

# Research on Strategies for Developing Language Sensibility in Upper Elementary Chinese Education

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**Abstract:** With the implementation of the 2022 version of the New Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education Chinese (referred to as the Curriculum Standards hereafter), the focus on core literacy has become a central concern and inevitable trend in Chinese language teaching research. This paper, starting from the practical aspects of Chinese language learning in the fifth and sixth grades of primary school, investigates the language sensibility of upper-level students. Based on the findings regarding the sensibility status, it identifies a series of issues such as inappropriate methods and insufficient attention in the cultivation process and proposes specific strategies to address the current state of students' language sensibility.

**Keywords:** Language Sensibility; Students; Strategies

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## 1. Conceptualization of Language Sensibility

### 1.1 Definition of Language Sensibility

The term "language sensibility" was initially introduced in the 1920s when Mr. Xia Miao Zun first defined the concept in the context of Chinese language education. Subsequently, educator Mr. Ye Shengtao further supplemented the definition as "a sensitive feeling towards language and words." Language sensibility research has continued to evolve, reaching unprecedented peaks in the late 20th century. Guided by various theoretical frameworks, language sensibility research has injected vitality and diversity into the field.

### 1.2 Characteristics of Language Sensibility

Examining the historical research, a consensus has been reached on several key characteristics of language sensibility, including:

- (1) Intuitiveness: the general explanation for intuitiveness is direct and non-logical reasoning, emphasizing speed, agility, and unconsciousness.
- (2) Individuality: Evident in diverse language styles, showcasing a strong personal touch.
- (3) Holistic Nature: As a language skill, language sensibility manifests through the overall presentation of abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- (4) Creativity: Primary school students, drawing on past learning experiences, creatively imbue more meaning into concepts such as the "yue" (moon).

## 2. Language Sensibility Teaching in Chinese Education

### 2.1 What is Language Sensibility Teaching?

As the name implies, language sensibility teaching is "an instructional activity conducted to cultivate language sensibility. It involves activities aimed at perceiving and utilizing language to achieve educational goals, considering students' psychological and linguistic development."

### 2.2 Importance of Language Sensibility Teaching

The necessity of implementing language sensibility teaching can be summarized from several perspectives:

Firstly, competence of language sensibility is at the core of language abilities. Students' reading proficiency, oral communication, expressive skills, and organizational abilities in written language are closely linked to the manipulation of language sensibility. The essence of

Chinese language learning lies fundamentally in the study of language, following the pattern of “perception—comprehension—accumulation—application.”

Secondly, language sensibility cultivation contributes to moral education. The linguistic form and content of a text permeate the author’s thoughts and emotions. Through repeated perception of language materials conveying truth, goodness, and beauty, students assimilate, adapt, and modify their cognitive patterns.

### 3. Analysis of Issues in the Current State of Students’ Language Sensibility

The author conducted a sample survey on the language sensibility status of over 500 fifth and sixth-grade students in a primary school in Xi’an:

Survey Questionnaire on the Language Sensibility Status of Fifth and Sixth-grade Students in a Primary School in Xi’an (excerpt)

Survey Content	Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
After multiple readings, can you achieve?	A	94	47%
	B	52	26%
	C	54	27%
How do you handle the “reading” aspect when studying course texts?	A	78	39%
	B	104	52%
	C	18	9%
How do you usually arrange your morning reading class?	A	31	15.5%
	B	100	50%
	C	29	14.5%
	D	40	20%
How many times do you usually read a course text?	A	98	49%
	B	67	33.5%
	C	35	17.5%
Do you think there is a significant correlation between reading and language learning ability?	A	114	57%
	B	50	25%
	C	36	18%
Do you have the habit of making simple annotations or writing reflections while reading articles?	A	38	19%
	B	88	44%
	C	74	37%
How would you rate your oral expression skills?	A	20	10%
	B	47	23.5%
	C	111	55.5%
	D	22	11%

To assess the current language sensibility level of primary school students, the author conducted a questionnaire survey involving 597 fifth and sixth-grade students in a primary school in Xi’an. A total of 597 questionnaires were distributed, with 502 valid responses collected (an effective rate of approximately 84.09%).

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire results, students generally acknowledge the importance of reading but do not emphasize it sufficiently in practice. They fail to develop the habit of thinking while reading and making timely reading notes. Most students engage in shallow reading, lacking critical thinking, and relying on teacher explanations for text comprehension. If students’ reading quality does not meet the standards, the cultivation of language sensibility becomes a theoretical concept without practical implementation.

#### 3.1 Lack of Good Reading Habits

The Song Dynasty philosopher Zhu Xi proposed the famous “Six Steps of Reading”, emphasizing that “the essence of reading lies in personal enrichment, and one should be able to derive insights and feelings from the text through reading.”.

### **3.2 Overreliance on Teacher Explanations**

Following recent curriculum reforms, the “authoritative role” of teachers is gradually diminishing, allowing students to become more active participants in the classroom, and enhancing their awareness as the main contributors to the learning process.

### **3.3 Insufficient Oral Training, Weak Language Organization and Expression**

Within the training phase of oral expression, teachers often simplify course content, inadequately implementing oral training, or substituting regular lessons to save time.

### **3.4 Lack of Language Accumulation, Weak Organizational Skills in Written Language**

Written language composition serves as another crucial benchmark for language proficiency. Common issues observed in writing instruction include difficulties in capturing and extracting key information from the prompt, frequent grammatical errors, incoherent sentences, a paucity of vocabulary, and a lack of aesthetic sense.

## **4. Strategies for Developing Language Sensibility Focused on Student Audience**

The process of forming students’ language sensibility is not instantaneous. It requires active engagement with language materials, internalizing these materials into cognitive structures, and reinforcing the learning through practical application. The author introduces the following strategies for cultivating language sensibility in student groups:

### **4.1 Critical Reading and Analysis, Appreciating Language**

- (1) Insightful Reading: Reading is a crucial step in Chinese language learning, occupying a significant portion of the curriculum.
- (2) Creating Scenarios: Language context influences the formation and content of language, and it affects the environmental setting in which language and words exist, influencing their meaning.
- (3) Analytical Contemplation: The ultimate goal of language learning is its practical application.

### **4.2 Extensive Reading and Knowledge Expansion**

(1) Wide Reading and Vocabulary Accumulation When students encounter a vocabulary word during reading, the information associated with that word stored in their “mental lexicon” is promptly activated. Typically, students with higher reading proficiency expend less time extracting information; while the students with weaker reading skills exhibit slower responses in capturing pertinent information, resulting in a comparatively delayed understanding.

(2) Utilizing Multimedia for Indirect Experience Accumulation Multimedia teaching aids, as auxiliary tools in Chinese language instruction, can compensate for students’ lack of life experience.

### **4.3 Transfer Training, Reinforcing Language Sensibility Application**

(1) Reading Notes Writing reading notes is the process of presenting the information after assimilation and adaptation. “the form of reading notes is simple and easy to operate; recording feelings at any time, possessing timeliness.” 19% of the surveyed participants who selected “yes” exhibited relatively strong language perception and expressive abilities in the subsequent written language tests.

(2) Comparative Imitation Writing Comparative imitation writing occurs after the study of Chinese literary texts. Students are tasked with mimicking the given text, using the text’s title as a prompt for their writing. The difficulty level of the material should align with the “zone of proximal development”. The second step involves modification, including group revisions and teacher guidance.

(3) Situational Writing The words “I write with my hand and speak with my mouth; how can tradition restrain me?” was mentioned by Huang Zunxian in Zagan. The situational writing involves on-the-spot composition in a specific context.

The current study primarily addresses issues related to cultivating language sensitivity identified through questionnaire surveys and teaching observations. While this paper may have limitations, it is hoped that it will serve as a catalyst, sparking further contemplation on

language sensitivity and its teaching methodologies.

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