

# Analysis of the Application of Flipped Classroom Teaching Mode in the Elementary Comprehensive Chinese Course

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**Abstract:** The widespread adoption of the internet has provided new platforms and possibilities for Chinese language instruction. Students can utilize online resources or mobile devices for learning outside the classroom, while teachers can shift the “intensive instruction” component of comprehensive Chinese courses to extracurricular settings. This approach enables increased practice time during class sessions, truly placing the learner at the center of the educational process. The flipped classroom model aligns with this philosophy and complements the disciplinary characteristics of comprehensive Chinese courses. In practice, implementing the O-PIRTAS universal flipped classroom model revealed its effectiveness in enhancing oral proficiency and overall competency. However, it is essential to concurrently address students’ writing skills and cultivate their awareness of the flipped classroom approach.

**Keywords:** Flipped classroom; Teaching model; Elementary comprehensive Chinese

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## 1. Introduction

As China’s national strength continues to grow, enthusiasm for learning Chinese has quietly risen worldwide, with the number of international students studying Chinese in China increasing year by year. The traditional teaching model of elementary comprehensive Chinese courses, characterized by “teacher-centered lectures and student drills,” has shown significant shortcomings in enhancing students’ comprehensive Chinese application and expression skills. Introducing the flipped classroom approach to elementary comprehensive Chinese instruction leverages information-based teaching methods to address shortcomings in traditional classroom settings. This integration promotes the deep convergence of information technology with elementary Chinese education, placing greater emphasis on cultivating students’ Chinese proficiency and showcasing their individual characteristics. It facilitates the comprehensive development of students’ knowledge and abilities, truly achieving a student-centered learning experience.

In recent years, the research on the flipped classroom teaching model in the teaching of Chinese as a

foreign language in domestic universities has mainly focused on three aspects: First, the feasibility and possible problems of applying the flipped classroom teaching model in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language <sup>[1]</sup>. The second is the discussion on the teaching design and curriculum model of the flipped Chinese classroom <sup>[2]</sup>. Among them, many scholars have proposed to combine Chinese teaching under the flipped classroom model with other teaching methods, teaching models, and online teaching platforms <sup>[3]</sup>. The third is the theoretical and practical exploration of the flipped classroom in different types of Chinese language courses, which is also a hot topic in the research on the combination of the flipped classroom and the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language in recent years. Among them, the majority of discussions were conducted by integrating the flipped classroom model with language skills courses (listening, speaking, and reading), such as Chen's <sup>[4]</sup> discussion in combination with advanced reading classes, and Gao's <sup>[5]</sup> design in combination with advanced oral English classes, etc.

The application, practice, and research of the flipped classroom teaching mode in the comprehensive course of elementary Chinese are relatively few. This paper adopts the O-PIRTAS general flipped classroom mode to conduct practical exploration in the elementary comprehensive Chinese course, and explains the exploration results as well as summarizes and reflects.

## **2. Problems with the traditional teaching model in elementary comprehensive Chinese courses**

### **2.1. Mismatch between students' knowledge and skill development**

The traditional teaching model for comprehensive Chinese courses is "teacher-led instruction with student drills." This approach is effective in the initial stages of comprehensive Chinese courses because students are just beginning their Chinese learning journey. At this foundational level, language barriers exist, and students must follow the teacher step by step, starting with pinyin, Chinese characters, and vocabulary. Through intensive instruction and daily exposure to the Chinese language environment, students can generally achieve the ability to communicate on simple, everyday topics after one semester of study.

As students' knowledge base expands, the volume of vocabulary and grammar covered in class increases. If traditional teaching methods persist, limited class time inevitably reduces opportunities for practice and expression. The result is that students cannot promptly internalize and output the knowledge acquired in class, leading to low efficiency in converting knowledge into practical language proficiency. Therefore, the traditional teaching model has certain limitations in cultivating students' language application abilities, causing a disconnect between their acquisition of Chinese knowledge and their ability to use the language effectively.

### **2.2. Neglect of students' individual learning characteristics**

A prominent feature of teaching Chinese as a foreign language is the significant variation among individual students. Since learners come from diverse countries and regions with distinct cultural backgrounds and learning characteristics, they encounter different interference factors when acquiring a second language. This necessitates teachers adopting tailored instructional strategies based on the unique needs of their learners. However, under traditional teaching models, instructors deliver "intensive lectures" to the entire class, with uniform implementation of pre-class preparation and post-class review, making it difficult to address the varied needs of different students. Moreover, students vary considerably in their learning methods and paces. Some possess weaker language acquisition abilities and require repeated exposure to master concepts, while others demonstrate strong comprehension and learning aptitude, seeking to absorb more knowledge. When their

learning needs are unmet, these advanced learners may become disengaged or dissatisfied. Consequently, the personalized learning characteristics of students are severely overlooked in traditional teaching models.

### **3. Feasibility of applying the flipped classroom model to comprehensive Chinese courses**

The core of the flipped classroom lies in liberating valuable classroom time by moving extensive direct instruction outside of class. This allows face-to-face classroom time to be dedicated to deep, meaningful learning, cultivating students' higher-order abilities and competencies <sup>[6]</sup>.

The flipped classroom differs from the traditional “teacher-centered” teaching model of elementary comprehensive Chinese courses. It assigns a large amount of new vocabulary and grammar learning to the pre-class stage—meaning students have already mastered the main learning content of the current lesson before class. The primary task in class is to further explore the application of new vocabulary and linguistic points, consolidate what has been learned through interactions between students and between teachers and students, and enhance their expressive skills and comprehensive application abilities. Therefore, the teaching of elementary comprehensive Chinese courses under the flipped classroom model achieves the most ideal effect in language teaching.

### **4. Exploring the O-PIRTAS flipped classroom model in comprehensive Chinese courses**

Experts worldwide acknowledge that the flipped classroom model revolutionizes traditional teaching by shifting low-level learning objectives to self-study outside class. This frees up valuable classroom time for higher-level, meaningful learning. However, opinions vary on the specific implementation process. After reviewing relevant literature and acquiring related knowledge, we favor Guo's O-PIRTAS universal flipped classroom model <sup>[7]</sup>.

O-PIRTAS is an acronym for Objective, Preparation, Instructional video, Review, Test, Activity, and Summary, representing key teaching phases in implementing flipped classrooms. Educators can follow these steps to execute the model.

It should be noted that not all the content in the elementary comprehensive Chinese course is suitable for inversion. The first thing we attempt is grammar. By applying the flipped classroom teaching model, pre-class videos explain language points, while class time is dedicated to practicing and applying them. This approach perfectly addresses the issues of teachers lecturing too much and students speaking too little; Time constraints often lead to an overemphasis on rote exercises at the expense of communicative activities. By dedicating most class time to communicative and social learning activities, the flipped classroom compensates for students' limited opportunities for real-world practice outside the classroom.

In the second semester of the 2023 academic year, we implemented the flipped classroom model in our elementary comprehensive Chinese course. Key language points with high daily usage became the focus of this flipped classroom approach. These included: “shi.....de” sentences, “ba” sentences, simple directional complements, complex directional complements, “zhe” indicating existence, “zhe” indicating action accompaniment, possibility complements, and complex comparative sentences. Students at this stage, having acquired foundational Chinese skills and the ability to receive and understand teacher instructions for self-directed learning through the previous semester, were well-prepared for the flipped classroom approach.

The O-PIRTAS model is employed throughout the flipped classroom implementation. First, teaching

objectives are established based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, with a stronger emphasis on competency-based goals. While Objectives are set by the teacher, they are communicated to students in advance, making the learning process more targeted and concrete.

Preparation, the pre-class phase designed by the teacher, consists of introductory activities before students watch instructional videos. Its purpose is to spark student interest and provide an overall preview of the upcoming lesson. Both these preparatory steps can be introduced during the closing moments of the previous class session when outlining the next lesson's agenda.

Next, students need to self-study instructional videos. Some of these videos are recorded by the instructors themselves, while others are sourced from online resources. The video content must align with the previously established teaching objectives, primarily focusing on knowledge goals. These instructional videos are distributed via the Rain Classroom platform, enabling backend monitoring of student viewing and quiz completion to ensure learning effectiveness. Instructional videos are crucial for pre-class preparation, delivering concise explanations of language points and may even include self-assessment questions to gauge comprehension. After watching the videos, students should have a foundational understanding of the grammar points to be practiced in class—knowing their grammatical meaning, basic structure, general usage conditions, and being able to apply them simply.

This concludes the pre-class preparation and self-study phase, transitioning to the in-person classroom instruction. It is important to note that within a complete 2-hour class session, the entire duration is not solely dedicated to practicing a single language point. Additional vocabulary or text learning may also occur. Therefore, implementing the flipped classroom model in comprehensive Chinese courses applies only to the grammar component—not the entire course, process, or all content.

When the classroom enters the flipped grammar segment, the teacher first reviews the pre-recorded video content. The teacher should systematically outline the key points of the grammar to be learned in this lesson, including the grammatical structures, their meanings, and when to use them.

Next, a short in-class quiz is distributed via the Rain Classroom platform to assess students' grasp of the grammar through video viewing. This quiz serves as a fundamental method for evaluating the entire class's understanding of grammatical structures and meanings. Moreover, the Rain Classroom platform enables immediate collection of student test data, providing highly targeted insights for subsequent teaching activities.

Activity is the heart and soul of the flipped classroom and the key to its success. The attainment of students' competency and quality objectives primarily depends on this phase of instruction, making meticulous activity design essential. For different teaching content, we designed distinct instructional activities. When learning about the “zhe” particle indicating existence, we conducted activities like “Spot the Difference” and “Guess Who It Is”; When studying “ba” sentences, we conducted activities like “Who Decorated the Room Most Beautifully?” and “The Spring Festival is Coming”; for complex comparative sentences, we used “Money-Saving Challenge” and “Southern and Northern China.” One important note: due to class size limitations, activities are conducted in groups of 4–5 students, with group performance recorded toward regular grades. Second, instructional activities must progress incrementally, starting with simpler tasks before moving to more complex, integrated challenges that meet higher-order learning objectives. As students engage enthusiastically in activities, the teacher concludes with a summary and refinement, re-emphasizing the key grammatical points of the lesson to reinforce memory.



## **5. Summary and reflection**

### **5.1. Teaching outcomes**

Students who participated in the flipped classroom experiment achieved a maximum score of 76 (out of 100) on the HSKK (Intermediate) Chinese oral proficiency exam taken later that year (specifically on May 19, 2024, which was later than our implementation period). This score was 2 points higher than the previous year's maximum score of 74 for students taking the same exam during the same timeframe. Furthermore, 33.3% of students scored above 70 points that year, significantly higher than the 14.2% from the same period the previous year. The pass rate for HSKK (Intermediate) that year was 70.8%, compared to 57.2% in the same period the previous year (<https://www.chinesetest.cn>). The HSKK (Intermediate) exam is more challenging than its corresponding HSK Level 4 test, focusing on assessing students' pronunciation, intonation, topic organization, and expression skills. Although the HSKK (Intermediate) exam questions differed between the two years, the scoring criteria remained consistent. This further indicates that incorporating flipped classroom design into comprehensive Chinese language courses can effectively enhance students' oral proficiency and strengthen their Chinese expression abilities.

### **5.2. Teaching reflections**

During the implementation of flipped classroom instruction and through discussions with students, we identified several key considerations for applying this model to elementary comprehensive Chinese courses.

#### **5.2.1. Balancing students' writing skills**

Student feedback indicated that while flipped classroom activities emphasized oral expression and topic discussions using learned grammar, there was insufficient focus on character writing exercises. Consequently, while student participation rates increased significantly during class, their notebooks often remained largely blank.

Upon identifying this issue, we supplemented the lessons with additional homework assignments. These included more grammar-related, rote writing exercises such as error correction, sentence completion, and answering questions using the studied grammar points. This approach aimed to compensate for the lack of writing practice during the main activities.

Simultaneously, we reminded students that watching pre-class instructional videos requires the same note-taking discipline as listening to live lectures, fostering good study habits.

#### **5.2.2. Cultivating student awareness of the flipped classroom**

Shifting students' learning mindset proves as challenging as transforming teachers' perspectives. Most students are accustomed to traditional teaching models, believing Chinese classes should involve teacher-led instruction and practice, accumulating knowledge gradually over time to improve proficiency.

Therefore, when implementing the flipped classroom, teachers should clearly communicate the purpose of changing the teaching model from the outset. This helps gain student buy-in and prepares them mentally for the transition. During implementation, provide specific guidance on how students should proceed. Promptly share and encourage well-executed work. During the inquiry activities phase, teachers should fully leverage scaffolding to guide students' exploration and participation.

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, reforming teaching through the flipped classroom model is not merely about changing “teaching” but fundamentally transforming “learning.” Its essence lies in shifting the focus from “teaching” to “learning,” placing students at the center. Therefore, while teachers adjust their approaches, students must also transform their learning mindset and habits.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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