

The Strategies and Significance of Constructing the Primary School "Chinese Language Map" Under the "Big Chinese" Perspective

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Abstract

In the context of a cultural tradition where literature, history, and philosophy are interconnected, and the interdisciplinary fusion of education, this study reflects on primary school Chinese language learning, especially ancient poetry, from the "Big Chinese" perspective. By using geography as a foundation, we aim to construct students' "Chinese Language Map," enhancing the effectiveness of language learning. The construction of the "Chinese Language Map" should emphasize both the present learning environment and the individuality of different students, while promoting an open landscape for the map, merging science with imagination. The significance of constructing the "Chinese Language Map" lies in its ability to enhance students' interest in learning, foster systematic thinking, and improve their understanding of life and literary sensitivity. For teachers, it offers an opportunity to update their teaching concepts and expand their knowledge horizons.

Keywords: Big Chinese, primary school chinese, Chinese Language Map

1. Introduction

Teaching ancient poetry in primary school Chinese is both a focus and a challenge, with most teachers focusing on textual analysis and author introductions. These often involve historical context or a "biographical approach," which helps students understand the works and authors comprehensively. However, this approach creates a significant gap between ancient poetry and students' real lives, emphasizing the "historical" aspect while neglecting the "contemporary" dimension. Contemporary literature transcends its era, offering aesthetic experiences that can be connected to students' lives. This study proposes constructing the "Chinese Language Map" by focusing on ancient poetry related to place names, facilitating a dialogue between Chinese, geography, and history, thus forming a "Big Chinese" perspective for students through interdisciplinary learning. Guided by this approach, we aim to break the limitations of traditional teaching and emphasize students' life experiences and systematic thinking, realizing genuine quality education[1].

2. The "Big Chinese" Perspective in the "Chinese Language Map" Construction

2.1 The "Big Chinese" Perspective as the Conceptual Foundation for Building the "Chinese Language Map"

China has a long-standing tradition of integrating "literature, history, and philosophy," yet the current educational environment emphasizes "literary and historical dialogue" while giving philosophy noticeable neglect. Of course, exploring the relationship between Chinese language teaching and philosophical issues is clearly more complex. If we approach this from an interdisciplinary perspective using "literature, history, and philosophy," based on years of teaching experience, we focus more on the integration of literature and geography, which can be simply termed as the "Chinese Language Map." Just as adults have unique experiences with each literary work—"a thousand readers, a thousand Hamlets"—elementary school students should also have distinct understandings of classical Chinese poetry. The "common" is necessary to avoid common-sense errors, while the "distinct" is closely related to each student's environment, personality, and unique life experiences. Clearly, if Chinese language teaching guides students to express their "distinctness" on the foundation of the "common," it will achieve the effect of personalized teaching. Particularly when the individual is linked with specific geography, such as in the case of Li Bai's poem "Early Departure from Baidi City," students from Chongqing, especially those from Fengjie, will likely have a greater sense of connection to the poem compared to students from other places[2]. Similarly, students

living in the Hexi Corridor of Gansu, studying Wang Wei's "Sending Yuan to the West," will have a deeper personal experience. Even among students from Chengdu, those who have visited the Stork Tower will understand the poem differently from those who haven't. From this perspective, if the geographical elements in classical poetry are closely connected with the students' actual lives, their understanding of these poems will become more profound and "personalized."

In elementary Chinese language textbooks, more than half of the classical poems involve place names or the "places of origin" of the poems (including both the main text and supplementary sections). Unfortunately, many teachers, in their teaching practice, simply explain the literal meaning of the classical poems or the "historical connotation" formed through historical development. The connection between ancient place names in the poems and their modern counterparts is often only briefly mentioned. In fact, because of the passage of time, many stories and situations can only be imagined[3]. It is precisely through place names that students are given the opportunity to "touch" history and closely connect it with the present. For example, in the third grade, the poem "Drinking by the Lake After the Morning Rain" describes the West Lake, while "Morning Departure from Baidi City" mentions not only Fengjie but also Jiangling. Many students may not even know that Jiangling is the modern-day Jingzhou. If we connect this poem with the present, using the Yangtze River as a central reference, the geographical locations of Fengjie and Jingzhou become immediately identifiable. By relating the poem's content to present-day transportation and the Three Gorges Dam, students can gain an understanding of geography through their Chinese language lessons. The geographical line drawn by "Morning Departure from Baidi City" extends west to Chengdu (as in the sixth-grade poem "Spring Night's Joyful Rain" by Du Fu) and even to the Gansu-Qinghai area (as seen in "On Military Service" by Wang Changling in fifth grade and "Sending Yuan to the West" by Wang Wei in sixth grade). It stretches east to the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region (including Li Bai's "Sitting Alone on Jingting Mountain" from the fourth grade, Su Shi's "Drinking by the Lake After the Morning Rain," Zhang Ji's "Night Mooring at Fengqiao," and Lin Sheng's "Inscription for the Residence in Lin'an," all covered in fifth and sixth grades)[4]. Furthermore, the line crosses through Fengjie north and south, extending north to Shanxi and Inner Mongolia (as in "Ascending Stork Tower" and "Chilian Song" in second grade), and south to Guangdong and Guangxi, with Su Shi's "A Unique Verse from Huizhou" expanding the map. This approach not only helps students better understand the poems' content but also opens up the channels between literature, geography, and history, allowing them to truly create their own "Chinese Language Map."

2.2 Examples of Building the "Chinese Language Map"

For the first and second grades of elementary school, the corresponding classical Chinese poems in the Chinese textbooks are as follows[5]:

First Grade (First Semester): "Jiangnan", "Painting", "The Farmer's Lament II", "Ancient Moonlit Journey", "Wind".

First Grade (Second Semester): "Quiet Night Thoughts", "The Beginning of a Person", "By the Pond", "Little Pond", "Spring Dawn", "A Little Fisher", "Seeking the Recluse", "Painting a Chicken".

Second Grade (First Semester): "Ascending the Stork Tower", "Looking at the Lushan Waterfall", "Night at the Mountain Temple", "Cilie Song", "Plum Blossoms", "River Snow".

Second Grade (Second Semester): Lesson plans for poems "Village Living", "Ode to the Willow", "Early Departure from Jingci Temple to Send Lin Zifang", "Jue Ju", "Farewell to the Old Grassland", "The Farmer's Lament I", "Night Boat's Writing".

The construction of the "Chinese Language Map" should pay attention to the foundational work in the lower grades, the consolidation work in the middle grades, and the expansion work in the higher grades. First, we need to organize and summarize the geographical elements found in the classical Chinese poems in the first and second grade textbooks. Key selections include[6]:

"Jiangnan", "Ancient Moonlit Journey" from the first-grade (first semester),

"Quiet Night Thoughts", "Seeking the Recluse" from the first-grade (second semester),

"Ascending the Stork Tower", "Looking at the Lushan Waterfall", "Night at the Mountain Temple", "Cilie Song", "River Snow" from the second-grade (first semester),

"Early Departure from Jingci Temple to Send Lin Zifang", "Jue Ju", "Night Boat's Writing" from the second-grade (second semester).

By integrating the concept of the "Chinese Language Map" into teaching practice, and with appropriate expansion, we can create a foundational "Chinese Language Map."

Based on the content of classical poetry, we form a preliminary "Chinese Language Map" with geographical orientations in the first-grade stage. Taking Chengdu, where the author lives, as an example, the students will have an initial awareness of regions such as Jiangnan and the Northwest. For example, "Jiangnan" points to the Jiangsu and Zhejiang areas, and "Ancient Moonlit Journey" points to the Northwestern Kunlun Mountains[7].

On this basis, in the second grade, we begin to construct a more detailed "Chinese Language Map". For instance: "Ascending the Stork Tower" is located in Yongji, Shanxi; "Looking at the Lushan Waterfall" is located in Lushan, Jiangxi; "Night at the Mountain Temple" is located in Huangmei, Hubei; "Cilie Song" is from Inner Mongolia; and "Early Departure from Jingci Temple to Send Lin Zifang" is set in Hangzhou, Zhejiang[8].

Through specific teaching practices and the accumulation of lessons in the first and second grades, students will have developed a systematic awareness of the "Chinese Language Map," laying a solid foundation for expanding and enriching their maps later on. This approach can be promoted to all the Chinese language teachers in the school through teaching discussions, allowing the "Chinese Language Map" to form a sustainable teaching model in the school's curriculum, gradually becoming a characteristic of the school's Chinese language education[9].

The "Chinese Language Map," after integrating the classical poems from all stages of the Chinese language textbooks, can be presented in a simplified form as shown in Figure 1.

Chinese language map

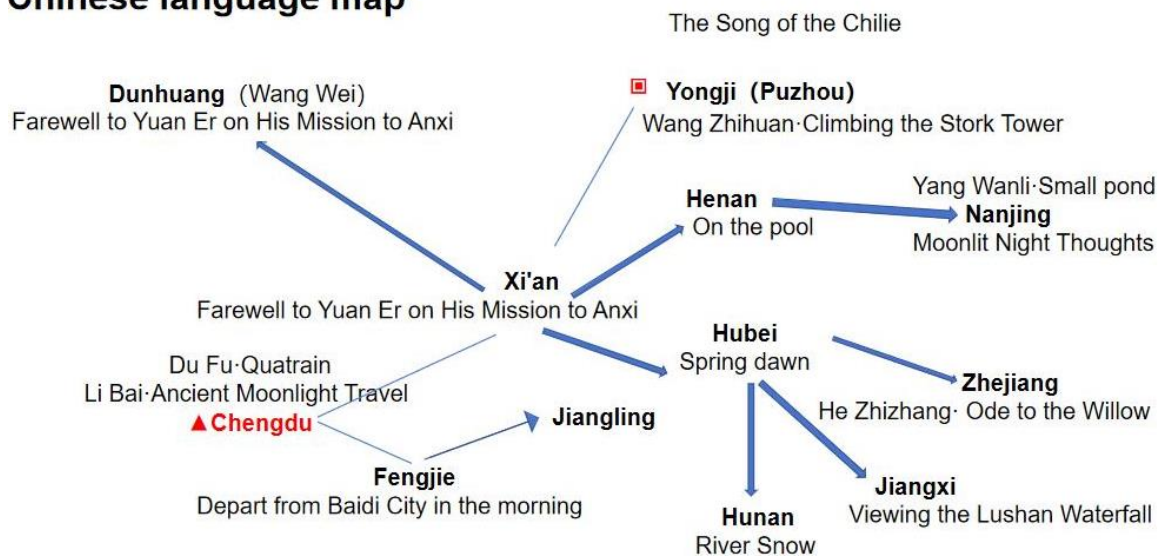


Figure 1. Example of the Chinese Language Map

3. Strategies for Building the "Chinese Language Map"

3.1 Focus on the Timeliness and Individuality of the "Chinese Language Map"

Of course, students from different regions have different "centers." They can certainly use their birthplace or place of study as the center, as it is the place they are most familiar with and closely connected to their lives. Famous education expert Wang Songzhou, when discussing the importance of reading in Chinese language teaching, mentioned, "After reading a book, the key is whether it can be connected, whether it can be linked to one's own life, and whether it can connect to the original cognitive structure." [1] This principle applies to classical Chinese poetry and even to the entire Chinese language teaching process. The complexity of the teaching target makes it difficult to highlight the individual characteristics within the "Chinese Language Map" during teaching. The construction of the "Chinese Language Map" is consistent in its general direction, principles, and ideas, ensuring its operability in teaching[10]. However, its starting point and conclusion always point towards the individual's unique development. Due to differences in life experiences, reading perspectives, and life experiences, the "Chinese Language Map" constructed by elementary school students will inevitably have slight variations, even though there is much in common. These small differences form the unique world of each student. Therefore, how teachers can grasp students' different characteristics and understand their backgrounds in order to effectively develop their unique personalities through the "Chinese Language Map" is a significant challenge.

When students approach the study and understanding of classical Chinese poetry from their own life experiences, their learning will naturally be more effective. This aligns closely with Tao Xingzhi's view of "living education,"

as well as his concept of "life education," which he defined as the opposite of traditional education. "It teaches people how to live," he said. [2] Using classical poetry as an entry point to construct students' literary maps effectively connects history with the present and their own lives, which is an effective practice of Tao's "life education." This teaching philosophy nurtures students' thinking and life awareness: first, the great wisdom that all things are interconnected; second, Chinese language teaching subtly guides students to autonomously form an attitude of respecting history and life. For example, the Cold Mountain Temple in Suzhou, though not particularly prominent in architecture or Buddhist status in the surrounding area, became famous because of Zhang Ji's poem "Night Mooring at Fengqiao." Visitors who are unaware of this poem would not fully appreciate the curiosity they might feel as children about the Cold Mountain Temple when they finally visit it. By cultivating students' "map" awareness through the study of classical poetry, they develop a different perception of certain places. Whether it is the evolution of a place name, the content of a poem, or the poet and historical events related to the poem, when these become part of a student's "Chinese Language Map," they become connected to the student's specific life.

3.2 Emphasizing the Openness of the "Chinese Language Map"

Thus, the teaching of classical Chinese poetry in elementary schools can not only be innovative and contemporary but can also form a system that influences the acquisition of other knowledge. Teachers at different stages should not be confined to their own teaching scope but can link the classical poetry content from previous and subsequent stages to guide and cultivate students. For example, in the second semester of first grade, the poem "A Gift to Wang Lun" by Li Bai mentions the "Peach Blossom Pool." Teachers could explore where this is located today, how far it is from the students' location, and what it looks like now. This can be followed by the second-grade poem "Ascending the Stork Tower" by Wang Zhihuan, discussing where Stork Tower is located today, how to get there from the students' location, and whether its current form has changed compared to historical records. Thus, by using the students' location, Peach Blossom Pool, and Stork Tower as a basis, they begin to construct their most primitive and rough Chinese Language Map, while also laying the framework for further exploration. This teaching philosophy connects classical poetry, which might seem distant, to the present, and seemingly unrelated poems become an integral part of the Chinese Language Map. Influenced by this method, students will consciously make geographical connections with their own locations whenever they study a poem involving a place name, thereby continuously expanding and enriching their "classical poetry map" and eventually forming a "literary map." Classical poetry is just an entry point, and other content in Chinese language teaching can be approached in the same way. As students accumulate knowledge, when they step onto a particular land, they will know the history, geography, and culture of that place, greatly enriching their life experiences. In fact, with the development of big data technology in recent years, some have compiled the travel routes of poets such as Li Bai and Du Fu. "Reading ten thousand books and traveling ten thousand miles" has always been an ideal life, and this path of teaching classical poetry by constructing a "Chinese Language Map" unites reading and traveling in the teaching process. It integrates works from different poets and eras into students' Chinese Language Maps. At first glance, this seems like the "interdisciplinary" thinking that has become popular in recent years, or the effective connection of literature, geography, and history. However, it actually touches on a deeper aspect of Chinese language teaching, which is how to connect texts with life and merge concrete content with abstract life experiences. Extending this to education is quite enlightening.

Building students' "Chinese Language Maps" through classical poetry teaching is a worthwhile approach to teaching. Classical poetry teaching is merely an entry point, or a window that reveals more. Perhaps, in specific stages or grades, this teaching thinking seems to involve a large amount of work, especially since it can become disconnected over time. However, as Wang Songzhou said, Chinese language teaching has three levels: "utilitarian orientation," "scientific orientation," and "aesthetic orientation." [1] Whether this thinking has the risk of being either-or is debatable, but why not combine all three? The "Chinese Language Map" neither affects the "utilitarian" acquisition of knowledge nor the "scientific" geographical location, while still having the "aesthetic" characteristic of life experience. If the six years of classical poetry teaching in elementary school can be integrated into the students' own "Chinese Language Map," it may be difficult in terms of time span and continuity, but it is entirely feasible in terms of teaching thinking and value orientation. In the long run, education is inherently a gradual process, as German philosopher Jaspers said, "True education shakes one tree with another tree, pushes one cloud with another cloud, and awakens one soul with another soul."

4. Effects and Significance of Constructing the "Chinese Language Map"

4.1 Effects of Constructing the "Chinese Language Map"

Academic research on Chinese language education often either places Chinese within the broader context of education for overarching studies, or treats it as an "independent" discipline for specific and practical research.

Some studies also examine the characteristics of elementary school students from the perspective of educational psychology. However, there is little research that combines the practical teaching techniques of Chinese, the characteristics of the discipline, and students' personal development, especially research that emphasizes the knowledge aspect of Chinese language learning, while neglecting its "humanistic" qualities, reflected in the disregard for students' life experiences. Against this backdrop, constructing the "Chinese Language Map" becomes highly significant. Its conceptual and practical path is outlined as follows:

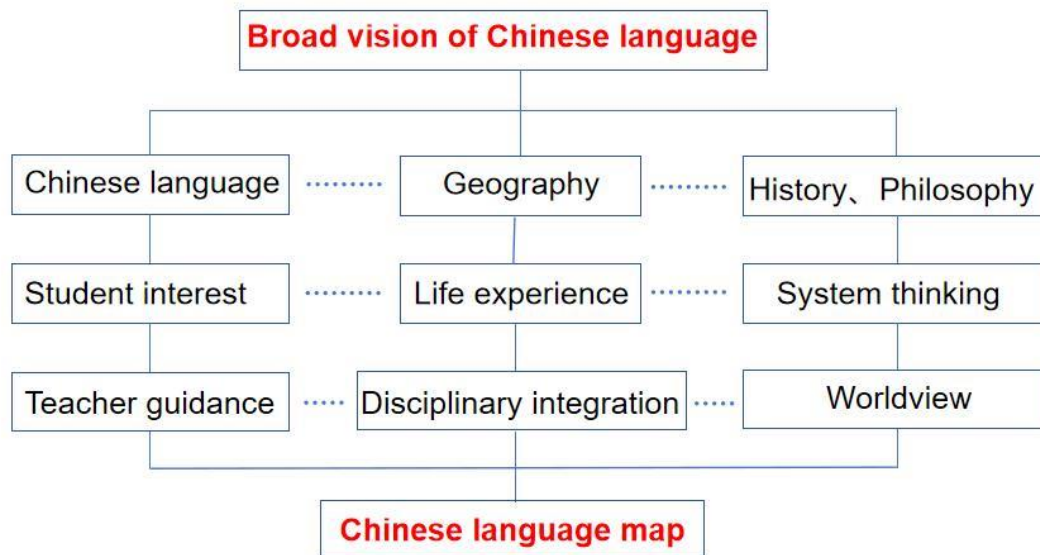


Figure 2. Mind Map of Constructing the "Chinese Language Map"

From Figure 2, it is clear that constructing the "Chinese Language Map" is a learning method that views Chinese teaching as an important way to shape students' worldviews, cultivating their understanding of literature, geography, history, culture, and life, thereby promoting interdisciplinary integration across educational stages.

Teachers' Strategies for Constructing the "Chinese Language Map": In their teaching practices, teachers incorporate the "Chinese Language Map" concept into their curriculum design, ensuring that the classical poetry of each grade level forms an organic connection, establishing the unique characteristics of the school's Chinese language teaching. In the first and second grades, the concept of the "Chinese Language Map" is introduced, while in the third and fourth grades, a richer map is constructed, and in the fifth and sixth grades, this becomes internalized as a thinking method for students' Chinese language learning and interdisciplinary integration.

Students' Learning Concepts of the "Chinese Language Map": Through continuous teaching practice, students gradually master the "Chinese Language Map" learning method. Starting from the content of classical poetry, extending to the birthplace of the poets, the place of composition, and other related content, students will actively apply interdisciplinary thinking from literature, geography, and history when learning classical poetry. Some students even begin to incorporate this approach into other texts.

New Teaching and Learning Perspectives Under the "Chinese Language Map" Concept: In reinterpreting the "Big Chinese View" and the practical construction of the "Chinese Language Map," the teaching philosophy of linking texts with life, and integrating concrete content with abstract life experiences, becomes deeply embedded. The "Chinese Language Map" learning philosophy enables students to form dialogues between history and the present, and between different regions, making Chinese language learning a "Big Chinese" world centered on the student. This guides students to form unique "Chinese Language Maps" and promotes the integration of disciplines and the implementation of the "Five Educational Aspects" concept in teaching.

4.2 Significance of Constructing the "Chinese Language Map"

The "Chinese Language Map" breaks from traditional knowledge-based learning that focuses solely on "language" and "literature." It allows students to metaphorically explore geography and touch history through specific texts, broadening their perspectives and greatly enhancing their interest in learning. The concept of the "Chinese Language Map" stimulates students' interest and ability to explore autonomously. For example, at the Chengdu

University Affiliated Primary School, students have been intentionally encouraged to construct their "Chinese Language Map." Besides integrating relevant content from textbooks, some students have focused on Chengdu, collecting poems related to the city, and spontaneously expanding and enriching the "Chinese Language Map" built from the textbook, which not only stimulates their interest in extracurricular reading but also fosters their ability to learn independently. Specifically:

Cultivating Students' Systemic Thinking Methods: Through the construction of the "Chinese Language Map," students gradually develop interdisciplinary thinking. Within the Chinese language subject, based on classical poetry, they expand to other texts and extracurricular reading, integrating perspectives from geography, history, literature, painting, and other subjects, truly cultivating a "Big Chinese" perspective. Outside of Chinese language learning, students also reflect on and relate Chinese language to mathematics, science, physical education, labor, English, and other subjects, understanding the deep connections and integration of various disciplines in terms of thinking methods. By incorporating the "Chinese Language Map" thinking into extracurricular interest groups and project-based learning, students use this "map" type of thinking to observe and discover connections between all things, forming a worldview that allows for systematic thinking.

Enhancing Students' Life Awareness and Chinese Language Sensitivity: The starting point of the "Chinese Language Map" is students' actual life experiences. The center of the map is their living area—Chengdu. Constructing the map based on their real-life surroundings establishes a close connection to their daily lives. Whether in terms of geographical space or historical dialogue, students learn classical poetry and Chinese language while relating it to their own lives, deeply understanding the relationship between language and life. This awareness, in turn, enhances their sensitivity to the Chinese language.

Updating Teachers' Teaching Philosophy and Knowledge Perspective: Through theoretical discussion and practical teaching of the "Chinese Language Map," the traditional concept that focuses solely on basic knowledge as the value goal of Chinese language teaching is broken. On the basis of cognitive learning, it develops students' value formation and thinking training. At the same time, teachers broaden their own knowledge of geography, history, and ethnicity, conducting academic research in teaching practice, promoting teaching through research, and vice versa. By establishing interdisciplinary and "Five Educational Aspects" teaching principles, teachers expand their own knowledge perspectives through the "Chinese Language Map," guiding students' holistic development.

5. Conclusion

Classical poetry is the literary essence of thousands of years of Chinese history and a key focus in elementary school Chinese language teaching. When these classical poems are connected with each student's life experience, they can influence the individual from various perspectives. In this sense, poets are like "prisoners of time"—looking outward from the depths of time. [3] Our role is merely to guide students to meet these poets, engaging with everything from historical events to personal life experiences. The essence hidden behind these texts becomes an integral part of their lives. As Wang Jiaxin said when discussing Mandelstam, "What truly makes a poet immortal is the struggle with death, the eruption and brilliance of language in the midst of disaster." [3] The "Chinese Language Map," although constructed from geographical locations, builds students' literary worlds. It is through these texts, which integrate history, culture, and individual life, that students can transcend geographical limitations, contemplating life philosophies beyond specific place names and figures. These reflections, such as the historical paradox of "prosperity brings suffering to the people; downfall also brings suffering to the people," or the philosophical loneliness of "I see no ancient people before me, and no future people after me," will become another layer of their "Chinese Language Map."

Author Informations

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