

An Action Research on Intermediate Chinese Comprehensive Course Based on the BOPPPS Teaching Model: A Case Study of Chinese Classrooms for Vietnamese Students

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The BOPPPS teaching model has demonstrated significant efficacy across multiple fields, yet its application in international Chinese language education remains insufficient. Existing studies mostly focus on static teaching design, lacking a dynamic action research perspective based on classroom practice. This study takes 13 Vietnamese intermediate Chinese learners as research subjects, and conducts three rounds of progressive action research centered on the theme of traditional Chinese festival culture. The results show that: the first two rounds of teaching exposed core problems, including the insufficient prominence of language training objectives in participatory activities, and students' distracted attention in the preceding language input phase caused by the advance announcement of hands-on practical activities. After the optimized design of embedding decentralized hands-on practice into the teaching process in the third round, students' classroom attention concentration score increased from 4.12 to 4.7, and the mean length of utterance (MLU) of language output increased from 6.8 words to 8.3 words. The research indicates that: (1) The structured design of BOPPPS provides a clear framework for international Chinese culture teaching, and the effectiveness of its "participatory learning" link is highly dependent on the timing of integration between activities and language input; (2) Although highly attractive hands-on practice can improve classroom participation, premature announcement and over-centralized arrangement can easily distract students' attention and weaken the effect of language input; (3) Action research can effectively drive teaching iteration and help teachers accurately diagnose in-depth teaching problems.

Keywords: intermediate Chinese comprehensive course, BOPPPS teaching model, action research, Vietnamese Chinese learners

Introduction

The Intermediate Chinese Comprehensive Course is the core compulsory course type in international Chinese language education, which undertakes the multiple objectives of comprehensive training of language skills, dissemination of Chinese culture, and cultivation of intercultural communication competence. Traditional Chinese festival culture is one of the core themes of culture teaching in the Intermediate Chinese Comprehensive Course. How to balance the interestingness of cultural experience activities and language learning objectives, and solve the teaching dilemma of "overprioritizing hands-on activities over targeted language training", is an urgent practical problem to be solved in current frontline international Chinese language teaching.

As a systematic teaching model centered on students and emphasizing closed-loop design and participatory learning, the BOPPPS teaching model has been verified to improve classroom teaching effectiveness in engineering, medicine, vocational education and other fields (Wang, 2022; Lou et al., 2014). In recent years, it has gradually entered the research vision of international Chinese language education, but there is still a lack of relevant localized and detailed empirical research.

The BOPPPS teaching model originated from the Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) for teacher skills training in Canada. It was led and created by Douglas Kerr from the University of Vancouver in 1976, and later improved by many scholars. It has gradually formed a closed-loop teaching model including six standardized links: Bridge-in, Objective, Pre-assessment, Participatory Learning, Post-assessment, and Summary (Cao & Yin, 2016; Pattison & Day, 2006). At present, the model has been promoted and applied in more than 100 universities and educational institutions in more than 30 countries around the world. Its core advantage is that it can disassemble learning objectives into implementable and testable classroom links through structured teaching design, and fully stimulate students' classroom participation (Zou, 2025).

Around 2010, the BOPPPS teaching model was introduced into China. Early practices mostly focused on professional courses such as science, engineering and medicine (Cao & Yin, 2016). Relevant studies have generally confirmed that the model can effectively improve classroom participation, reduce students' learning anxiety, and achieve quantifiable improvement of teaching effects (Wang, 2022; Lou et al., 2014). In recent years, the model has been gradually applied in the field of international Chinese language education. Scholars have carried out application exploration in different course types such as comprehensive course, oral course, and newspaper reading course. Most studies have affirmed its adaptability in Chinese classrooms: Zou (2025) found that the participatory learning link of the model can reduce the classroom anxiety index of Chinese learners by 32%, and the real-time feedback mechanism can effectively maintain students' learning motivation; Bi (2025) increased students' classroom language output by 1.7 times through technology-enabled participatory activity design; Zhong & Zhang (2020) alleviated students' fear of learning Chinese through the gamification design of the model in the teaching practice of the Confucius Institute in the Philippines.

At the same time, some studies have pointed out the adaptation problems of the model in international Chinese language teaching. Wu (2025) found that the BOPPPS model has a high application threshold in the primary Chinese comprehensive course, and has an unbalanced effect on the improvement of students' Chinese character writing skills; Yuan (2024) pointed out that the model has many links, which is prone to out-of-control teaching rhythm and hasty ending of the post-assessment and summary links. It can be seen that the teaching effectiveness of the BOPPPS model is not unconditionally established, and its application effect is highly dependent on the adaptation degree of teaching scenarios, task design and teaching objects.

By sorting out existing literature, it can be found that there are still two obvious research gaps in the current BOPPPS-related research in the field of international Chinese language education. First, there is a lack of dynamic action research perspective. Most existing studies are static teaching design demonstrations or effect verification of single teaching, and few studies have carried out continuous iterative optimization of the BOPPPS model in the spiral cycle of "Plan-Action-Observation-Reflection" of action research, especially the localized action research for Vietnamese Chinese learners. As a core method to solve real classroom problems and promote teachers' professional development, action research can effectively bridge the gap between static design and dynamic needs of real classrooms (Burns, 2010; Wang, 2015). Second, there is a lack of in-depth discussion on the complex effects of hands-on practical activities in culture teaching. Most existing studies default that hands-

on cultural experience activities have a positive promoting effect on language learning, but ignore the negative effects such as distraction caused by the timing of activity arrangement and students' expectation management. The internal mechanism of how to efficiently integrate hands-on practice with language input links has not been fully revealed, nor has it further enriched the practical connotation of Experiential Learning Theory and Second Language Output Hypothesis in the field of international Chinese language education (Kolb, 1984; Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

To clarify the research boundary and core category of this study, the core concepts involved are uniformly defined as follows. The BOPPPS teaching model referred to in this study is a six-link teaching model centered on students and with closed-loop teaching design as the core. This study focuses on the iterative optimization of its "participatory learning" link, and explores its adaptation path in the intermediate Chinese culture-themed comprehensive course. As the core teaching carrier of this study, the Intermediate Chinese Comprehensive Course specifically refers to the core compulsory course for Chinese learners with HSK 3 to HSK 5 proficiency, who have systematically learned Chinese in China for 6 to 12 months. It focuses on the comprehensive teaching of vocabulary, grammar and cultural content, and takes into account the systematic training of listening, speaking, reading and writing language skills. The action research adopted in this study is a reflective empirical research method that focuses on solving real teaching problems in intermediate Chinese culture classrooms, and continuously optimizes teaching design through three rounds of spiral cycle of "Plan-Action-Observation-Reflection".

Based on the above research gaps, this study takes 13 Vietnamese intermediate Chinese learners as research subjects, and carries out three rounds of progressive action research relying on the intermediate Chinese comprehensive course with the theme of traditional Chinese festival culture. It aims to answer the core research questions: What is the application effect of the first round of baseline teaching design based on the BOPPPS model in the culture-themed classroom for Vietnamese intermediate Chinese learners, and what core teaching problems are exposed? Is the teaching effect of the second and third rounds of teaching design optimized for the problems of the previous round significantly improved, and if so, what are the core driving factors for the improvement? What are the key factors affecting the teaching effectiveness of the BOPPPS model in the intermediate Chinese culture classroom?

Research Methods

Participants

The participants of this study are 13 Vietnamese international students from the School of International Chinese Language Education, Sichuan Normal University, aged 18 to 22, including 11 females and 2 males. They have systematically learned Chinese in China for 6 to 12 months, with Chinese proficiency ranging from HSK 3 to HSK 5 (4 have passed HSK 4, 2 have passed HSK 5, and the remaining 7 have a Chinese proficiency equivalent to HSK 3). All participants use the HSK Standard Course series textbooks for daily learning, and have not been exposed to the BOPPPS teaching model before.

All three rounds of teaching were conducted for these 13 students. The number of valid questionnaires collected after each round of teaching was 11, 10, and 13 respectively, with the effective recovery rates of 84.6%, 83.3%, and 100% in turn.

Research Materials

The materials used in this study are divided into three categories:

First, teaching materials, including standardized BOPPPS lesson plans, teaching PPTs corresponding to the three rounds of teaching, as well as teaching props needed for the festival culture hands-on practice links.

Second, testing materials, namely the pre-test and post-test papers for each round of teaching. All test papers were strictly designed around the learning objectives of the corresponding lesson. The quantity, type and difficulty of questions in the core vocabulary, grammar and comprehensive expression modules were consistent, ensuring the homogeneity and comparability of the three rounds of tests.

Third, feedback collection tools, a self-designed 5-point Likert scale on Wenjuanxing (a leading online survey platform in China), with supporting open-ended questions, to collect students' classroom feedback and learning experience after each round of teaching.

Research Design and Procedure

This study designed three complete progressive teaching cycles of “Plan-Action-Observation-Reflection” following the action research paradigm. Each round of teaching consisted of 1 class hour (45 minutes), with an interval of one week between two rounds. The subsequent round of teaching design was optimized based on the reflective conclusions of the previous round, forming a complete iterative closed loop of teaching design.

To ensure the comparability of teaching effects across the three rounds, this study strictly controlled extraneous variables. All three rounds of lessons were taught by the same teacher, with a fixed duration of 45 minutes per lesson. The teaching themes were all traditional Chinese festival culture, and the learning objectives were set around three core dimensions: “mastery of festival core vocabulary, application of step description sentence patterns, and understanding of traditional festival culture”. The difficulty of knowledge points and the level of learning objectives were consistent, so as to eliminate the interference of irrelevant factors on the teaching effect to the maximum extent.

The pre-test and post-test of the three rounds of teaching were uniformly pushed through Rain Classroom (an online teaching platform developed by Tsinghua University). The core assessment dimensions, quantity of questions and difficulty of the tests were consistent, and only the specific question stems were adjusted according to the teaching content of the corresponding lesson, ensuring the homogeneity of the test objectives and the comparability of the results. The specific design of the six BOPPPS links of the three rounds of teaching is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Overview of the Three Rounds of Teaching Design

BOPPPS Link	Round 1 (Dragon Boat Festival)	Round 2 (Mid-Autumn Festival)	Round 3 (Lantern Festival)
Bridge-in	Festival traditional video	Sino-Vietnamese festival culture comparison video	Physical ingredients introduction
Objective	Core vocabulary+zongzi-making steps description	Vocabulary & sentence patterns+festival preference expression	Core vocabulary+production steps description +experience sharing
Pre-assessment	Rain classroom		
Participatory learning	Simulation game (ranking+description)	Centralized practice (30 min language learning+15 min mooncake making)	Decentralized practice (knowledge & steps alternated, no advance notice)
Post-assessment	Rain classroom		
Summary	Teacher summary	Sino-Vietnamese festival comparison	Student sharing+ teacher supplement

Data Collection and Analysis

This study adopted the triangulation method to collect multi-source data to ensure the reliability of the results: First, the whole class was recorded throughout the process to record students' speeches, group participation, and

attention performance. Second, a self-designed 5-point Likert scale (including open-ended questions) was distributed through Wenjuanxing to collect students' after-class feedback, with 11, 10, and 13 valid questionnaires in the three rounds respectively, and the effective recovery rates were 84.6%, 83.3%, and 100% in turn. Third, the teacher completed a structured reflection log within 24 hours after each round of teaching, recording the teaching effect, students' classroom reactions and optimization directions.

The calculation and coding standards of the core observation indicators in this study are as follows: (1) Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) of language output: Taking the oral production of students in the participatory learning link as the sample, after eliminating meaningless repetitions, modal particles and single-character responses, the average number of words in each independent sentence was calculated to measure the complexity of students' language output. (2) Classroom attention distraction: The coding standard was that students were out of the teaching scene for more than 10 consecutive seconds (doing irrelevant actions, not paying attention to the teaching content, whispering, etc.) in the preceding language input phase, and the proportion of students with this behavior was counted through classroom video review.

A mixed research method was adopted for data analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistics using SPSS 26.0, and the mean, standard deviation, and approval rate were calculated (a score of 4 and above on the scale was used as the approval standard). The Cronbach's α coefficient of the self-designed questionnaire was 0.82, indicating good reliability. The classroom videos were independently coded by two undergraduate students majoring in international Chinese language education with frontline teaching experience, and the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) of the coders was 0.87, which met the reliability requirements of empirical research. Qualitative data were analyzed by thematic coding method to extract core problems and optimization strategies.

Action Process

The three rounds of teaching in this study strictly followed the spiral cycle of "Plan-Action-Observation-Reflection" of action research. Each round of teaching was 1 class hour (45 minutes), with an interval of one week between two rounds. The teaching design of the latter round was completely adjusted and optimized based on the core reflection problems of the previous round, forming a complete iterative closed loop.

The first round was the baseline teaching design, whose core was to verify the basic adaptability of the BOPPPS model in the intermediate Chinese culture classroom. It adopted the form of simulation games to carry out participatory learning, focusing on examining students' classroom participation status and language output effect. The second round was optimized for the reflection problems of the first round, namely "insufficient language focus and strong demand of students for real hands-on practice". The participatory learning link was adjusted to the form of "preceding language input phase + centralized hands-on practice", focusing on balancing cultural experience and language learning objectives. The third round was optimized again for the core problem of the second round, namely "students' expected attention distraction caused by advance announcement of activities". It adopted the design of "decentralized embedded hands-on practice + unannounced task", and finally formed a stable and effective teaching scheme. The complete implementation process and reflection summary of the three rounds of action research are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Teaching Design and Implementation of the Three Rounds of Action Research

	Round 1 (Dragon Boat Festival)	Round 2 (Mid-Autumn Festival)	Round 3 (Lantern Festival)
Plan	Simulation game: ranking+conjunction description	Centralized practice: language first, making later	Decentralized practice: learning- making alternation, unannounced task
Action	Group sorting+description, timed competition	Teach patterns first, then make & describe mooncakes	Identify→practice→describe→ taste, with language tasks per step
Observation	Focus on competition; brief output; desire real practice	Early distraction; feedback: waited too long	No anxiety; focused; no advance notice works well
Reflection	Insufficient language focus; need real practice	Early announcement causes distraction; waiting period	Decentralized practice+unannounced task effective; timing & expectation management

Research Results**Language Proficiency Improvement**

The comparison of post-test scores of the three rounds of teaching shows that with the iterative optimization of teaching design, students' language proficiency shows a continuous upward trend as a whole, among which the improvement of comprehensive expression ability is the most prominent. The specific comparison results of the post-test scores of the three rounds of teaching are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Comparison of Post-test Scores of the Three Rounds of Teaching (Mean ±SD)

Test Dimension	Round 1 (N = 11)	Round 2 (N = 10)	Round 3 (N = 13)	Improvement from Round 1 to Round 3
Core Vocabulary Recognition	81.2% ±5.8	82.3% ±6.1	87.5% ±5.5	+6.3%
Core Grammar Application	73.5% ±6.9	74.6% ±6.8	81.2% ±6.2	+7.7%
Cultural Content Understanding	76.8% ±6.2	83.6% ±5.7	88.0% ±5.0	+11.2%
Comprehensive Expression Task	65.2% ±7.8	74.5% ±7.1	78.5% ±6.8	+13.3%
Overall Average	74.4% ±6.5	79.3% ±6.1	84.1% ±5.7	+9.7%

Note: N is the number of valid questionnaires in each round, and the total number of participants in the three rounds is 13 Vietnamese international students.

Changes in Classroom Participation

The comparison of classroom observation data of the three rounds of teaching shows that the optimized teaching design not only effectively improves the problem of students' attention distraction in the preceding language input phase, but also significantly enhances students' willingness of classroom expression and the complexity of language output. Among them, the average number of active speeches per capita increased from 2.5 times in the first round to 4 times in the third round, and the MLU of language output increased from 6.8 words to 8.3 words. The changes of core indicators of classroom participation in the three rounds of teaching are shown in Table 4.

Analysis of Student Feedback

The student classroom satisfaction survey conducted with a 5-point Likert scale in this study shows that with the iterative optimization of teaching design, students' satisfaction with all dimensions of classroom teaching presents a continuous upward trend. Among them, the score of the core observation item "being able to concentrate" increased from 4.12 in the second round to 4.7 in the third round. Taking a score of 4 and above on

the scale as the approval standard, the students' approval rate of this item increased from 60% to 90%. This item was added after the first round of teaching based on the teaching reflection of "students' attention distraction in the preceding language input phase", so there is no corresponding data in the first round of questionnaire.

Table 4

Changes in Classroom Participation

Observation Indicator	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Total Number of Active Speeches	32 times	48 times	52 times
Average Number of Active Speeches Per Capita	2.5 times	3.7 times	4 times
Group Activity Participation Rate	85% (2 marginalized students)	100% (full participation)	100% (full participation)
MLU of Language Output	6.8 words	7.2 words	8.3 words
Attention Distraction in preceding language input phase (Video Review)	About 12% of students had occasional distraction	About 38% of students had obvious expectation for hands-on practice	No students had continuous attention distraction

Note: The coding standard of attention distraction is the behavior that students are out of the teaching scene for more than 10 consecutive seconds in the preceding language input phase.

The feedback from the open-ended questions after class further confirmed the effectiveness of the optimization strategy: in the second round of teaching, students generally put forward the demands of "waited for a long time" and "hope to learn while doing"; after adopting the design of decentralized hands-on practice and unannounced tasks in the third round, students feedback "this time I don't have to wait for a long time, I learn while doing, and I am more focused", "the teacher didn't say what to do in advance, so I won't keep thinking about it", which is completely consistent with the results of classroom video observation. The scoring results of students' classroom satisfaction in the three rounds of teaching are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Students' Satisfaction Feedback of the Three Rounds of Teaching

Evaluation Item	Round 1 (N = 11)	Round 2 (N = 10)	Round 3 (N = 13)
Activity interestingness	4.2	4.8	5.0
Helpfulness for vocabulary memory	3.8	4.6	4.8
Helpfulness for language learning	4.0	4.6	4.9
Being able to concentrate	—	4.12	4.7
Overall preference	4.1	4.7	4.9

Conclusion and Discussion

Through three rounds of progressive action research, this study systematically explores the application path and effect of the BOPPPS teaching model in the traditional Chinese festival culture-themed comprehensive course for Vietnamese intermediate Chinese learners, and fully responds to the preset research questions.

The first round of simulation game teaching design based on the BOPPPS model achieved a group activity participation rate of 85%, but exposed an obvious problem of insufficient language focus: students paid too much attention to the competition results, the language output was mechanical and short, with an MLU of only 6.8 words, and generally expressed a strong demand for real hands-on practical activities. The optimized centralized hands-on practice design in the second round achieved full classroom participation, with an activity interestingness score of 4.8. However, due to the advance announcement of the highly attractive activity, about

38% of students had attention distraction in the preceding language input phase, with an attention concentration score of only 4.12. After adopting the optimized scheme of decentralized embedded hands-on practice + unannounced task in the third round, students' attention concentration score increased to 4.7, the MLU of language output increased to 8.3 words, and the overall post-test score increased by 9.7% compared with the first round, with all indicators significantly improved. Based on the three rounds of practice, the core of the improvement of teaching effect lies in optimizing the timing of integration between hands-on practice and language input, and eliminating students' waiting distraction through reasonable expectation management. The key factors affecting the teaching effectiveness of the BOPPPS model are exactly the timing of integration between activities and language input, as well as students' expectation management of highly attractive activities.

Based on the three rounds of teaching practice, this study forms three core conclusions. First, the six-link structured design of the BOPPPS model provides a clear and implementable teaching framework for the intermediate Chinese culture-themed comprehensive course, which can effectively ensure the systematicness of teaching. However, the teaching effectiveness of its core "participatory learning" link is highly dependent on the adaptation degree and integration timing between activity design and language input, and the ideal effect cannot be achieved by simply applying a fixed template. Second, highly attractive real hands-on practice is an effective carrier for culture teaching, which can significantly improve students' classroom participation and learning motivation. However, premature announcement and over-centralized arrangement will lead to students' expected attention distraction, weaken the effect of preceding language input phase, and fall into the dilemma of "overemphasis on experience while neglecting language training". Third, the integration of action research and BOPPPS model has outstanding practical value. Through the spiral cycle of "Plan-Action-Observation-Reflection", it can effectively expose the hidden variables in the classroom that cannot be predicted by static teaching design, realize the continuous iteration of teaching design, and help frontline teachers accurately diagnose in-depth teaching problems.

The findings of this study not only verify the positive role of the BOPPPS model in improving participation and stimulating learning motivation in Chinese classrooms in existing studies, but also supplement the dimension of "activity timing and expectation management" that has not been fully paid attention to in existing studies. It further clarifies the adaptation conditions of the model in culture teaching, and provides new practical evidence for the application of Experiential Learning Theory and Second Language Output Hypothesis in the field of international Chinese language education.

Combined with the research conclusions, this study forms three implementable practical implications for frontline international Chinese culture teaching. First, in the design of cultural experience activities, decentralized hands-on practice is better than centralized hands-on practice. Highly attractive hands-on practical tasks can be disassembled into multiple micro-links, which are promoted alternately with language knowledge points, to realize "learning by doing and practicing while learning", and avoid students' attention dissipation caused by long-time waiting. Second, attention should be paid to expectation management in classroom activity design, rather than simply stimulating expectation. For highly interesting activities, teachers can retain appropriate surprise, and do not need to announce the complete content too early, so as to avoid students' distraction in the preceding language input phase due to excessive expectation. Third, simulation games and real hands-on practice have their own applicable scenarios. The former is more suitable for focused practice of language forms, while the latter is more suitable for comprehensive application of language. Teachers can flexibly choose or combine the two forms according to learning objectives, to balance the interestingness of the classroom and the core objectives of language teaching.

This study also has certain limitations. The research subjects are only 13 Vietnamese intermediate Chinese learners, with limited sample size and coverage, so the universality of the conclusions still needs further verification. In the future, the sample scope can be expanded to include learners from different countries and with different Chinese proficiency for comparative research, and further explore the application path of the model in other Chinese course types, so as to provide more practical references for frontline teaching.

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