

A Review of Research on Chinese Language Learning Task Groups in Primary and Secondary Schools from 2017 to 2024

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Abstract: As a new concept for organizing and presenting Chinese language teaching content, “learning task groups” has received continuous attention from the academic community since *the 2017 New Curriculum Standard* was first proposed, and fruitful research results have been achieved. This paper adopts a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative research to conduct in-depth research on the literature related to Chinese language learning task groups in primary and secondary schools in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure database from 2017 to 2024, in order to unveil the research status and achievements in this field and predict future research trends. With the Citespace visualization research tool, this study identified two theoretical research hotspots through quantitative analysis, which are “research on curriculum goals of learning task groups” and “research on the connotation of learning task groups”. Four practical research hotspots in the field of learning task groups, “curriculum construction research”, “textbook units integrated teaching”, “teaching design research”, and “reading and writing integrated teaching research” were pinpointed as well. Through in-depth study of specific literature, it can be seen that scholars have mainly focused on the theoretical exploration of the connotation characteristics, curriculum construction, and teaching design of learning task groups. However, the research on the overall construction of learning task group teaching and the theoretical summary of the application of learning task groups in Chinese language classroom teaching are insufficient. Based on the philosophy of implementing new concepts in new textbooks, subsequent research needs to further promote the development of textbooks and pedagogization under the concept of learning task groups, enhance the balanced research on various learning task groups, and on the integration of individual text teaching and unit teaching from the perspective of learning task groups.

“Learning task group” is a way of organizing and presenting language curriculum content in primary and secondary schools. Since the first official proposal of “learning task group” teaching concept in *the 2017 Edition, 2020 Revised Edition of Chinese Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High Schools* (hereinafter referred to as *the 2017 Edition Chinese Curriculum Standards*). *The 2022 Chinese Language Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education* (hereinafter referred to as *the 2022 Chinese Language Curriculum Standards*) follows the curriculum philosophy of the high school Chinese language curriculum standard, and requires the course content to be integrated and structured in the form of “learning task groups” in Chinese language teaching of compulsory education. Under the joint attention of educational researchers from academia and frontline teachers, research on Chinese language learning task group has rapidly expanded and achieved fruitful results. This study combines quantitative research and description of research literature related to learning task groups in academia from 2017 to 2024 based on Citespace visualization, with qualitative analysis on the basis of secondary literature reading, in order to grasp a comprehensive review of the research status of learning task groups, make corresponding reflections, and assess the research trends for academic reference.

1. Current Status of Research on Chinese Language Learning Task Groups in Primary and Secondary Schools from 2017 to 2024---Analysis Based on Citespace

A search was conducted in the database of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) with the theme of “Chinese Language Learning Task Group”, spanning from March 5, 2017 to May 11, 2024 under the source of “All Journals”, and the type of “Academic Journals”. A total of 719 papers were retrieved, and 694 were exported in Refworks format with new book recommendations and indirectly related literature excluded, and imported into Citespace6.3.R1. Keyword co-occurrence knowledge graph were generated with keywords as the node type, thereby exploring the research hotspots of “Chinese language learning task groups”.

(1) Keyword co-occurrence knowledge graph analysis

A keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted on 694 papers from 2017 to 2024 with a time partition of 1 year. Keyword was selected as the node type and g-index was selected in the threshold setting. The size of the keyword co-occurrence network was adjusted by increasing or decreasing the value of K, which is a value of 10. The circle in Figure 1 represents nodes, and the larger the node and the font size are, the higher frequency the keyword has. Nodes and font sizes of keywords such as “core literacy”, “reading teaching”, “learning tasks”, “curriculum standards”, “unit teaching”, and “teaching design” are larger, indicating that these keywords have a higher level of popularity in the research on learning task groups.

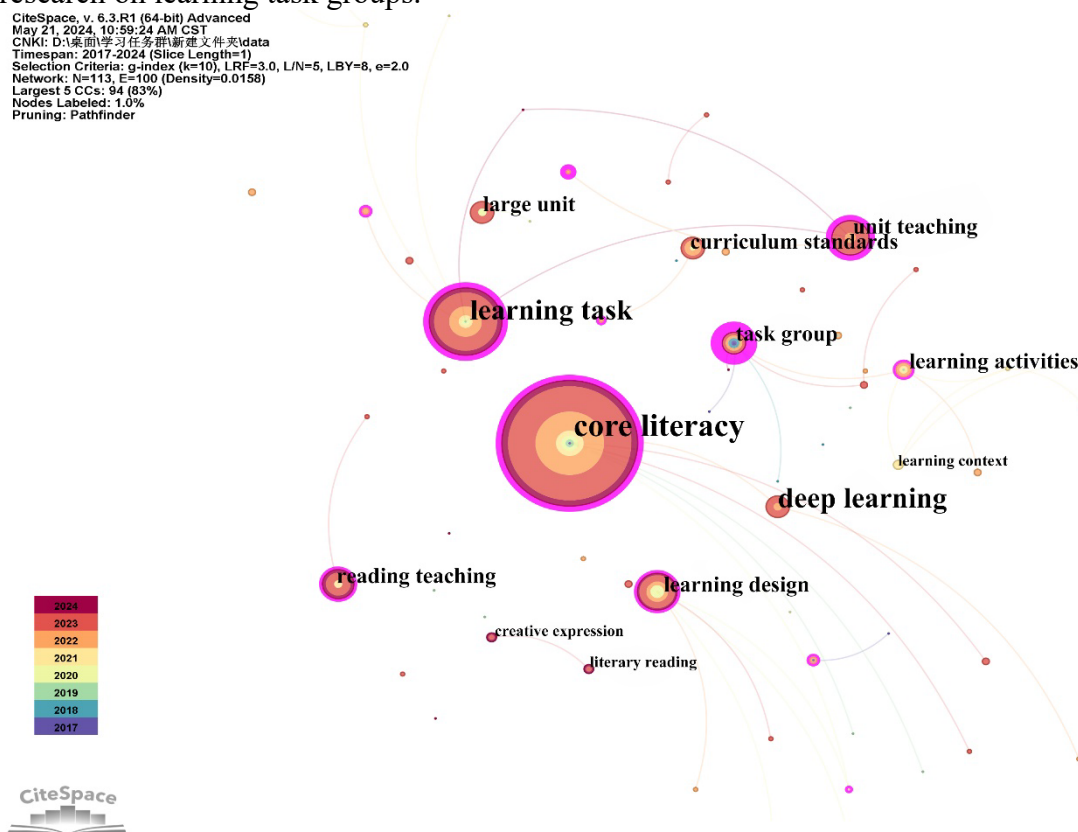


Figure 1 Keyword co-occurrence graph of 694 papers related to “Chinese language learning task groups”

2. Analysis of research hotspots on Chinese language learning task groups in primary and secondary schools from 2017 to 2024

By combining the interpretation of the co-occurrence knowledge graph with the secondary literature review, this paper is to further analyze the research literature on Chinese language learning task groups in primary and secondary schools from both theoretical and practical dimensions.

(1) Theoretical research on learning task groups

The first is the research on the curriculum objectives of Chinese language learning task groups.

Professor Wen Rumin pointed out the relationship between “learning task groups” and “Chinese core literacy” in the national training class of the unified edition of high school Chinese textbooks, that is, the goal of learning task group teaching is to guide students to construct Chinese core literacy in independent Chinese language practice by breaking the form of individual text intensive training, and integrating the content of the textbooks into learning tasks.^[1] At the same time, how to avoid deviating from the core competency orientation in Chinese language teaching from the perspective of learning task groups has become a topic of common concern for researchers. For example, Rong Weidong proposed four principles for literacy oriented Chinese language learning task group teaching from the perspective of teaching practice, including adhering to course objectives, creating situations, integrating course content, and utilizing information technology.^[2]

The second is the research on the connotation of learning task groups. Firstly, focus on the “task”. Lu Zhiping believes that “task” is one of the key words in learning task groups, and that the learning content should be integrated into learning tasks represented by language activities in real situations, while pursuing the unity of scientific logic, learning logic, and life logic in the task.^[3] Secondly, focus on the context. Situations are the carriers of the smooth implementation of learning tasks. Researchers and Chinese language teaching practitioners attach great importance to creating authentic learning situations closely related to the students’ real life based on the teaching guidelines in the curriculum standards. As proposed by Li Gonglian, the context constructed by task groups is to establish cultural and psychological alliances in real or simulated knowledge production and restoration situations, allowing students to internalize the static teaching process of real space and the dynamic activity experience of psychological space, thereby achieving the unity of individual psychology and the external manifestation.^[4] Thirdly, focus on “Chinese language practice activities”. Wang Rongsheng believes that language practice does not refer to exclusive activities like listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but to comprehensive dynamic language practice activities that integrate many aspects and even expand to society.^[5]

(2) Practical research on learning task groups

The first is the research on the construction of learning task group courses. This type of research can be divided into the “curriculum design” model represented by Zheng Guihua and the “large unit teaching” model represented by Lu Zhiping, Dai Xiaoe, etc. The curriculum design proposed by Zheng Guihua transforms a relatively general learning task group into a clear and linear time series required in the Chinese language learning process. It is a learning activity process design aimed at cultivating students’ key abilities, which can be carried out in multiple lessons in the task group. It is a teaching design based on a problem, a learning activity, or a task, and placing more emphasis on the intrinsic characteristics of learning materials.^[6] As Dai Xiao’e proposed, large unit teaching is the foundation of the Chinese language course content structure. Based on core literacy, it integrates learning resources into learning activities, and constructs a basic path for promoting the implementation of learning task groups on the basis of large units.^[7]

The second is the research on the integration of learning task groups and textbook units. As Wu Xinxin believes, in designing learning task group teaching for the unified Chinese language textbook units, the overall teaching objectives of the unit should be determined in the first place by considering the requirements of both the curriculum and the characteristics of the unit text. In the second place, learning projects should be designed according to the logic of reading appreciation, sorting and exploration, and expression and communication. Finally, attention should be paid to the evaluation and guidance from teachers throughout the entire teaching process.^[8]

The third is the research on instructional design for learning task groups. In the study of the learning task group of “critical reading and expression”, Yu Dangxu proposed that critical reading does not depend on the style, but on the purpose of reading. More attention should be paid to cultivating students’ “rational listening”, allowing them to develop from sensibility to rationality, from chaos to clarity, and from understanding to judgment. A path for critical reading was proposed starting from objective texts, to understanding the human nature and the nature of the world, and then to integrating texts from humanistic perspectives to make self-assured judgments.^[9]

Fourthly, research on reading and writing strategies for learning task groups. Sheng Qing and

Chang Fei explored the implementation path of writing unit teaching from the perspective of learning task groups, adopting the fifth unit of the fourth grade textbook of the unified edition as a case. They believe that students' writing literacy should be improved by following the path of determining the writing task context, structuring learning activities, and designing evaluation tools through the entire process in the task group writing.^[10]

3. Research reflection and outlooks

The teaching concept of learning task groups has undergone 6 years of research and practice, and rich achievements have been made in the research on its connotation characteristics, curriculum construction, teaching design, etc.. Frontline teachers are also active in exploring the teaching content structure and innovative teaching methods based on learning task groups. However, for continuously advancing the theoretical and practical exploration of learning task groups, and fundamentally transforming the students' learning approach, further research on learning task groups can be carried out from the following three aspects.

(1) Textbook development and Teaching research

Both the 2017 and 2022 versions of the Chinese curriculum standards clearly state that the learning task group is the main presentation method of Chinese curriculum content in primary and secondary schools in China. At present, the unified edition of high school Chinese language textbook has implemented the teaching concept of "learning task groups". Teachers can identify the the task group a specific text belongs to based on the unit introductions, unit learning tasks, and text content, and then design teaching plans accordingly. The unified Chinese language textbooks for compulsory education have not yet been organized and presented according to the "learning task group". Therefore, subsequent research can focus on the following three aspects.

(2) Research on strengthening the balance of learning task groups

Each learning task group has received varying degrees of attention from the academic community, and there is an imbalance between theoretical research and practical summary. At present, research on learning task groups mainly focuses on areas such as "whole book reading", "cross media reading and communication", "interdisciplinary learning of Chinese language", and "practical reading and communication". There is relatively little research on learning task groups such as "study on Chinese character and Chinese language", "study of Chinese traditional culture classics", and "contemporary cultural practice". Only 4 papers with the title "Chinese character and Chinese language study" were retrieved from the CNKI database, 6 with the title "study of Chinese culture classics", and 14 with the title "contemporary cultural practice". In contrast, there are 876 papers titled "whole book reading" and 59 titled "interdisciplinary learning of Chinese language". The retrieved papers data indicates that the research on Chinese language learning task groups shows an unevenness in terms of literature quantity. Weak research on learning task groups can lead to limited reference experience for teachers, and may also result in the neglect of the importance of such learning task groups, ultimately causing the failure of the cultivation of the core language literacy emphasized by such task groups.

Therefore, in the future, a three-dimensional pattern should be constructed for learning task groups, paying attention to interdisciplinary integration, adopting empirical research methods, and combining theoretical exploration with practical research, taking into account of various learning task groups, and avoiding favoring one over the other.

(3) Exploration of the relationship between learning task groups and individual text teaching, unit teaching, and large unit teaching

The reform of Chinese language teaching in China has gone through the development process of individual text teaching, unit teaching, and large unit teaching. It is necessary to explore strategies for learning task groups teaching by grasping the relationship among these three models. Since the concept of "learning task group" teaching was proposed, researchers have generally shifted their focus to the study of large unit teaching from the perspective of learning task group, thus neglecting to some extent the research on the educational value of individual texts. Unit teaching from the perspective of learning task groups is a fusion of individual text teaching and grouped texts teaching.

In the future, research on learning task groups aims to promote students' core Chinese literacy by integrating individual text teaching and unit teaching, without weighing one over the other.

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