optimizing learning methods and academic writing guidance. The practical experience of the Bok Center at Harvard University shows that providing regular academic counseling to students can increase their GPA by an average of 0.3-0.5. In terms of life support, we will build a smart logistics platform to achieve "one click response" for repair, catering, security and other services. After the smart logistics platform of the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China was put into use, the processing time for daily affairs was significantly reduced, with an average processing time of only 15 minutes. In terms of development support, we will implement the "Second Classroom Transcript" system to quantitatively record students' social practice, innovation and entrepreneurship experiences, and provide scientific basis for students' comprehensive quality evaluation (referring to the "Second Classroom System Guidelines" of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League).

## 4. OPTIMIZATION PATH SUGGESTIONS

### 4.1 Institutional Innovation: Breaking Down Collaborative Barriers

To address the collaborative issues in student management in universities, institutional innovation is needed. Firstly, formulate the "Regulations on Collaborative Student Management Work", clarify the specific responsibilities of each department in student management work, establish a sound accountability mechanism, and ensure that all

management work is implemented effectively. Secondly, establish a "Management Efficiency KPI System" to include key indicators such as academic improvement rate and service satisfaction in the assessment scope, in order to motivate various departments to actively improve management efficiency.

#### 4.2 Technical Empowerment: Building a Smart Management Ecosystem

Empower university student management with advanced technological means. Develop a Decision Support System (DSS) for management, utilizing machine learning algorithms to analyze students' learning and life data, and predict their dropout risk, such as the OULA model adopted by the Open University in the UK. At the same time, the introduction of blockchain technology to store students' growth data ensures the authenticity of student files and the security of their personal privacy.

#### 4.3 Cultural Reconstruction: Strengthening Students' Subjectivity

Pay attention to the reconstruction of student management culture in universities and fully leverage the role of students as the main body. Establish a 'Campus Governance Student Committee' to invite students to participate in the revision of school management systems, referencing the ASUCSD model of the University of California, allowing students to truly become participants in campus governance. The implementation of the "Service Experience Officer" system recruits students every semester to participate in the optimization of management processes. After the implementation of this system, the response speed to student complaints

has increased by 70%, effectively enhancing students' sense of participation and satisfaction.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The proposal of the "three pronged education" concept has prompted the management of college students to gradually shift from the traditional discrete transaction processing mode to a systematic development support mode. By establishing a management system with responsibility grid, standardized processes, and ecological services, students' academic resilience, career competitiveness, and adaptability to life can be significantly enhanced. In the future development process, universities need to further explore the application boundaries of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence and neuroscience in student management decision-making, continuously optimize the "student-centered" governance paradigm, and create a better environment for students' growth and development.

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# Research on the "Online + Offline" Blended Teaching Model

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**Abstract:** In an era where information technology serves as the medium and carrier for knowledge dissemination and learning, the formation of blended teaching has been propelled. Building on the full coverage of blended teaching in core courses of professional groups, this study explores the blended teaching model, standardizes its teaching processes and resource allocation, deepens the reform of blended teaching, and advances its implementation more profoundly and solidly.

**Keywords:** Blended Teaching; Teaching Process; Gold Standard

## 1. IMPLEMENTATION BACKGROUND

With the deepening development of teaching informatization, the "online + offline" blended teaching model (referred to as blended teaching) has been widely adopted in vocational colleges, achieving nearly full course coverage. Blended teaching not only enhances the utilization and sharing of teaching resources but also allows for rational allocation of teaching activities across both spatial and temporal dimensions. However, many issues have emerged in the daily practice of blended learning in higher vocational institutions, primarily reflected in the following[1].

### 1.1 Emphasis on construction but neglect of usage.

Many institutions invest significant effort and resources in the development of online teaching materials but lack standardized practices for how teachers and students should use these resources after their completion[2].

### 1.2 Focus on quantity over quality.

The requirements for online resource development often prioritize mere existence and abundance, failing to effectively integrate with offline resources to achieve complementary advantages.

### 1.3 Singular evaluation criteria[3].

During the evaluation of online resources, the focus is solely on the number of resources or page views, leading to redundancy between online and offline resources. This reduces student learning to mere video-watching, significantly diminishing learning outcomes.

## 2. INNOVATING THE BLENDED TEACHING MODEL

To effectively promote the application of blended teaching and ensure its pedagogical impact, the institute conducted centralized discussions on dozens of blended reform courses. Based on the specific

learning conditions of students, a "three-ring, three-part, one standard" blended teaching model was developed[4].

### 2.1 Restructuring the "Three-Ring" Teaching Process to Implement a New Blended Teaching Model

Blended teaching should not be simplistically understood as a supplement to offline courses but rather as a transformation of the existing teaching model. The institute restructured the teaching process into three phases: preliminary preparation, mid-term learning, and post-learning. This involved the effective integration of online and offline elements in front-end analysis, learning objective design, learning resource construction, learning activity design, and learning evaluation design.

**Preliminary Preparation:** Utilizing modern personalized recommendation algorithms, customized learning paths were created for each student based on their academic interests and learning styles. Meanwhile, teachers adjusted offline course content more effectively by leveraging online learning resources and assessment results.

**Mid-Term Learning:** Interactive teaching tools such as online polling systems and interactive whiteboards were introduced to engage students in real-time. Teaching methods like case studies and group collaboration were employed to ensure teaching effectiveness and enhance students' problem-solving abilities. Additionally, real-time online experiments were incorporated to alleviate the limitations of offline lab resources while allowing students more flexibility in practical work.

**Post-Learning:** Remote practice and virtual experiments were implemented, enabling students to continue hands-on exercises after class. Online interaction and discussions were strengthened, with a focus on personalized tutoring to improve learning outcomes. Furthermore, a diversified comprehensive evaluation mechanism was established, incorporating assignments, online quizzes, and a combination of process, outcome, and value-added assessments to provide a holistic view of student performance.

### 2.2 Optimizing "Three-Part" Teaching Resources to Promote Effective Integration of Online and Offline Resources

Since online and offline resources cater to different teaching subjects, online resources should not merely replicate offline ones. The institute optimized teaching resources, including textbooks, case studies, and teaching methods, to reasonably allocate content

and formats for online and offline settings. This created a seamless, complementary "three-part" teaching resource system that fostered teacher-student interaction and a dynamic learning atmosphere, fully engaging students' initiative.

Online teaching, centered on students, focused on foundational knowledge and employed various methods to enhance learning interest, ensuring students "learn happily and solidly." Offline resources, used in classroom teaching, aimed at cultivating higher-order competencies by introducing complex problems, group tasks, and typical case. The institute collaborated with enterprises to use AR, digital twin, and other virtual simulation technologies to replicate real production equipment, processes, and scenarios, deepening students' understanding and skill application. This broke the limitations of traditional classroom teaching, creating a synergistic effect between online and offline instruction.

### 2.3 Refining the "Gold Standard" System Design to Detail Blended Teaching Resource Development

Existing evaluation criteria for blended teaching resources are overly simplistic, focusing only on the quantity of uploaded resources while neglecting metrics like online resource utilization and integration with offline courses. To ensure blended teaching enhances student learning outcomes, the institute further refined online resource development standards, established feasible feedback mechanisms, and prioritized learning effectiveness.

First, the standards for online resource development were optimized across multiple dimensions, including teaching objectives, content quality, diverse formats, and interactive design. Second, multi-channel feedback pathways were established to promptly address student input, regularly aggregate and analyze information, identify issues, and implement improvements. Incentives were also introduced to encourage active student participation in feedback. Third, learning outcomes were emphasized, with comprehensive evaluations covering participation, discussion depth, practical skills, and more. Fourth, teacher training and collaboration were strengthened through workshops on blended teaching concepts, methods, and techniques, enhancing their ability to design and evaluate online-offline resources. Teachers were encouraged to share experiences and strategies, fostering collective professional growth.

## 3. CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF BLENDED LEARNING

### 3.1 Technical Challenges And Breakthrough Paths

Currently, blended learning faces dual challenges at the technical implementation level. The uneven infrastructure directly impacts teaching equity, with survey data showing that approximately 12% of students are constrained by network conditions and struggle to achieve an equally high-quality learning experience. To address this issue, a multi-level technical support system needs to be established:

offline learning centers equipped with high-performance terminal devices should be set up to provide physical learning spaces for students with limited resources; meanwhile, lightweight mobile applications should be developed, with installation packages strictly controlled within 15MB to significantly lower the usage threshold; an intelligent resource caching mechanism should also be implemented to automatically adjust content loading strategies based on network conditions.

In terms of platform compatibility, the current cross-platform data interoperability rate of 76% restricts the integration and application of teaching data. Solutions include adopting the xAPI (Experience API) standard to build a unified learning data platform for standardized collection and analysis of multi-source data; developing a unified identity authentication system based on the OAuth 2.0 protocol to eliminate barriers when switching platforms; and establishing interface specifications compliant with IEEE learning technology standards to ensure seamless connectivity between systems. These technical improvements will effectively enhance the technical support capacity of blended learning.

### 3.2 Teacher Competency Transformation And Professional Development

The deepening implementation of blended learning places new demands on teachers' capabilities. Recent evaluations reveal significant gaps in teachers' digital instructional design, data analysis, and blended classroom management skills. To enhance digital instructional design capabilities, schools have innovatively adopted a "workshop + mentorship" training model, successfully cultivating 56 key teachers through 48-hour specialized training sessions, creating a demonstration effect.

In terms of data literacy, a three-tier certification system has been established, covering core competencies such as data collection, analysis, and application. Currently, 23% of teachers have obtained primary certification. To address blended classroom management challenges, an intelligent monitoring system has been developed to track 12 teaching indicators in real time, including student engagement levels and interaction frequency, providing teachers with precise classroom adjustment guidance.

These capacity-building measures must be integrated with teacher performance evaluations, professional title assessments, and other institutional mechanisms to establish a sustainable long-term development framework. Notably, improving teachers' digital competencies cannot rely solely on technical training but also requires a deeper shift in teaching philosophies, necessitating an institutional environment that encourages innovation.

### 3.3 Innovative Practices in Intelligent Teaching Systems

Blended learning is evolving toward greater

intelligence. Pilot applications of AI-assisted learning systems have demonstrated significant results, integrating multiple innovative features: personalized learning path planning based on knowledge graphs, dynamically adjusting content and difficulty; real-time voice Q&A powered by natural language processing engines, with an average response time under 3 seconds and an accuracy rate of 85%; and learning emotion detection through facial expression recognition and behavioral analysis, enabling timely intervention and adjustment suggestions.

In virtual teaching environments, three professional metaverse teaching and research rooms have been established, supporting innovative applications such as holographic projection teaching and 3D interactive experiments. Particularly noteworthy is the cross-national collaborative learning function, allowing students from different countries to complete projects in a shared virtual space. This immersive experience greatly expands the boundaries of teaching.

These intelligent applications not only transform knowledge delivery methods but also reshape teacher-student interaction models. However, the educational appropriateness of technological applications must be considered to avoid falling into the trap of "technology for technology's sake."

#### 4. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

This study systematically validates the effectiveness of the "Three Loops, Three Tiers, One Standard" blended learning model through practical implementation. The model innovatively constructs a "self-directed online learning – in-person deepening – virtual expansion" triple-loop learning process, ensuring continuity and extensibility; through a three-tier resource allocation system ("basic resources – extended resources – innovative resources"), it achieves gradient-based instructional design; and the established quality chain ("construction standards – application norms – evaluation system") ensures standardized teaching implementation. These innovations have significantly improved students'

comprehensive competency development.

Looking ahead, the development of blended learning should focus on three key directions:

Technology empowerment: exploring the application of 5G + edge computing in mobile learning to address real-time interaction latency issues;

Data-driven approaches: establishing a big data-based learning early warning system for precise teaching interventions;

Application scenarios: developing modular courses compatible with the "1 + X" certification system to support flexible learning needs.

Future research should focus on three key areas: the differences in learning outcomes among students with varying cognitive styles in blended environments, the psychological impact mechanisms of virtual simulation experiments on learners, and the construction and validation of a teacher digital competency model. These studies will provide critical insights for further refining the theoretical framework of blended learning.

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# A Survey on EFL Learning Engagement in College of Non-English Major College Students

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**Abstract:** This study examines English learning engagement among 201 non-English major undergraduates using the Student Course Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ). Results indicate overall engagement, with behavioral engagement being the weakest dimension, followed by emotional and cognitive engagement. Key findings reveal students demonstrate high homework completion and note-taking but lack class preparation initiative; while they actively attempt to cultivate interest, authentic enjoyment remains low; critically, behavioral participation shows minimal classroom interaction. The study recommends enhancing pedagogical innovation, fostering intrinsic motivation through learner-initiated tasks, and designing interactive activities to improve behavioral engagement, providing empirical insights for optimizing college English teaching strategies and student engagement outcomes.

**Keywords:** Learning Engagement; College English Course; Non-English Majors

## 1. INTRODUCTION

More and more studies at home and abroad have found that the level of learning engagement affects students' learning performance and learning outcomes. English is a required course for university students. In China, college education is an essential component of university education, and it is critical for developing high-quality specialized talent. Successful English learning requires great student engagement.

The first viewpoint proposed by Fredricks (2004)[1] that learning engagement can be identified by behavior engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement which is the mainstream perspective and widely adopted by domestic and overseas scholars. Sun Weiwen (2009)[2] defined learning engagement as the time and effort engaged in different academic activities at certain school environment and condition. The three-dimensional structure of learning engagement proposed by Fredricks is cross-cultural stable and more suitable for the study of learning engagement in college English courses, English learning engagement is defined as the behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement generated by learners in the process of English learning (Guo Jidong, 2018)[3]. Mao Junshe and Peng Qinghua (2021)[4] identified three themes

concerning work environmental affordance and individual work engagement, utilizing the affordance-engagement theory as a framework. Ren Qinmei (2021)[5] conducted a study involving 961 students who were not majoring in English to examine how motivation regulation relates to student engagement in a blended learning context. The findings indicated that motivation regulation significantly and positively predicted student engagement among college students in English learning. This research was grounded in social cognitive theory.

This thesis studies the present situation and influencing factors of non-English major college students' learning engagement, and provides a new research perspective for higher education quality assurance and college students' learning evaluation, and enriches relevant theories of college English learning engagement.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Questions

Taking non-English major college students as samples, this research undertakes to explore and clarify the status quo of English learning engagement from the perspectives of cognition, emotion and behavior.

1) What is the current situation of English learning engagement for freshmen and sophomores at target college?

2) What feasible suggestions can be put forward according to the analysis of college students' English learning engagement results?

### 2.2 Research Subjects

The research subjects were 201 college students majoring in non-English fields and their ages ranged from 17 to 21 years. In terms of gender, there were 166 females and 35 males. Regarding their year of study, 131 were freshmen and 70 were sophomores. As for their place of origin, 155 came from rural areas and 46 from urban areas. Additionally, 146 of the respondents held student leadership positions while 55 did not.

### 2.3 Research Instruments

This study use Student Course Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ) which is developed from Handlesman et al.'s (2005)[6] study. SCEQ was designed to measure specifically on learning engagement in particular college course. The SCEQ

is made up of 3 subscales, including cognitive engagement (9 items), emotional engagement (5 items), and behavioral engagement (6 items). All items will be measured on a 5-point Linker Scale, from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1 Levels of English Learning Engagement and of Each Dimension of English Learning Engagement

The questionnaire scores range from 1 to 5 (which means “never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “frequently”, “always”), the lower the score, the lower the engagement level, and the higher the score, the higher the engagement level. As shown in Table 1, Students’ overall English learning engagement is 2.76, which is somewhat lower than average of 3.0. Cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavior engagement are the three dimensions of learning engagement with values of 2.87, 2.83, and 2.54, respectively, with behavior engagement having the lowest score. As a result, non-English major freshmen and sophomores at target college had low levels of English learning engagement, with cognitive engagement being highest, emotional engagement second, and behavioral engagement lowest.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Students’ English Learning Engagement

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall	201	2.76	0.52
Cognitive Engagement	201	2.87	0.51
Emotional Engagement	201	2.83	0.79
Behavior Engagement	201	2.54	0.66

#### 3.2 Item Levels of Each Dimension

##### 3.2.1 Detailed Results About Cognitive Engagement.

A descriptive analysis of the cognitive engagement dimensions in college students’ English learning engagement (as presented in Table 2) reveals the following key findings. The mean scores of cognitive engagement dimensions predominantly remain below 3.0, indicating a pervasive lack of learning motivation and initiative among students, which manifests in inadequate levels of English learning engagement. Notably, the highest score of 4.08 is observed in CE3, followed by CE8 with a mean score of 3.84. CE7 ranks third with a score of 3.44, accompanied by a standard deviation of 1.03, which highlights significant interindividual differences in note-taking behaviors. The lowest score of 1.18 in CE9 suggests a low rate of classroom absenteeism among college students. Collectively, these findings underscore the necessity for students to optimize their study planning and refine cognitive strategies in English learning.

##### 3.2.2 Detailed Results about Emotional Engagement.

As indicated in Table 3, the English Learning Engagement subscale comprises five items. Apart from item EE3, the mean scores of the remaining

items are below 3, reflecting certain deficiencies in students’ emotional engagement. The content of EE3 has a mean score of 3.51, signifying that college students have invested more in enhancing their interest in English learning. However, the substantial standard deviation of EE3 suggests a significant variation in students’ enjoyment of English. The mean values of the other items are all below 3. This indicates that students exhibit inadequacies in these areas and generally have a low interest in learning English.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Engagement

	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cognitive Engagement	CE1	201	2.70	0.74
	CE2	201	2.91	0.73
	CE3	201	4.08	0.86
	CE4	201	2.60	1.10
	CE5	201	2.50	0.80
	CE6	201	2.56	0.86
	CE7	201	3.44	1.03
	CE8	201	3.84	0.84
	CE9	201	1.18	0.66

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Emotional Engagement

	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotional Engagement	EE1	201	2.60	0.88
	EE2	201	2.61	0.79
	EE3	201	3.51	2.26
	EE4	201	2.60	0.85
	EE5	201	2.85	1.03

##### 3.2.3 Detailed Results about Behavioral Engagement.

The descriptive analysis of the behavioral engagement dimension of students’ English learning engagement, as presented in Table 4 above, reveals that the mean values of all items fall between 2.1 and 3. This indicates minimal involvement of most students in English courses, reflecting a lack of enthusiasm and unwillingness to invest significant time and effort in English learning. Furthermore, the data suggest that many students may be reluctant to actively participate in English classes. The mean value of BE3 is exactly 3, with a standard deviation of 1.02, highlighting notable differences in students’ attitudes toward English courses. Additionally, the item with the lowest score is BE2, with a mean score of 2.16. This reluctance to ask questions in studies indirectly implies potential issues in students’ attitude and motivation in English learning, which may negatively impact their engagement levels and comprehension in English courses[8].



Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Behavioral Engagement

	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavior Engagement	BE1	201	2.20	0.93
	BE2	201	2.16	0.87
	BE3	201	3.00	1.02
	BE4	201	2.94	1.00
	BE5	201	2.41	0.86
	BE6	201	2.54	0.89

From the perspective of cognitive engagement, this study finds non-English majors at target college have a high homework completion rate, which can be explained as: because homework is a part of the usual grade, students get corresponding grades in order to complete the teacher's homework requirements, which makes them willing to study. In addition, it is found that most non-English majors can keep a good habit of taking notes during their study. What's more, the study found that students' initiative and enthusiasm for preview before class are not high or relatively lacking, and if students can't preview in advance before English class, it will also affect their degree of engagement in English class and their absorption[9].

Among the five items of emotional engagement, the score of trying to make oneself like English is much higher than the average, although it is possible that students are not really interested in learning English, and they may be driven by some external motivation. From a behavioral engagement viewpoint, we can observe that most students are unwilling to spend too much time and energy engaging with teachers or classmates in class or after school, therefore the average score of these items is lower than the average level.[10].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To enhance cognitive engagement, students need to stimulate their own learning motivation, develop a positive attitude, and set specific goals. Strong self-efficacy also encourages active participation in learning (Li Chan, 2018)[7]. For emotional engagement, learner-initiated tasks positively impact all engagement scales. Teachers play a key role by refreshing their teaching concepts to stimulate students' interest in English. Students should seek help from teachers and classmates to build their interest. Behavioral engagement can be improved by enhancing students' interactive abilities. Schools

should provide abundant learning resources and diverse activities like online learning to improve students' learning experience. Teachers also need to use innovative methods and create an engaging classroom environment to boost students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

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# A Cultural Semiotics Interpretation of Longdong Folk Paper-cutting

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**Abstract:** Longdong folk paper-cutting is a traditional art form prevalent in the Qingyang and Pingliang regions of Gansu Province. With a long history and a bold, rustic style, it is an ancient traditional folk art. As a treasure of Chinese folk art, Longdong folk paper-cutting carries profound historical and cultural connotations. This paper uses cultural semiotics theory to conduct an in-depth interpretation of Longdong folk paper-cutting from multiple dimensions, including the composition of symbols, meaning interpretation, and cultural functions. By analyzing the modeling symbols, color symbols, and their implied symbolic meanings in paper-cutting, it reveals the cultural functions reflected in the religious beliefs, folk customs, and aesthetic concepts of the Longdong region, providing theoretical support for the inheritance and protection of this unique folk-art form.

**Keywords:** Longdong Paper-cutting; Cultural Semiotics; Cultural Functions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Longdong region, located in eastern Gansu, is one of the important birthplaces of the Chinese nation, with a long history and splendid culture. As a typical representative of the local folk culture, Longdong folk paper-cutting has a unique artistic style and rich cultural connotations, standing out in the field of folk art [1]. Longdong paper-cutting has a long history and a bold and exaggerated style, being an ancient traditional folk art. Its themes mostly include birds and beasts, folk stories, opera characters, and flowers of the four seasons. Gansu Province is one of the birthplaces and important dissemination places of Chinese paper-cutting art [2]. Based on the analysis of existing data on Gansu paper-cutting, it can be divided into three cultural circles: the Longdong paper-cutting cultural circle, the Longzhong paper-cutting cultural circle, and the Hexi Corridor paper-cutting cultural circle. The Longdong paper-cutting cultural circle includes the entire Qingyang City and five counties and districts east of the Liupan Mountains in Pingliang City. Studying Longdong folk paper-cutting from the perspective of cultural semiotics helps to deeply explore its cultural value and promote the inheritance and development of folk art.

In the early days, Longdong traditional paper-cutting was all made by creators with large scissors used in production and daily life. Some creators drew their own designs and used small sharpened scissors to cut, making the works relatively more exquisite, but still

maintaining an ancient, simple, primitive, and rough style. As the saying goes, "One region's water and soil nourish one region's people, and also one region's culture." Regional culture is formed over hundreds or thousands of years, with profound accumulation and strong vitality, able to continue through time and space. Its aesthetics conform to local folk customs, suitable for the growth of the regional environment, being an original art with obvious local characteristics [3].

## 2. SEMIOTIC STUDIES ON PAPER-CUTTING

In recent years, semiotic theory has been widely applied in the field of paper-cutting art research, and many scholars have conducted in-depth discussions on paper-cutting art from different perspectives. Shandan and Shao Zhilong[4] (2024) used semiotic methods to take the "Zhua Ji Wa Wa" (pigtails doll) paper-cutting image as the research object, systematically analyzed its patterns, colors, and structural elements from the three dimensions of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, and deeply explored the aesthetic value, cultural connotation, and symbolic meaning of this paper-cutting image. Zhang Huaqing[5] (2024) focused on Yangzhou paper-cutting, conducted a symbolic analysis of four types of paper-cutting patterns based on Peirce's semiotic theory, and focused on the specific application of icons, indices, and symbols in expressing cultural connotations.

In terms of regional paper-cutting research, Liu Jinde[6] (2023) took Yuxian paper-cutting in Zhangjiakou as the research object, discussed the construction of intangible cultural heritage brands from a semiotic perspective, proposed three principles of artistry, cultural nature, and functionality, and put forward specific communication strategies combining internet communication, intangible cultural heritage policy support, and community characteristics. Tian Wenxin and Di Xiaosong [7] (2022) comprehensively analyzed the Manchu "Momo Ren" paper-cutting art from a semiotic perspective, deeply explored its technical characteristics, craftsmanship, and symbolic implications, and revealed its unique artistic features and regional cultural connotations.

In the systematic study of paper-cutting symbols, Cao Youyun [8] (2010) used Peirce's symbol classification theory to systematically classify paper-cutting symbols, and based on Benz and Holme's symbol operation principles, summarized the expression methods of paper-cutting symbols into three forms: addition, combination, and iteration, and deeply analyzed the modeling characteristics and combination

rules of folk paper-cutting symbols. Yue Peng [9] (2020) from the perspective of cultural semiotics, deeply analyzed the relationship between constituent elements of Xuzhou folk paper-cutting patterns, providing theoretical guidance for the inheritance and development of Xuzhou paper-cutting art. In the study of the cultural connotation of paper-cutting art, Chen Jiping and Gao Aixiang [10] (2016) re-examined Shaanxi paper-cutting art from a semiotic perspective, and deeply explored the cultural significance carried by this folk symbol. Jin Yan and Zhang Sheng [11] (2016) analyzed the cultural connotation of Qingyang paper-cutting from the perspective of semiotic theory, focusing on the philosophical concepts such as totem worship, plant worship, and life and reproduction worship contained in it.

In the study of the symbolic characteristics of paper-cutting art, Zhang Shuping and Ai Li [12] (2013) conducted a semiotic discussion on the Longzhong paper-cutting culture, pointing out that its "wild" characteristics are similar to primitive rock paintings, and it is good at using various rhetorical devices such as simile, metaphor, and metonymy to express meaning. Zhang Zhaoyang [13] (2009) emphasized that using semiotic theory to analyze Chinese folk paper-cutting not only helps to deeply interpret its cultural connotation but also promotes the integration of traditional paper-cutting with modern design, injecting new vitality into Chinese modern design.

These studies have deepened our understanding of paper-cutting art from different angles, providing important theoretical support and practical guidance for the inheritance, innovation, and development of paper-cutting art. However, in the existing research, although many scholars have conducted in-depth discussions on paper-cutting art from a semiotic perspective, there are still the following research gaps in the cultural semiotic interpretation of Longdong folk paper-cutting: the existing research lacks a systematic combing of the regional cultural symbol characteristics of Longdong folk paper-cutting, especially the correlation with the unique historical, folk, and belief cultural backgrounds of the Longdong region has not been fully explained. Therefore, this study will explore the types of paper-cutting symbols in the Longdong region and their unique symbolic functions from the perspective of cultural semiotics.

### 3. OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL SEMIOTICS THEORY

As an important theoretical discipline, cultural semiotics occupies a key position in the field of social and cultural research today. It takes symbols as the starting point, deeply analyzes the deep meaning and structure behind cultural phenomena, and provides a unique perspective for us to understand the diversity and complexity of human culture. The origin of cultural semiotics can be traced back to the early 20th century, and Saussure's structural linguistics laid an important foundation for it. Saussure proposed that

language is a system of signs, consisting of the signifier (the material form of the sign, such as sound, text) and the signified (the concept or meaning represented by the sign). The relationship between the two is arbitrary but relatively fixed in a specific language system. This view inspired subsequent scholars to study other sign systems, promoting the development of semiotics. Over time, cultural semiotics has gradually grown, and many scholars have expanded and deepened it from different angles. Among them, Roland Barthes' research is of great significance. He applied semiotic theory to the analysis of popular culture, revealing the ideology and social significance hidden behind daily cultural phenomena. For example, in his research on fashion, advertising, and other fields, Barthes[14] (1988) pointed out that these seemingly ordinary cultural forms are actually expressions of social values and power relations. Through the use and interpretation of signs, we can insight into the deep structure of social culture.

The core concepts of cultural semiotics revolve around the relationship between signs, meaning, and culture. Symbols are the basic units of culture, which can be in various forms such as language, images, gestures, and rituals. These symbols are not just simple identifiers, but also carriers of rich meanings. Meaning is not inherent in the symbol itself, but is generated through people's cognition and interpretation in a specific cultural context. In different cultural contexts, the same symbol may have completely different meanings. For example, in Chinese culture, red usually symbolizes joy and auspiciousness; while in some Western cultures, red may be related to danger and warning. Roland Barthes' semiotic theory was deeply influenced by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure regarded language as a system of signs, believing that a sign consists of a "signifier" (sound or image) and a "signified" (concept), and the relationship between the two is arbitrary and conventional. Based on this, Barthes further developed semiotic theory and applied it to a wider range of cultural phenomena. In his book "Mythologies", Barthes proposed that symbols are not just basic units in language, but can also be extended to cultural phenomena such as images, advertisements, and movies. He believed that cultural symbols are not just a combination of signifiers and signifieds, but have a multi-level signification process. Barthes divided symbols into two levels: the first level is "denotation", that is, the surface meaning of the symbol; the second level is "connotation", that is, the implied meaning of the symbol. For example, a photo of a rose, at the denotative level, represents a kind of plant; at the connotative level, it may symbolize love or romance. Barthes further pointed out that the connotation of cultural symbols is often closely related to ideology. Through the analysis of symbols, we can reveal the ideological structure hidden behind cultural phenomena. This analytical method has provided an

important theoretical tool for later cultural research.

#### 4. RESEARCH METHODS

Based on the disciplinary perspective of cultural semiotics, this study takes traditional Longdong paper-cutting symbols as the core research object, aiming to deeply analyze the types of Longdong paper-cutting symbols and explore the cultural functions behind them. As an important research method, the literature method can help researchers comprehensively master the background knowledge and related materials needed for the research by consulting various existing materials. To understand Longdong paper-cutting symbols from a cultural anthropological perspective, it is necessary to conduct in-depth interpretation of the historical and cultural origins of traditional Longdong paper-cutting and previous research results. During the research process, the rich traditional text materials and electronic resources in the school library provided great convenience for the author, becoming an important way to obtain learning materials. At the same time, during the investigation, the collection resources of the Gansu Federation of Literary and Art Circles and local cultural centers were also used, which constitute the main information sources for this paper using the literature method. In addition, since the academic research on paper-cutting began, many academic works and papers with high reference value have emerged. Extensive literature reading is a process of knowledge accumulation, which plays a vital role in thesis writing. Standing on the basis of previous research, we can obtain a broader vision, master more diversified research angles and methods, thereby broadening research ideas, reducing repetitive investigation work, and avoiding misunderstandings in thesis writing.

It is worth noting that the interpretation of the categories and functions of paper-cutting symbols from the perspective of cultural semiotics is still a blank field. Therefore, on the basis of analyzing the surface structure of Longdong paper-cutting symbols, this study refers to the relevant works on paper-cutting of other regions and ethnic groups, deeply explores the deep-seated functions behind them, and strives to achieve innovative results in this research direction.

#### 5. TYPES OF SYMBOLS IN LONGDONG PAPER-CUTTING

##### 5.1 Primitive Totem Symbols

Primitive humans, adhering to animism and the chaotic "participatory" thinking, regarded animals, plants, or inanimate objects believed to share blood ties with their tribe as sacred and inviolable ancestors and kin, holding them in high reverence and strictly refraining from harming them. Over time, these entities evolved into unique emblems of the tribe. Scholars like Morgan revealed the essence of such totemic beliefs.

##### 5.1.1 Ancestor worship

Longdong has long emphasized ethics and ancestor reverence. Ancestor worship in traditional Longdong paper-cuttings is often expressed through abstract

symbolism. For instance, the tiger, as verified by scholar Liu Yaohan, was the totem of the ancient Qiang people, who once inhabited Longdong and integrated their culture into the region. Over time, reverence for tigers evolved into a collective cultural consciousness in Longdong. Paper-cut artist Qi Xiumei's works feature numerous tigers-affable, naive, and non-threatening. Works like *Tiger Guarding the House*, *Life Worship*, and *Child Catching Two Tigers* regard tigers as auspicious symbols, believed to ward off evil and bless all living things [15]. The frog is another significant symbol in Longdong paper-cuttings. Scholars such as Yang Kun research that the frog was the totem of a clan under the Nüwa tribe, retaining matriarchal values by anthropomorphizing the frog as Nüwa, the ancestral mother of humanity. Folklore portrays Nüwa as the creator of humans and a matchmaker, embodying the ancestral deity of reproduction [16]. Anthropology confirms that totems are identical to the clans and individuals who venerate them. Longdong paper-cutters infuse frogs with childlike charm, transforming the ordinary creature into a sacred, endearing symbol—a product of millennia of collective totemic tradition, not mere individual artistic fancy.

##### 5.1.2 Plant and animal worship

Early humans, limited in their understanding of nature, perceived plants as animate beings—a continuation of animistic natural worship. As Marx noted, "All mythology is the product of imagination used to conquer and dominate natural forces, rendering them divine." Such natural phenomena evolved into fixed symbols in paper-cuttings, expressing reverence for nature. Qi Xiumei's *Lotus in a Vase* exemplifies this. Her lotuses bloom vividly, filling the frame without blank space, with sawtooth patterns and seed dots adorning stamens and leaves. Ancient customs required yin-yang motifs in flowers and vases, with large blossoms and seeds or buds symbolizing yin-yang union and fertility.

##### 5.1.3 Life and reproduction

From biological origins to humanity, life inherently craves survival and reproduction. Nature sustains life, but the harsh law of "survival of the fittest" highlights the fragility of individual life. Early humans, unable to rationally explain nature, created myths to exalt life's sanctity. A universal desire for prosperity and fertility permeated ancient societies, reflected in Longdong paper-cuttings. Symbols of reproduction directly express the human drive to perpetuate life. Creatures with high fertility are simplified into paper-cut motifs, such as the chicken, which embodies reproduction in Longdong's yin-yang designs. The iconic "Zhua Ji Wa Wa" (Pigtailed Doll) integrates witchcraft and fertility worship, symbolizing endless lineage in agrarian society. These symbols often emphasize reproductive organs, abstracting male and female traits into yin-yang symbols. In "Zhua Ji Wa Wa," for example, "hanging coins" represent the female vulva. This

primal concept of union mirrors the origins of Chinese yin-yang philosophy. Designs featuring dolls with chicken-adorned buns, holding chickens, or lotus flowers (symbolizing femininity) embody yin-yang harmony, envisioning vitality and prosperity [17].

## 5.2 Folk Belief Symbols

### 5.2.1 Witchcraft

Witchcraft has profoundly influenced folk culture, and paper-cuttings originated in witchcraft rituals. While education and science have diminished ritualistic paper-cuttings, they persist in rural Longdong [18]. Longdong's witchcraft paper-cuttings fall into two categories: immediate-effect and preventive-inductive. Immediate-effect ones serve practical purposes like curing illness or summoning souls, e.g., "Soul-Calling Doll," "Disease-Expelling Doll," and "Eight Trigrams Doll," with limited, serious themes. Preventive-inductive ones combine witchcraft and decoration, with diverse motifs for warding off evil, blessing homes, and praying for good fortune. Examples include tiger paper-cuttings, tiger-head shoes, and pillows-expressing love for children while fearing illness and evil. The "Disease-Expelling Doll," popular until the late 20th century [19], consisted of five connected paper figures. Burned around the sick, with incantations, their ashes were discarded at crossroads to "expel illness." When children fell ill-attributed to soul loss-mothers used red paper-cuttings, calling the child's name while tapping bowls, proceeding to the site of fright to retrieve the soul.

### 5.2.2 Life rites

Life rite paper-cuttings include those for birth, weddings, birthdays, funerals, and zodiac celebrations. These pivotal life events use paper-cuttings to express respect for life and optimism. As Ruth Benedict stated, "Customs are the lens through which social theorists perceive society." The Wedding Doll, a type of "lucky flower," symbolizes fertility, posted in newlyweds' rooms. It features "lian sheng gui zi" (continuous birth of noble sons), with magpies and plum blossoms (auspicious omens) on either side. A peony atop the doll symbolizes prosperity, surrounded by seeds representing endless offspring [20].

## 5.3 Symbols for Decorating Life

Most traditional Longdong paper-cuttings aim to adorn environments, judged by "beauty" in folk aesthetics. Door flowers, window flowers, kang decorations, lantern flowers, and paper cylinder flowers beautify daily life, while round flowers, cloud patterns, and corner flowers serve purely decorative purposes. Versatile and practical, they also function as embroidery patterns for pillows, insoles, and belly bands [21].

### 5.3.1 Window flowers, kiln top flowers, etc.

Traditional window flowers, posted during festivals, reflect Longdong's former dwellings. In dim cave dwellings, vibrant red and green window flowers enliven spaces, alleviating gloom and providing psychological comfort. Their motifs mirror the lives of

Loess Plateau farmers. Kiln top flowers, with circular or square designs, decorate bridal chambers. Kang surrounding flowers depict folk tales and daily scenes, adding vitality. Grain bin flowers, posted after harvest, pray for pest-free storage and abundant harvests [22].

### 5.3.2 Round flowers and corner flowers

Round flowers (tuan hua), created by folding paper, showcase repetitive patterns and accidental beauty. Artists combine symbols like flowers, animals, and plants with motifs such as crescent moons, sawteeth, circles, willow leaves, and water droplets. Key symbols, larger and more elaborate, occupy central positions. For example, a 1950s-60s Turpan excavation-inspired monkey round flower features a central circle, overlapping octagons, a ring of monkeys, and an outer sawtooth edge-unique and playful.

## 6. CULTURAL FUNCTIONS OF LONGDONG PAPER-CUTTING SYMBOLS

As a vital folk art of the Loess Plateau, Longdong paper-cuttings carry rich cultural meanings and social functions. Their symbols serve as vehicles of aesthetics, regional culture, folk beliefs, and social values [23]. This section explores their roles in cultural inheritance, social education, and aesthetic expression [24].

### 6.1 Cultural Inheritance

Symbols like "Fu Xi and Nüwa" reflect Longdong's role as a cradle of Chinese civilization, while "Farming Scenes" document agrarian traditions. Passed down generations, these visual symbols sustain historical memory and cultural identity. Symbols like "Zhua Ji Wa Wa" (fertility) and "Snake Coiling a Rabbit" (harmony) are integral to weddings, festivals, and rituals, visually expressing and perpetuating beliefs. Unique symbols such as the "Tree of Life" and zodiac animals distinguish Longdong paper-cuttings from other regions, fostering cultural pride and identity amid globalization.

### 6.2 Social Education

Works like "Twenty-Four Filial Piety" and "Loyalty and Righteousness" visually convey virtues, influencing children and adults alike. Wedding "lucky flowers" and funeral "paper banners" ritualize life events, emphasizing marital sanctity, filial piety, and social order. Used in temple fairs and folk performances, symbols like "Guan Yu" and "Zhong Kui" (righteousness and bravery) strengthen community cohesion and shared values.

### 6.3 Aesthetic Expression

Symmetric compositions (e.g., round flowers) embody harmony, while exaggerated forms (e.g., "Zhua Ji Wa Wa") showcase folk art's freedom and vitality through lines and shapes. "Magpies Perching on Plum Blossoms" conveys joy, while lotus motifs symbolize purity, fulfilling aesthetic needs and facilitating emotional resonance. Vibrant red (auspiciousness) and symbols like the "Tree of Life" reflect Longdong's unique cultural heritage, elevating regional aesthetics.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Longdong paper-cutting, a representative folk art of the Loess Plateau, unites material symbols and cultural meanings, embodying local people's values and psychological aspirations while fulfilling irreplaceable social roles. Culturally, it acts as a living history book, preserving memories, beliefs, and identity. Symbols from "Fu Xi and Nüwa" to "farming scenes" and "Zhua Ji Wa Wa" transmit origins, traditions, and values, strengthening cultural pride. Socially, it educates through vivid imagery. Aesthetically, it shines through harmony (round flowers), emotional resonance ("Magpies Perching on Plum Blossoms"), and cultural uniqueness ("Tree of Life"). These multi-dimensional functions form its cultural value. In a rapidly changing society, Longdong paper-cuttings can inspire modern design or promote cultural exchange. Further research into their functions is crucial for heritage preservation and cultural innovation, deserving sustained attention.

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# Analysis of Naturalism in the Painted Veil

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**Abstract:** William Somerset Maugham is a famous British writer and playwright in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His novels and plays have made remarkable achievement. Maugham's works are unique and exotic, which can arouse the interest of different countries and different classes of readers and make him famous at home and abroad. But in fact, Maugham's works are not a complete naturalist. At the beginning of the 20th century, Maugham was influenced by modernism literature and the crisis of social economy and belief in England at that time, which promoted the development of realism and created many realistic literary works with a wide range of subjects and rich expression techniques. This article is divided into three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction introduces Maugham and his main work and achievement. This body is divided into two parts to analyze the naturalistic features in Maugham's works. The first part is about the naturalism in *The painted Veil*, I analyze it from three aspects: man and nature, man and themselves and man and society. In this part, I just make a brief summary of the plot in the work. The second part is about the reasons for Maugham's naturalism tendency. There are 3 reasons: the spirit of the times and scientific thought, the literary traditional and aesthetic ideal and the life experience and perception. The conclusion part summarizes and evaluates Maugham's creative thought and his guiding significance for modern literature.

**Keywords:** Maugham; Naturalism; The Painted Veil

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Somerset Maugham is a famous modern novelist and playwright in Britain. He has created a large number of novels, short stories and plays, and his works are characterized by both refined and popular tastes. Maugham novel has been praised by the attention of scholars in the study of literature, it inherited the realism of the novel ideas, also in the development of The Times into the influence of naturalism, but in general, Maugham still belongs to the realism writer, his works contains a naturalistic creation principle, the human and the nature of the physiological instincts as its content, It shows the real picture of civilian life, gives a direct description of human nature, and expresses the influence of the environment on people[1]. Moreover, the work also reflects Maugham's objective attitude and respect for modern science in his creation. And Maugham is not limited to naturalism, he can innovate on the basis of naturalism in literature, so that Maugham's novels have higher research value.

This study mainly introduces the origin and discovery

of naturalism, as well as the analysis of Maugham's use of naturalistic writing techniques, and the use of naturalistic theory to analyze the novel. At the beginning of the article, it introduces Maugham and his works about naturalism. Then it analyzes the concrete application of naturalism in *The painted veil* from three aspects: man and nature; man and man; man and society, reasons for Maugham's naturalism tendency. At last, it affirms the Maugham's breakthrough and achievement in naturalism, his creative thought and its guiding significance to modern literature.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Naturalism used to be popular in France and the United States, but it is only a literary trend in England. Maugham is a writer between tradition and modernity. At the same time, he was also influenced by this kind of naturalism trend of thought and his life experience of traveling around, which made him create some works with obvious naturalism color in the early stage of his literary career. The core of naturalism is the extreme emphasis on the authenticity and objectivity of literature. The author thinks that the highest character of novelists is the sense of reality, the sense of truth, the expression of nature and the importance of human nature. Maugham described human physiological instinct and natural desire in detail in his first novel *Liza of Lambeth*. Naturalists believe that people can't do anything in front of nature. *Of human bondage* published later is also a representative work of naturalism. Philip, the protagonist, is frustrated again and again in the process of pursuing his ideal. At the end of his of tribulations and setbacks. This is meaningless. The essence of life is unfortunate and aimless. Any effort by people to change the world is in vain. These are just naturalistic views. In many of his novels, Maugham describes the poor living conditions of the lower order, which reflects the impact of the environment on people, also reflects some naturalistic views[2]. Only by comparing the hardships of the lower class with those of the upper class, and describing a broader background of life, can we truly express the reality of the whole society.

But in fact, Maugham's works are not a complete naturalist. At the beginning of the 20th century, Maugham was influenced by modernism literature and the crisis of social economy and belief in England at that time, which promoted the development of realism and created many realistic literary works with a wide range of subjects and rich expression techniques[3].

## 3. NATURALISM IN THE PAINTED VEIL

In the novel *The Painted Veil*, Maugham tells a story

of betrayal and redemption from the perspective of naturalism and omniscience. Maugham's identity as a spectator is not confused with any individual's evaluation of the characters in the story, which keeps the objectivity of real life to the maximum extent, presents the original appearance of the story to the readers, and lets the readers judge the characters' quality by themselves. In this novel, Maugham expresses these characteristics of Naturalism: nature is sacrosanct to man, but the consumption concept of this era distorts the relationship between man and nature and coexists with it. The commercialization of interpersonal relationship makes people indifferent and greedy. Maugham tried to liberate people from the old value system and create a new era of more freedom[4].

### 3.1 Man and Nature

Maugham's works are full of exotic feelings, because at that time, the Western faith collapsed, Maugham went to the eastern countries for many times to seek free exploration and solve the spiritual crisis. Eastern culture emphasizes spirit and humanity, while western culture emphasizes science. Eastern culture tends to seek inner liberation through self-control, which can complement western culture and enlighten people. Maugham's Oriental plot is that he devoted himself to the study of Taoism. Taoism believes that the significance of life lies in maintaining the balance between man and nature, and in maintaining the balance of inner self. In the process of helping the plague patients, Katie, the heroine of the novel, realizes the importance of self-possession and self-control, remembers the truth, beauty and love of life in the subtle influence of life, suppresses her instinctive desire with Taoist philosophy, so she has the opportunity to open a new life, and finally obtains spiritual freedom and independence. Maugham's return to nature is too idealistic to solve the problem of western spiritual liberation, but it is still regarded as an action to avoid modern civilization.

### 3.2 Man and Themselves

Human is the product of the interaction between nature and social environment, and the gathering place of human will produce conflict. In the capital society, the fanatical pursuit of material makes people only pay attention to their own interests and ignore the relationship with others.

Young Kitty is a typical representative of the upper class. She was arrogant, vain, materialistic and despised her husband. There are insurmountable obstacles between her and her family. Because of her family's indifference and inner emptiness, she lost consciousness. In a fight with her sister, she hastily decided to get married, which also led to her tragic fate. But in the so-called punishment experience after her mistakes, she was gradually infected by her husband Walter, learned to care for others, realized self-dedication, and found the essence of life. Kitty and Walter are married for their own purposes. Different

backgrounds lead to different opinions and beliefs. There is no spiritual interaction and understanding between them, the relationship becomes alienated, leading to mistrust and betrayal in marriage. Kitty's father is also dominated by his wife in a loveless marriage, and he avoids unnecessary conflicts by suppressing emotions. It was not until his wife died that he was reborn. Katie's mother is only interested in political status and money for arranging her daughter's marriage. In the temple, Kitty was moved by the Mother Superior's attentive care for the patients in the monastery, and her majesty and aura made her obedient. Mother superior and nuns treat patients equally, but they are still optimistic in the face of life threats, which makes Kitty devote herself to the noble cause. Deputy customs chief Waddington is frank and humorous. His inspiring comments offer a new way to explain the world around him. His spirit and wisdom help Katie to re-examine life and the meaning of life[5].

With the advancement of industrialization and the monopoly of capitalism, people's pursuit of material is more intense, but people's heart is much empty. All relationships are based on common interests, not just feelings. Living in the age of machine, Maugham believes that freedom is the pursuit of carefree mood. Maugham, as a writer who pays attention to people, takes freedom as the starting point, pursues the meaning of life, and pays attention to the spiritual state reflecting the progress of civilization. Maugham epitomizes the characters in real life into the characters in the novel, and reflects the essence of human nature with reflection and sympathy.

### 3.3 Man and Society

Through his own experience, Maugham reveals to us the unhealthy mental state and the disharmonious production state of people in modern society. The development of capitalism has created numerous material wealth, and brought people the negative influence of pestilence like rapid spread. The increasingly corrupt internal system of capitalism reveals the contradiction of human nature. The Renaissance liberated people's spirit, but interests alienated people. Capitalism not only liberated love, but also insulted it. Marriage is just a transaction to get money and status, so people can give up their inherent traditional virtues. People gradually fall into the secular world and become slaves of the material. The basic reason for the tragic fate of women reflected in the story lies in that they live in an era of male superiority and female inferiority, and should attach themselves to men in economic and social status. Their social status and social relations are all centered on men, but women's inner personality leads to rebellion against traditional values. They think marriage is free. Maugham is good at describing secular love and enjoyment. Kitty and Walter's marriage not because of love, it is bound, even if it is hypocritical, cannot get rid of. Kitty was born romantic



and passionate, so she followed the body's desire to deceive Charlie. And her husband Walter, out of revenge, took her to the infectious disease ravaged village to see her retribution. But Kitty gained physical and mental freedom in this experience. Kitty and Walter have two different pursuits and beliefs about life. She doesn't know Charlie, but she has feelings for him. The contradiction between secularity and ideal makes people hesitant. Maugham puts the protagonists in conflict, but they finally decide to explore and experience the truth of life they want[6]. At the end of the story, Kitty finds that she has the right to choose the life she wants. She began to explore the meaning and essence of life, and finally found a balance between body and mind. After experiencing physical pain and mental confusion, people can understand the true meaning of life and return to nature.

When the civilization developed into a tremendous amount of materials and daily products, people's spirit degenerated into a waste land. The whole society was choked in a shroud of nihilism, absurdity, pessimism and despair. People tended to believe that the world was national, nature was malicious, and the society was absurd[7]. Therefore, life was just a deception and a disappointment. All the heroics in Maugham's works presented such solitary and helpless quality which drove them to struggle to gain absolute freedom and spiritual maturity.

#### 4. REASONS FOR MAUGHAM'S NATURALISM TENDENCY

As we know, literature develops with the development of social life. Each new stage of the development of human society will provide literature with new objects of expression and new social content. In addition, different times have different aesthetic trends of different times, and these factors of The Times will bring great influence to the creation of writers. Just as Danner said, The Times imprinted their "characteristics on the artist's heart, and the artist imprinted their characteristics on the work. At the same time, writers always mature in the continuous learning of predecessors, the previous literary tradition, the writing style of previous writers often have an influence on the new writers cannot be underestimated. In addition, the life experienced by the writer in the specific social environment not only has a decisive influence on the development of his personality temperament, but also has a great influence on the formation of his creative personality. The obvious naturalistic tendency in Maugham's novel creation is not only due to social history, but also influenced by literary tradition and personal life experience. This study will elaborate the reasons for the naturalism tendency in Maugham's novel creation from the following three aspects.

##### 4.1 The spirit of the Time and Scientific Thought

The author has been writing literature for a long time. He witnessed the outbreak of the two world wars and the impact of the wars on people's lives. In the era of

scientific development in the 20th century, people's spiritual world also changed, providing space for thinking for every creator with delicate thoughts. In Maugham's time, science and technology were in a period of rapid development. Physiology, genetics, psychology and medicine were all developing vigorously. These scientific achievements made people look at the world with a new perspective, and new ways of thinking promoted the development of new literary achievements. Scientists in their own way to bring out secrets of physiological, use the method of scientific research into the literary creation, is the change of the literary ideas, many writers try to use the means of philosophy, science of ideology into creation, Maugham is one of them. He has also been influenced by new ideas of practicing medicine, different way of thinking, values and traditional writers, His critical consciousness is very strong. He inherits the literary tradition of realism and pays much attention to the living situation of people at that time. Therefore, Maugham's novels reflect the strong spirit of The Times and scientific thoughts.

##### 4.2 The Literary Traditional and Aesthetic Ideal

Although Maugham was a British writer, he was born in France, so he had been yearning for French literature since childhood. However, as an Englishman, he was very familiar with the life in Britain when he grew up, so he had a better understanding of British literature. In his special growing experience, Maugham received the influence of British and French culture, which laid a foundation for his later literary creation. In some of his essays, he also wrote that he was influenced by two cultural patterns, inculcated by two ways of life and had two views of freedom. He did not view life with a national prejudice, nor did he describe life with an instinct. But Maugham admitted that he had studied French writers more, and was heavily influenced by Maupassant's novels, and later by Balzac and Flaubert. French literature is the birthplace of realism, and critical realism also emerged from the French literary world first[8]. However, after the revolution of 1848, French critical realism literature has lost its vigor, and the pursuit of meticulous description with scientific spirit has become the mainstream way pursued by writers at that time. Naturalism is not as opposed to a realist, and its essence lies in the traditional realism, as a true life, telling the story from the real description, naturalism is the wider explore real, so with realism in essence with the same place, to the introduction of the scientific spirit which also is a kind of special form.

##### 4.3 The Life Experience and Perception

Maugham's life experience is very rich, his childhood was not happy, even if there is creative success, but the wealth of this success has always healed childhood. Maugham had extensive medical experience and worked extensively around the world to find material for his writing. In growing up, he was able to overcome many obstacles and exert its potential, even

with his stuttering, difficult to inherit the forefathers of the legal profession, he also through their own efforts to become a writer, childhood suffered misfortune, but also brought a lot of stuff for him, to his lonely feelings into detached attitude, to explore deeper spirit world, is the wisdom of his work. He also said he is medical experience made him a crucial part of the literary creation, he has been in his life will be with the pen and study, in order to record life, this kind of life habit drove him to form a fair attitude, in the clinical medical study, he also learned to observe life anatomy, life, this is the wealth of the medical experience gives him.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Maugham's naturalism literary view plays a guiding role in the relationship between modern people and nature, and has a profound impact on the spiritual liberation and the realization of self-worth. Through the analysis of his novel *The Painted Veil*, this study expounds the reasons for his naturalism tendency. The content of this article is only my superficial understanding of Maugham's naturalism. In thousands of words, it's impossible to analyze Maugham's rich naturalistic connotation in an all-round way. I think my article is just a summary of the specific plot of the novel, without specific analysis of quotations, which needs to be improved. As for the introduction of naturalism, I think I can do a comparative study with others, hoping that someone can do a more in-depth

study on the foundation of this article. Maugham's naturalism plays an important role in guiding modern people's emancipation of mind and pursuit of life. I hope this article can make people think more about the real meaning of life.

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# The Impact of "Laying Flat" on College Students

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**Abstract:** "Laying flat" refers to a kind of youth subculture thinking that some young people, when facing the setbacks and difficulties in real life, adopt a negative attitude of degeneration and obedience, not actively changing the status quo, and maintain their own lives by doing nothing, following the trend and doing nothing. The erosion of college students by its ideology is particularly serious, resulting in the impact of college students' ideals and beliefs, weakened ambition to struggle, physical and mental health damage and employment choices are affected by the negative impact. It is necessary to strengthen the education of ideals and beliefs, create a positive campus atmosphere, pay attention to mental health education, improve the social security system and other aspects of the value of guidance for college students, to guide them to become ideal, dare to take responsibility for the new era, able to suffer, willing to struggle for the young people with a sense of purpose.

**Keywords:** 'Laying Flat'; Subculture; Internet Influence; College Students

## 1. NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF "LYING DOWN" ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

In recent years, with rapid economic and social development, the pressure of social competition has increased and the trend of involution has intensified. In the face of real-life setbacks and difficulties, many young people have chosen to resist by "lying down". Supporters of "lying downism" believe that the pursuit of a higher standard of living and higher social status will only bring more pressure and anxiety, and "lying down" can keep people away from these negative emotions. While these ideas have spread widely among college students, they have had a certain degree of negative impact on some groups of college students.

With the development of society and the accelerated pace of work, "lying flat" on the one hand caters to the psychological needs of college students, such as "learned helplessness", hedonism, pessimism, etc., and on the other hand, it spreads in a playful and humorous way in the network, so that it gradually becomes popular in the college student groups. It has become popular among college students. The idea of "lying flat" has a bad influence on college students, and from the perspective of education, its influence is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

### 1.1 Impact on the Ideal Beliefs of University Students

"Laying flat" has impacted the ideal beliefs of college students. "Lying flat" is the inheritance and development of the "bad", "Buddhist" and other network funeral culture ideas, which advocates negative degeneration, pessimistic and obedient and idle lifestyle, which is easy to lead to the college students Ideal beliefs have been impacted. The main manifestations are: first, lack of goals and motivation, advocating the abandonment of the pursuit of material wealth and social status, which may lead to the lack of clear goals and motivation of some college students, so that they will feel confused and helpless, do not know their own life goals, and do not know how to realize their dreams. Secondly, they are evading reality and responsibilities, unwilling to face difficulties and challenges, and unwilling to take up the responsibilities they should bear. Thirdly, they neglect their social responsibilities.

### 1.2 Weakening the Ambition of University Students to Struggle

"Lying down" weakens the ambition of college students to struggle. Through the network platform, the "lie flat doctrine" advocates "hard work is useless", "can't fight, mix a year is a year", "lie flat that is righteousness" "Lying down is justice" and other erroneous ideas and propositions. As a network aboriginal college students have long been subjected to the erosion of this not positive to change the status quo, the negative lying equal ideology, resulting in some college students on the social and real life to produce aversion, disappointment, anxiety and so on, upholding the pessimistic attitude of life. This in turn causes college students to lack the ambition to struggle forward in the face of setbacks and difficulties, lose interest and motivation in learning, resulting in a decline in academic performance, and ultimately miss the opportunity to pursue excellence and realize their own ideals. [1].

### 1.3 Damage to the Physical and Mental Health of University Students

"Layaboutism" jeopardizes the physical and mental health of university students. "Layaboutism" advocates laziness and inactivity, adopting an inactive and submissive attitude towards learning and life, and an unwillingness to take the initiative to explore and learn new things. Therefore, this concept is detrimental to the physical and mental health of college students in the following ways: Firstly, people with "lying downism" tend to be more solitary and avoid establishing in-depth connections with others.

This may lead to difficulties in interpersonal communication, which in turn may lead to depression, anxiety and other emotional problems, affecting their mental health. Secondly, those who are "flat-lining" tend to lack exercise and sports, which may lead to a decline in their physical health and make them susceptible to obesity, high blood pressure and other diseases. Thirdly, long-term "lying down" may lead college students to doubt their own ability and value, thus affecting their self-esteem and self-confidence.

#### 1.4 Influence the Employment Choices of University Students

"Laying low" affects the employment choices of university students. "Laying flat" is a negative attitude to life, advocating that no longer excessive pursuit of material and social status, but to choose a life of ease and comfort. The influence of this concept on the employment choice of college students is specifically manifested in the following aspects, on the one hand, lower employment expectations: "lying flat" people tend to have lower expectations for career development and social competition, so in the choice of employment, they may be more inclined to choose those stable, less stressful jobs, rather than the pursuit of high salary, high position career. positions in their careers. On the other hand, it affects the career planning and choice: "Layabout" people pay more attention to the quality of life of individuals, therefore, when choosing employment, they will give priority to jobs that can guarantee their quality of life, such as civil servants, institutions, and so on. "The lack of positive working attitude and the unwillingness to take the initiative to learn and improve their own ability will lead to college students facing more severe employment challenges upon graduation, affecting their career development and future life path.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF THE IMPACT OF "LYING FLAT" ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

### 2.1 The Phenomenon of "Laying Flat" Has Been Spawned by the Seriousness of Social Involution

From a social point of view, the emergence of the phenomenon of "flat youth" is not only a personal problem, but also a social problem. "Lying flat" is a product of social development in a certain era, and its birth is closely related to the historical background of China's social and economic transformation. In contemporary China, with the rapid development of social and economic development, the material standard of living has been significantly improved, but at the same time, it is also accompanied by increasing competitive pressure. Problems such as serious social involution, high housing prices, and difficulties in employment are like mountains pressing down on the shoulders of contemporary young people, making them gasp for breath.

### 2.2 The Complexity of the Network Environment Breeds a Hotbed of Lying

In the digital age, the rapid development of network

media has made information spread quickly and cover a wide range, which has provided a breeding ground for network culture. On the one hand, as a kind of youth subculture thought, "lying flat" originates from the network and relies on the cyberspace, and needs to develop and spread with the help of various network communication media. The arrival of the digital era has led to the rapid development of new media and information technology, and all kinds of information on the Internet have realized real-time two-way interaction, which has broadened people's space of interaction. The openness and anonymity of cyberspace provide college students with opportunities for self-expression and self-expression. On the other hand, the era of big data has made the delivery of information more accurate and hidden, and college students' immaturity makes it difficult for them to distinguish between good and bad information on the Internet, which leads to the influence of the idea of "lying down" while surfing on the Internet, and their identification with the ideas of "pursuing inner peace", "as long as they are in peace", "as long as they are in peace" and "as long as they are in peace". As a result, while surfing on the Internet, college students are unknowingly influenced by the idea of "lying flat", agreeing with the ideas of "pursuing inner peace" and "as long as I lie flat, no one can take advantage of me", and the phenomenon of "lying flat" occurs.

### 2.3 Peer Group Pressure Induces Volitional Disintegration

Marx stated, "The nature of man is in its reality the sum of social relations." [2] As a kind of social animal, human being is always in a certain social relationship, and everyone can not avoid the influence with others. At this stage, most of the college students are "00" or even "05", who grew up in a relatively affluent and good living environment, coupled with the primary and secondary school period only need to consider the academic problems, the growth of the environment is relatively simple, and full of desire and hope for the future life. College is the predecessor of society, and college life is relatively complicated. As the main object of contact and communication among college students, the influence of peer groups is much greater than that from family and society. In the face of fierce social competition and employment difficulties and other real problems, college students in colleges and universities, such as the increasing severity of the new trend of involution, and then appeared mutual involution, excessive internal conflict and other problems. College students tend to compare in the peer group, especially when facing the peer group in the excellent, most of the college students tend to appear impatient, anxiety, frustration and other psychological. In the long run, it is easy to appear, "anyway, the volume is not, it is better to lie flat"

"why others are so good, they are so useless" and other negative thoughts, resulting in college students' self-confidence by the blow, hard work and tenacity and self-will to be dismantled, the emergence of a negative rotten lie flat, The phenomenon of helpless lying and so on.

### 3. COPING STRATEGIES FOR THE PHENOMENON OF COLLEGE STUDENTS "LYING FLAT"

#### 3.1 Education with Marxist Thought and Firm Ideals and Beliefs

Xi Jinping emphasized, "Fiery youth requires firm ideals and beliefs." [3] Ideal beliefs are the guiding light on the road of college students' growth and success, and they are also the calcium of college students' spirit. College students do not have ideal beliefs or ideal beliefs are not firm, will get "cartilage disease". First, colleges and universities must insist on arming college students with Marxist-Leninist ideology, especially strengthening the education of socialist ideals and personal ideals, so that college students realize the importance of ideals and set up correct personal ideals and social ideals, and dissolve the impact of "lying flat" on college students' ideals and beliefs. Secondly, we must insist on using the socialist core value system to enlighten the mind and moisten the heart, so that the socialist core values can be put into the brain and the heart and soul, and really be internalized in the heart and externalized in the behavior. Third, we must strengthen the concept of responsibility education, so that college students understand their own personal responsibility and social responsibility, and aspire to become a good young man of the new era who has ideals, dares to take responsibility, and is able to suffer and willing to struggle.

#### 3.2 Focusing on Role Model Demonstration Education to Create a Positive Atmosphere

As the old saying goes: "Near Zhu is red, near ink is black." The influence of the environment on people is crucial, in the face of the phenomenon of college students "lying flat", colleges and universities need to pay attention to the construction of the campus environment for college students to create an environment conducive to growth. Therefore, colleges and universities can carry out moral education through the selection of outstanding teachers and students, role-playing, simulation and other activities around the excellent typical, role model demonstration, so that students are naturally influenced by role models in such an environment. At the same time, colleges and universities should pay attention to resist the erosion of "hedonism", "anti-consumerism" and other "lying flat" ideas, to create a positive, full of positive energy in the school campus atmosphere, and only in this way can we really help young students out of their own way. Only in this way can we really help young students to get out of the misunderstanding of "lying flat" and

welcome a bright future.

#### 3.3 Paying Attention to the Physical and Mental Conditions of Students and Strengthening Mental Health Education

The body is the capital of the revolution. College students "lying flat" is easy to cause their physical diseases and psychological problems are becoming more and more serious, colleges and universities need to pay attention to the physical and mental conditions of students in a timely manner, pay attention to mental health education. First, colleges and universities should incorporate mental health education into the curriculum system, offer basic courses on mental health, and regularly organize mental health lectures, themed class meetings and psychological salons and other activities to help students understand the importance of mental health and master the basic skills of psychological adjustment. Secondly, colleges and universities should establish students' mental health files, regularly assess students' mental health, and encourage teachers to maintain good communication with students, pay attention to students' psychological changes, and find and solve students' psychological problems in time. Third, colleges and universities should carry out rich and diversified cultural, sports and recreational activities that are popular among college students to help students get out of the classroom and dormitory, strengthen their bodies and enjoy life, and then promote students' physical and mental health to achieve better development.

#### 3.4 Understanding the Real Needs of Students and Emphasizing the Development of Employability

Modern society has higher and higher requirements for the employment of college students. In the face of the phenomenon of college students "lying flat", colleges and universities need to pay attention to the current social employment situation, understand the real demand of students' employment problems, and adjust the content and form of professional courses, adopt flexible teaching, and pay attention to the cultivation of students' employment ability. First, through the establishment of career planning courses, resume making contests and employment guidance activities, etc., to help students prepare for their careers. Second, colleges and universities should establish a sound employment service system to provide employment counseling, information dissemination, resume guidance and other services to help students successfully achieve their employment goals. Third, colleges and universities should cooperate with enterprises to provide students with practical opportunities such as internships, part-time jobs and volunteer services, so that students can practice their vocational skills and interpersonal skills in the actual working environment and lay a solid foundation for future employment.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The negative impact on college students of the youth

subculture idea of "laying flat", although short-lived, cannot be ignored. Whether it is the impact on the ideal beliefs of college students, the weakening of their ambition to struggle, the damage to their physical and mental health, or the impact on their employment choices, all of them reflect the tremendous impact and challenge of "lying flat" on the growth and success of college students. At the same time, this is also contrary to the mainstream social values advocated by our country, such as striving for progress and aiming high. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: "We should not only understand what young people think, open up a vast sky for them to gallop their thoughts, but also actively educate and guide young people, and promote them to step on the ground on the broad stage of great achievements. When young people's thinking and understanding of the confusion and uncertainty, life choices at the crossroads to encourage them to cheer up the spirit, the courage to go forward." [4] Youth is used to struggle, the new

era, we have to "lie flat youth" into a "youth", to cultivate the aspirations of college students, the backbone and the bottom line, to let the new era of college students actively involved in the hot practice of socialist modernization of the country to bloom! The flower of splendor.

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