

Exploring the Practical Path of Emotional Education in High School Chinese Texts from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

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Abstract: *Under the guidance of core competency education, emotional education serves as a crucial means for high school Chinese language to implement aesthetic appreciation and cultural inheritance literacy. Currently, there are common practical issues in high school Chinese emotional classrooms, such as text interpretation being labeled, emotional perception being detached from language carriers, and perceptual experience lacking rational critical thinking support. Conceptual metaphor, image schemas, and conceptual integration in cognitive linguistics provide new analytical tools for dismantling the inherent emotional structure of texts from the linguistic level. Based on the inherent linkage of “language-cognition-emotion-thinking”, this paper builds a textual emotional analysis framework, develops practical teaching methods suitable for the classroom, and constructs a four-ring classroom paradigm of “textual intensive reading — cognitive deconstruction — emotional experience — rational expression”. It demonstrates the implementation process through teaching segments of “Shengshengman” and “Xiangjixuanzhi”, and proposes solutions to practical difficulties such as theoretical transformation, personalized reading, effectiveness evaluation, and college entrance examination adaptation, providing practical references for high school Chinese emotional teaching.*

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, High school Chinese, Text interpretation, Emotional education, Core competencies.

1. Origin of the Problem: The Practical Dilemma of Emotional Education in High School Chinese Language Education

The high school stage is a crucial period for shaping students' three outlooks. Emotional teaching in Chinese language classrooms bears the important responsibility of shaping personality and character, and fulfilling the fundamental task of cultivating students with moral integrity (General High School Chinese Language Curriculum Standards, Daily Revision Edition, 2025). Examining current frontline teaching, emotional teaching still has obvious shortcomings. Some teachers skip the textual close reading phase and directly present standardized thematic conclusions, simplifying the complex and diverse emotions in the text into labels; some classrooms equate emotional edification with moral preaching, conducting emotional indoctrination without relying on the text, lacking a derivation chain from linguistic symbols to emotional comprehension (Mao, 2022); many teachings only remain at the level of emotional infection, lacking critical thinking activities that guide students to reflect on the value positions behind emotions.

One major cause of the aforementioned teaching issues is the absence of a set of emotional interpretation tools in the classroom that are rooted in language ontology and easy for teachers to use. Cognitive linguistics proposes that language has embodied characteristics, and abstract emotions rely on language to complete conceptualization and construction. Conceptual metaphor, image schemas, and conceptual integration theory can compensate for this teaching shortcoming (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Based on this, this study explores how to use cognitive linguistic tools to mine multi-layered emotions in texts, create a classroom implementation paradigm suitable for frontline teaching, and achieve synergistic progress in language acquisition,

emotional edification, and thinking cultivation.

2. Theoretical Perspective: The Inner Logic of Cognitive Linguistics Intervening in Emotional Education

Research in cognitive linguistics abroad has shown that humans often convey abstract emotions through concrete metaphors and image schemas. The theory of conceptual integration explains that reading is a process of meaning generation where multiple mental spaces blend together (Kövecses, 2000). However, practical research on the application of this theory in domestic high school classrooms remains scarce. Most domestic research on emotional education in middle school Chinese language focuses on value interpretation and teaching experience summarization, affirming the educational value of emotional education. However, when it comes to classic texts with profound ideological connotations, there is a lack of comprehensive interpretation schemes based on language ontology (Yuan, 2022; Yu et al., 2023).

The inherent logic of applying cognitive linguistics to affective teaching in high school Chinese classrooms can be understood as follows: language is both a carrier of emotions and a medium for students to engage in emotional cognition; the deep emotions of a text are embedded in a systematic metaphorical network; the internal emotional fluctuations and conflicts within a text can be structured and organized through image schemas; readers' understanding of the emotions in a text is a process of personalized cognition generated by the integration of text content, personal experiences, and cultural context of the era (Kövecses, 2000). Teaching should follow the evolutionary path of “language--cognition--emotion--thinking”, starting from text language, relying on cognitive tools to complete text decoding, generating deep emotional

experiences, and ultimately forming personal insights with a speculative flavor. Cognitive linguistics does not replace literary aesthetic perception, but rather adds cognitive scaffolding to perceptual reading, enabling emotions to be generated from language and rational cognition to be refined from emotions.

3. Model Construction: A Framework for Text Sentiment Analysis from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

Based on the characteristics of the selected texts in the unified edition of high school Chinese language textbooks, the textual emotions can be divided into five categories: individual introspection, human and society, cultural tradition, interpersonal emotions, and human and nature. Individual introspection focuses on self-questioning about life, such as “I and Ditan (我与地坛)”; human and society focuses on criticism of the family and society, such as “The Blessing (祝福)”; cultural tradition points to historical nostalgia and cultural reflection, such as “Qin Opera (秦腔)”; interpersonal emotions focus on family ties, parting, and other human bonds, such as “The Story of Xiangji Xuan (项脊轩志)”; human and nature carries natural aesthetics and cosmic contemplation, such as “Autumn in the Old Capital (故都的秋)”. Relying on the core theories of cognitive linguistics, three types of text analysis models for classroom practice are constructed.

3.1 Metaphor Analysis Model: Uncovering the Value Orientation Behind the Metaphor Network

The deep emotions and value concepts of a text are often presented through a complete metaphor system, rather than scattered rhetorical sentences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The metaphor analysis model focuses on capturing the repeated imagery in the text, sorting out the complete metaphorical chain, and establishing the intrinsic connection between the imagery system and emotions and value concepts.

Taking “The Ode to Chibi (赤壁赋)” as an example, we can sort out the metaphorical system formed by “water-moon”. The surging river and the waxing and waning of the moon embody the contemplation on life, namely “change and constancy”. Teaching should move beyond the simple label of “Sushi’s open-minded personality” and guide students to realize that the author’s life insights are not subjective expressions, but are constructed through the natural metaphors of water and moon. This allows emotional interpretation to take root in the details of the text language.

3.2 Image Schema Analysis Model: Grasping the Emotional Dynamics of Narrative Texts

Image schemas such as path, container, and conjunction-division can transform the implicit and fluid emotions of text into a deconstructible narrative structure (Kövecses, 2000). The path-obstacle schema can interpret the emotional tension of “goal-obstacle-perseverance” in the struggle of Santiago in “The Old Man and the Sea (老人与海)”; the container schema is used to analyze the protagonist’s emotional breakthrough from the layers of social rules,

judicial injustice, and fate in “The Case of Dou E (窦娥冤)”, which is achieved through three vows; the conjunction-division schema can explain the breakdown of character relationships in “Thunderstorm (雷雨)” and the internal logic that continuously escalates the tragic mood. In the classroom, students can be guided to draw emotional maps, visualize the fluctuations of character emotions, and understand the emotional logic behind the narrative.

3.3 Conceptual Integration Analysis Model: Facilitating the Generation of Personalized Emotional Cognition

The theory of conceptual integration posits that reading is a process in which readers actively construct meaning. Teaching necessitates bridging multiple spaces, including the text, the author’s life, students’ life experiences, and the culture of the era, abandoning the notion of a sole standard answer, and respecting students’ diverse reading experiences (Kövecses, 2000). Taking the teaching segment of “Shēng Shēng Mǎn (声声慢)” as an example:

Lesson segment: Interpreting the melancholy in “Shēng Shēng Mǎn (声声慢)” through conceptual integration

[Intensive Reading] Circle and underline the imagery of evening breeze, returning geese, yellow flowers, and drizzle, and feel the cold and melancholic tone created by the repetition of words, thereby establishing a textual input space.

[Cognitive Deconstruction] Supplement the life circumstances of Li Qingzhao after the Southern Expedition, where her family was broken and the country fell, and build the author’s life input space.

[Emotional Experience] Encourage students to recall their personal experiences of loss and disappointment, thereby activating their individual experience input space.

[Rational expression] Exploration task: Does the word “chou (愁)” merely represent personal loneliness and sadness? Write down your understanding.

Students move beyond the superficial understanding of “poets expressing sorrow” and comprehend that this sorrow is a complex emotion intertwined with personal hardships and the suffering of the era, achieving deep understanding based on empathy.

4. Practical Turn: Teaching Strategies Oriented Towards Rational Speculation and the Four-Ring Classroom Model

4.1 Three Classroom Practical Teaching Strategies

1) Metaphor matrix analysis strategy

This strategy involves selecting high-frequency images from the text, organizing the image association network, distinguishing between the source and target domains of metaphors, and interpreting the emotional connotations carried by the images. It is commonly used in the teaching of poetry and prose. Taking “The Ode to the Chibi (赤壁赋)” as

an example, students are guided to create a metaphor matrix table, with “river water, bright moon, and gentle breeze” as the source domains, corresponding to the target domains of “the passage of life, the vicissitudes of life, and spiritual freedom”. Instead of directly accepting the conclusion that “Su Shi is open-minded and unrestrained”, students can see how the text relies on a set of natural metaphors to express philosophical thoughts on life through the associations between images, achieving emotional decoding from conclusion memorization to the linguistic level.

2) Emotion mapping strategy

For novels, dramas, and narrative prose, organize students to draw emotional curves or structure diagrams, combining through the complete process of emotional occurrence, conflict, turning points, and endings, transforming implicit emotions into visual content. For example, when teaching “Moonlight over the Lotus Pond (荷塘月色)”, use the author’s changes in whereabouts as a clue, and have students draw an emotional change map, marking several key nodes such as “quite uneasy in heart → temporarily comforted by the lotus pond → returning to the reality of depression”. The map visually reveals that emotions are not singularly “leisurely and comfortable”, but rather a constant tug between liberation and depression, helping students grasp the complex and contradictory internal emotions of the text and avoid one-sided interpretation.

3) Strategies for promoting critical writing

Set reading and writing inquiry tasks to promote the transformation from emotional experience to rational expression, and use writing to stimulate thinking (Yu et al., 2023). For example, after studying “The Blessing (祝福)”, a micro-writing task can be set: analyze the collective emotions of the people in Luzhen towards the death of Xianglin’s wife based on textual details. Students are required not to simply criticize the indifference of the public, but also to consider how this numbness is gradually constructed through character dialogue and behavioral details. The task forces students to move beyond pure moral judgment and examine the social emotional logic behind the text based on linguistic evidence, completing rational reflection after empathy.

4.2 “Textual Close Reading → Cognitive Deconstruction → Emotional Experience → Rational Expression” Four-Stage Teaching Model

First, focus on close reading of the text: base on a detailed analysis of the language, identify key words and recurring imagery, and avoid vague comprehension that is detached from the text;

Second-level cognitive deconstruction: Utilizing metaphor matrices, image schemas, and conceptual integration to conduct text analysis and clarify the linguistic logic underlying emotion generation;

The third emotional experience: combining the background of the times with students’ life experiences to achieve aesthetic empathy and respect students’ personalized feelings;

The fourth link is rational expression: through classroom discussion and critical writing, examine the value positions behind emotions, and express personalized viewpoints supported by textual evidence.

Using the brief example from “The Story of Xiangji Xuan (项脊轩志)” to demonstrate the four-step process: 1) Close reading of the text, focusing on the sentence “In the courtyard stands a loquat tree, which my wife planted the year she passed away. Now it has grown into a towering tree, its branches spreading like a canopy,” and circling words related to trees and time; 2) Cognitive deconstruction, using container and associative schemas to analyze the loquat tree as a metaphorical carrier linking life and death; 3) Emotional experience, evoking students’ feelings of life changing and nostalgia, and appreciating the implicit and profound longing; 4) Rational expression, classroom discussion: why does the author not express his grief directly, and what expressive effect does expressing emotions through trees have.

The four-ring model uses cognitive tools as a scaffold, pursuing “interpreting emotions through language, analyzing logic based on emotions, and achieving a symbiosis of emotion and logic”. Cognitive analysis is merely a teaching scaffold and cannot replace traditional teaching methods such as recitation and contextual experience. It should not be solidified as the only interpretation conclusion.

5. Practical Reflection: Realistic Challenges and Coping Paths

Applying cognitive linguistics to high school Chinese emotional classrooms will encounter four types of practical challenges that teachers need to handle properly.

Firstly, it is crucial to maintain a balance in the transformation of theoretical tool teaching. Cognitive linguistics possesses a strong academic attribute. Directly copying professional concepts can exacerbate students’ learning burden, while excessive simplification can diminish theoretical value. In teaching, it is important to ensure language translation without delving deeply into professional definitions. The focus should be on implementing classroom practices that encourage “multi-angle thinking incorporating text, author, and personal experience.”.

Secondly, there is a contradiction between analytical frameworks and reading generation. Structured models carry the risk of patternizing literary emotions, potentially suppressing students’ personalized reading experiences. In teaching, models should be viewed as interpretative scaffolds rather than standard answers. After completing cognitive deconstruction, sufficient classroom space should be reserved to accommodate diverse insights, ensuring that “scaffolds are provided but not the only option”.

Thirdly, there is the challenge of evaluating the effectiveness of emotional education. The improvement of students’ emotions, aesthetics, and thinking involves long-term implicit changes, which are difficult to quantify through examination papers. Evaluation focuses on qualitative methods, integrating classroom observation, student interviews, analysis of reading and writing works, and questionnaire surveys. It places

emphasis on the students' thinking process in interpreting texts, rather than using the correctness of conclusions as the sole criterion for evaluation (Yu et al., 2023).

Fourth, adapt to the pace of high school exam-oriented teaching. Affected by the pressure of the college entrance examination, many teachers are concerned that in-depth text interpretation will take up time for exam preparation. In fact, deep reading based on language ontology is the foundation for the ability to read literary works and write argumentative essays in the college entrance examination. Teachers can integrate this analytical approach into regular unit teaching, balancing the cultivation of literacy and the improvement of exam-oriented abilities

6. Conclusion

Under the background of core competencies, emotional teaching in high school Chinese language education needs to move beyond vague preaching and return to the textual language itself. Cognitive linguistics provides a new research perspective for emotional teaching. By relying on conceptual metaphor, image schemas, and conceptual integration to build an analytical model, it implements the four-ring classroom teaching paradigm, connects the intrinsic links between language, cognition, emotion, and thinking, and guides students to move from shallow empathy to rational speculation with aesthetic depth.

It should be clear that cognitive linguistics is merely a teaching aid and cannot fully replace traditional teaching methods such as reading aloud and situational edification. In subsequent teaching practice, it is necessary to continuously develop lesson examples for different literary styles, optimize classroom scaffolding, balance theoretical tools and literary aesthetics, and allow emotional education to take root in the text, thereby promoting students' spiritual growth and fulfilling the fundamental task of cultivating moral character and nurturing talents in Chinese language curriculum.

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