



A Survey Study on Perceived Problems in Chinese Literature Courses and Willingness for Teaching Reform among Chinese Language and Literature Majors at a University in Guangxi, China: A Baseline Needs Assessment for Subsequent Course Development

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Previous research on Chinese literature teaching reform has examined instructional practices, course design, and reform implementation, but the studies reviewed do not directly provide baseline data on the specific problems perceived by the students involved in the present course-development context. Drawing on a student voice perspective, this study aimed to describe students' learning experiences in Chinese literature courses, identify the major problems they perceived, assess their overall willingness for teaching reform, and summarize the specific reform suggestions provided in their open-ended responses.

Methodology: This study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional, single-institution baseline needs-assessment survey design. A total of 102 third-year students from two Chinese Language and Literature classes at a public university in Guangxi, China, were invited to participate voluntarily. A total of 90 submissions could be matched to the class rosters. Eleven students submitted the questionnaire more than once to



supplement or clarify open-ended responses. During data cleaning, each student's most recent complete closed-ended responses were retained, while confirmed supplementary open-ended responses were merged at the participant level. After cleaning, 78 students were included in the final analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used for the closed-ended responses, and the written responses to Q4 and Q6 were analyzed by the first author using conventional inductive qualitative content analysis.

Results: Among the 78 participants, 75 (96.2%) reported that the Chinese literature courses they had experienced were primarily teacher-led, 67 (85.9%) indicated that their learning of traditional Chinese literature relied mainly on textual reading, and 63 (80.8%) experienced difficulty understanding the courses at least some of the time. Among the 68 participants who provided substantive responses about current problems, the most frequently identified issues were the disconnect between theory and practice or lack of practical relevance (42.6%), monotonous teaching methods or textbook-bound instruction (36.8%), and boring content or lack of interest (32.4%). In addition, 69 participants (88.5%) expressed an overall willingness for reform, 9 (11.5%) remained neutral, and none indicated that they did not want reform. However, only 11 participants provided specific reform suggestions.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that students in these two classes perceived problems across multiple aspects of Chinese literature education and that overall willingness for reform was considerably more common than the provision of specific reform proposals. Further interviews with students, teachers, and experts are therefore needed to clarify course needs before a course design is developed and piloted. The findings are limited to the two participating classes and should not be generalized to other institutions or interpreted as evidence for the effectiveness of any specific reform approach.

Keywords: Chinese literature education and teaching; higher education; student voice; teaching reform; baseline needs assessment

Introduction

The Chinese Language and Literature program emphasizes not only disciplinary knowledge but also literary reading, aesthetic judgment, and language expression.



Chinese literature is one of the core foundational areas of the program. The Teaching Steering Committee for Higher Education, Ministry of Education (Jiaoyubu Gaodeng Xuexiao Jiaoxue Zhidao Weiyuanhui, 2018) requires universities to formulate training objectives and curricula on the basis of an accurate understanding of disciplinary content and their own institutional circumstances, and to evaluate these programs regularly and revise them when necessary (p. 85).

At present, artificial intelligence and online information technologies have made access to information and text generation more convenient, while also changing the conditions under which students read, think, and write. Huang (2023) noted that the teaching environment of modern and contemporary Chinese literature has changed with the development of online information and modern educational technologies. Technological change therefore provides an important context for reassessing existing teaching, but specific reforms still need to be considered in relation to program requirements, existing research, and students' actual learning experiences.

Research in China has examined the improvement of Chinese literature teaching from perspectives including the relationship between literary history and the reading of literary works, close reading, teaching approaches, and assessment. Wang (2017) focused on the relationship between literary-history instruction and the reading of literary works. Leng (2018) emphasized the integration of disciplinary knowledge with the close reading of poetry. Yuan (2021) discussed in-depth reading, research-method training, and writing guidance. Huang (2023), meanwhile, addressed canonical reading, teacher guidance, student participation, and the connection between literature teaching and real life.

Research outside China has mainly examined current teaching practices in Chinese literature courses and participatory approaches to teaching. Kao-ien and Imsaran (2023) investigated Chinese-literature-related courses at several universities in Thailand, while An (2023) examined a participatory Chinese literature course offered to non-Chinese-major students at a university in South Korea.

These studies provide useful references for understanding problems in Chinese literature teaching and possible directions for improvement, but they do not directly answer which problems are perceived by the Chinese Language and Literature majors involved in the present study before course development, whether they wish to see



teaching reform, or what specific suggestions they are able to provide. Students' actual learning experiences are also an important basis for identifying teaching needs. Research on "student voice" emphasizes that students have distinctive first-hand perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling, and that their views should not only be heard but also responded to (Cook-Sather, 2006).

Against this background, the present study was conducted in the Chinese Language and Literature program at a public university in Guangxi, China, using "student voice" as the starting point for a baseline needs assessment. In this study, "teaching reform" refers to possible adjustments to course content, teaching activities, reading support, and assessment methods. The study examines students' general willingness to see teaching reform; it does not imply that students support any particular reform model, nor does it evaluate the effectiveness of any specific teaching intervention. The study aims to identify baseline teaching needs from the students' perspective and to provide preliminary empirical evidence for subsequent needs analysis and teaching reform within a multi-phase course development project.

Objectives

1. To describe students' learning experiences in current Chinese literature courses and identify the major problems they perceive.
2. To assess students' overall willingness for teaching reform in Chinese literature education.
3. To synthesize the specific reform suggestions presented in substantively meaningful open-ended responses.

Literature Review

1. Educational Objectives of Chinese Literature Education

The national standards for Chinese Language and Literature programs (Jiaoyubu Gaodeng Xuexiao Jiaoxue Zhidao Weiyuanhui, 2018) emphasize the cultivation of students with a sound political orientation, a solid foundation in the Chinese language, a high level of literary accomplishment, and strong abilities in literary appreciation,



reading documentary and classical texts, aesthetic evaluation, and written and oral expression in their native language (p. 85).

2. Teacher Guidance and Dialogic Teaching

Huang (2023) proposed that teachers should serve as guides, sharers, problem-solvers, and facilitators in the classroom while also recognizing students as active participants in classroom learning. The “dual-subject classroom” discussed by Huang emphasizes the relationship between teacher guidance and student participation. Nystrand et al. (1997), drawing on research on classroom discourse and dialogic teaching, emphasized that students participate in textual interpretation and meaning-making through classroom interaction. Their work treats classroom interaction as an important part of students’ participation in the process of understanding, rather than viewing knowledge as something transmitted unidirectionally by the teacher.

3. Literary-Historical Knowledge, Primary-Text Reading, and Close Reading

Wang (2017) pointed out that literary history had come to occupy an increasingly large proportion of some classical Chinese literature courses, in some cases resulting in an emphasis on literary history at the expense of reading literary works. Wang therefore called for adjustments to curriculum structure, teaching methods, and assessment mechanisms. From the perspective of literary reading theory, Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional theory emphasizes that literary meaning does not reside as a fixed entity within the text but emerges through the transaction between reader and text. The theory highlights the reader’s active role in literary reading and the construction of meaning. Leng (2018) emphasized that disciplinary knowledge such as phonology, prosody, exegesis, syntax, allusions, and textual organization should be integrated with the close reading of poetry so that such knowledge contributes to the understanding of specific literary works. Yuan (2021) proposed that in-depth reading, research-method training, and writing guidance could strengthen students’ reading foundations and cultivate their research awareness and abilities. In broader research on literary education, Bass and Linkon (2008) regarded close reading as an important disciplinary practice in literary studies and discussed the relationship between textual analysis and theory. Douglas et al. (2016), focusing on reading-related issues in university literature courses, discussed



the roles of contextual support, reading guidance, and assessment design in helping students sustain their engagement with complex literary texts.

4. Reading Difficulties Across Literary Genres

In their study of senior secondary students in Hong Kong, Liu and Gu (2017) found that students experienced difficulties at both the lexical-recognition and discourse-comprehension levels when reading classical Chinese, with lexical recognition presenting the more prominent problem. Students also showed weaknesses in their knowledge of classical Chinese and in their translation and comprehension strategies. Different literary genres involve different forms of disciplinary knowledge and different reading demands. Leng (2018) noted that the study of poetry involves knowledge of phonology, prosody, exegesis, syntax, allusions, and textual organization. Shang (2020) proposed that, in the teaching of *fu*, comparing works with the same title can help students understand textual characteristics, genre development, and literary motifs. Yuan (2021) noted that long Ming- and Qing-dynasty novels and traditional drama require advance planning and sustained reading over an extended period. Sui and Wen (2022) likewise identified the promotion of whole-book reading as one of the challenges facing courses on classical Chinese fiction.

5. Student Engagement and Student Voice

Kao-ien and Imsaran (2023) examined the teaching of Chinese-literature-related courses through student questionnaires and interviews with teachers and literary experts at several universities in Thailand. The study identified problems including relatively limited teaching methods, the excessive use of entertainment by some teachers, and excessive reliance on students' first language in classroom instruction. It also discussed contributing factors such as limited instructional time, students' literary knowledge and interests, teachers' knowledge of Chinese literature, and traditional approaches to literature teaching in Thailand. An (2023) presented a case study of an elective course titled *Understanding Chinese Literature* offered to second-year students in aviation-, tourism-, and foreign-language-related programs at a university in South Korea. The course incorporated participatory activities before, during, and after class. It received relatively high course evaluations and levels of student satisfaction, while the study also reported that most students initially experienced some burden from the learner-



centered participatory activities. Kao-ien and Imsaran (2023) conducted a cross-university investigation of current teaching practices, whereas An (2023) examined the implementation of a single course. The two studies therefore differ in their participant groups, course contexts, and stages of implementation. Fredricks et al. (2004) distinguished student engagement into behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions and argued that engagement should be examined as a multidimensional construct. Cook-Sather (2006) argued that students possess distinctive perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling, and that their views should not only receive attention but also be responded to. Dai et al. (2024) found that students' understandings of student-staff pedagogical partnerships were related to how they perceived their own identities, for example, as "followers," "customers," or "co-teachers." Bovill (2020) suggested that whole-class approaches to co-creation may be more inclusive than approaches involving only a small group of already highly engaged students and may provide broader opportunities for participation.

6. Assessment Methods and the Relevance of Courses to Contemporary Life

With respect to course assessment, Hu (2024) pointed out that practical courses may involve vague assessment criteria and overly uniform assessment methods and advocated the use of diversified forms of assessment. Huang (2023), meanwhile, emphasized the connection between literature teaching and real life and discussed the adjustment of literature courses within contemporary educational contexts.

7. Synthesis of the Literature and Research Gap

Overall, previous studies have examined the teaching and reform of Chinese literature and related courses from the perspectives of educational objectives, classroom teaching, literary reading, student engagement, and course assessment. However, they do not directly show which problems the students involved in the present study perceive before course development, whether they wish to see reform, or what specific suggestions they are able to provide. Accordingly, this study conducts a baseline needs assessment through a student questionnaire to examine students' perceptions of the main problems in current Chinese literature education, their willingness for reform, and their specific reform suggestions, thereby providing preliminary evidence for subsequent needs analysis and course development.



Research Design

This study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional, single-institution needs-assessment survey design and constituted the questionnaire component of the first phase of a multistage Chinese literature course development project. The broader project also includes interviews with students, teachers, and experts; focus groups to be organized as needed; course development; pilot implementation; and effectiveness evaluation. The present article analyzes only data from the comprehensive pre-course questionnaire concerning students' course-learning experiences, perceived problems in current Chinese literature education, overall willingness for teaching reform, and specific reform suggestions. It does not analyze other items concerning the performing arts, artificial intelligence, or AI virtual singers, nor does it evaluate the effectiveness of any teaching intervention. The position of the present study within the broader project is shown in Figure 1.

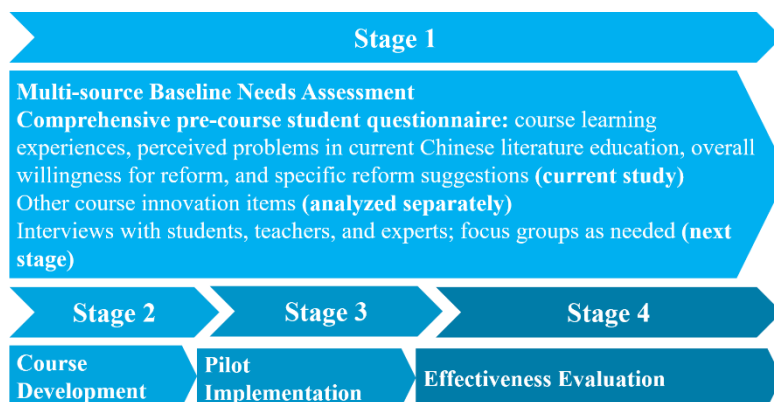


Figure 1. Stages of the broader course development project and the scope of the current study

Participants and Sampling

The participants were 102 students from two intact third-year classes in the Chinese Language and Literature program at a public university in Guangxi, China. All students had previously taken courses related to Chinese literature. Questionnaire invitations were sent to all 102 students, and 78 students were ultimately included in



the analysis, representing 76.5% of those invited. The findings reflect only the circumstances of these two classes and do not represent students at other institutions.

Research Instrument

Six items directly related to the research objectives were selected from a comprehensive pre-course questionnaire and renumbered Q1–Q6. Four closed-ended items examined the predominant mode of instruction, reliance on textual reading, comprehension difficulties, and overall willingness for teaching reform. Two items containing open-ended components collected students’ perceived problems in current Chinese literature education and their specific suggestions for reform. The six items are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire items analyzed in the present article and response formats

Item	Questionnaire item and response format
Q1	Were the Chinese literature courses you experienced primarily teacher-led? [Yes / Unsure / No]
Q2	Did your experience of learning traditional Chinese literature rely primarily on reading texts? [Yes / No / Unsure]
Q3	Did you find traditional Chinese literature courses difficult to understand? [Yes, sometimes / Yes / No]
Q4	What do you consider to be the main problems with current Chinese literature education? [Open-ended]
Q5	Do you hope that Chinese literature education and teaching will be reformed? [Strongly hope for teaching reform / Generally hope for teaching reform / Either reform or no reform would be acceptable / Do not hope for teaching reform]
Q6	Would you like to offer suggestions concerning the reform of Chinese literature education and teaching? [Yes / No / Unsure; “Yes” → open-ended follow-up]



Responses to Q1–Q3 and Q5 were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. The closed-ended responses to Q6 were likewise reported using frequencies and percentages. For Q3 and Q5, all original response options were reported first, followed by the necessary secondary aggregations. The written responses to Q4 and Q6 were analyzed through open coding and inductive qualitative content analysis. Before formal administration, the questionnaire underwent content-validity review by three experts in relevant fields. The Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to assess the alignment between the questionnaire items and the research objectives, after which the questionnaire was revised in accordance with the experts’ comments.

Data Collection and Processing

With the course instructor’s permission, the researcher distributed the online questionnaire directly to 102 students in the two classes through Tencent Questionnaire on May 22, 2026. Data collection closed seven days later.

After data collection, 90 submissions that could be matched to the class rosters were received. Eleven students submitted the questionnaire more than once: 10 students submitted it twice, and one student submitted it three times, producing a total of 12 additional records. It was confirmed that all 11 students had resubmitted the questionnaire in order to supplement or clarify their open-ended responses.

For the closed-ended items, each student’s most recent complete submission was retained. Supplementary open-ended responses confirmed by the students were merged at the participant level. The same student was counted only once within the same category, and each student ultimately constituted a single unit of analysis. After data processing, 78 students were included in the analysis. Identifying information, including names and student identification numbers, was then removed, and the participants were assigned anonymous codes from S01 to S78.

Data analysis

The response options for Q1–Q3, Q5, and Q6 were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. The number and percentage of responses for each original response option were reported first, followed by secondary aggregation where necessary.



For Q3, “Yes” and “Yes, sometimes” were combined into the category “experienced difficulty understanding the course at least some of the time.” For Q5, “Strongly hope for teaching reform” and “Generally hope for teaching reform” were combined into the category “expressed an overall desire for reform.” These aggregated results were used only to summarize the overall pattern and did not replace the results for the original response options. This study did not test relationships among variables or evaluate the effects of any teaching intervention.

The written responses to Q4 and Q6 were analyzed using conventional inductive qualitative content analysis. The analytical approach was informed by Hsieh and Shannon’s (2005) description of conventional content analysis, in which coding categories are not predetermined but are developed from participants’ original responses. All coding was conducted by the first author. Responses such as “none,” “no,” “don’t know,” and “can’t think of anything at the moment,” which did not provide substantive information, were excluded from coding.

The first author repeatedly read all substantive responses, generated initial codes, and developed a coding framework that recorded the definition, inclusion criteria, and representative responses for each category. Codes with similar content were then combined, resulting in 12 categories of course-related problems for Q4 and 11 categories of reform suggestions for Q6. These categories were subsequently checked again against the original responses. A single response could be assigned to more than one category, but each student was counted only once within the same category.

The percentages for each category were calculated using the number of students who provided substantive responses to Q4 and Q6, respectively, as the denominator. Therefore, the sums of category frequencies and percentages could exceed the total number of respondents to the item and 100%. The results report the frequency, percentage, and representative verbatim response for each category.

Ethical Considerations

The broader research protocol of which the present study formed a part was reviewed by the Ethics Committee of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University and determined to be exempt from full ethical review (Exemption Certificate No. COE. 2-



203/2026; Study Code 69-205-2-1). Students participated on an informed and voluntary basis. Their decision whether to participate had no effect on their course grades, and no incentives were provided. The course instructor did not have access to identifiable raw questionnaire responses. Personal information used to identify duplicate submissions was used solely for data processing and was removed before analysis. All quotations in the article are identified only by anonymous participant codes. The questionnaire was administered in Chinese. Student quotations included in the English-language article were translated by the first author from the original Chinese and subsequently checked against the Chinese source text. To reduce the risk that participants could be identified through a combination of information concerning the institution, year level, class, and students' original statements, the name of the university is not disclosed in this article.

Results

After duplicate submissions were processed and the data were consolidated at the participant level, a final sample of 78 students was included in the analysis. Table 2 first presents the six questionnaire items, all response options, and the corresponding results. The open-ended responses to Q4 and Q6 are then presented separately.

Table 2. Questionnaire Items, Response Options, and Results (N = 78)

Item	Question	Response Options and Results
Q1	Were the Chinese literature courses you experienced primarily teacher-led?	Yes: 75 (96.2%); Unsure: 3 (3.8%); No: 0 (0.0%)
Q2	Did your experience of learning traditional Chinese literature rely primarily on reading texts?	Yes: 67 (85.9%); No: 6 (7.7%); Unsure: 5 (6.4%)
Q3	Did you find traditional Chinese literature courses difficult to understand?	Yes, sometimes: 59 (75.6%); Yes: 4 (5.1%); No: 15 (19.2%). Aggregated result: 63 participants (80.8%) experienced difficulty understanding the courses at least some of the time.



Item	Question	Response Options and Results
Q4	What do you consider to be the main problems with current Chinese literature education?	Open-ended responses. A total of 68 participants (87.2%) provided substantive responses, while 10 (12.8%) answered “none,” “don’t know,” “can’t think of anything at the moment,” or similar. Example: “Theory is disconnected from practice” (S20).
Q5	Do you hope that Chinese literature education and teaching will be reformed?	Strongly hope for teaching reform: 32 (41.0%); Generally hope for teaching reform: 37 (47.4%); Either reform or no reform would be acceptable: 9 (11.5%); Do not hope for teaching reform: 0 (0.0%). Aggregated result: 69 participants (88.5%) expressed an overall desire for reform.
Q6	Would you like to offer suggestions concerning the reform of Chinese literature education and teaching?	Yes: 13 (16.7%); No: 36 (46.2%); Unsure: 29 (37.2%). Of the 13 participants who selected “Yes,” 11 provided specific suggestions. Example: “Break away from the rigid, assembly-line model and create literature classrooms centered on critical thinking” (S05).

Note. The aggregated figures for Q3 and Q5 were calculated by combining relevant response categories. Q5 included the option “Do not hope for teaching reform,” which was selected by no participants.

1. Main Problems in Current Chinese Literature Education

The closed-ended items showed that 75 participants (96.2%) reported that the courses they had experienced were primarily teacher-led, 67 (85.9%) indicated that their study of traditional Chinese literature relied mainly on textual reading, and 63 (80.8%) reported experiencing difficulty understanding the courses at least some of the time. In



Q4, 68 participants provided substantive responses that could be analyzed, offering further detail on the problems they perceived in current Chinese literature education.

Table 3. Coding Categories, Frequencies, and Representative Responses Concerning Problems in Current Chinese Literature Education (n = 68)

Coding Category	n (%)	Representative Response
Examination-oriented or utilitarian emphasis	12 (17.6%)	“Examinations dominate everything, reducing literature to a ‘tool for scoring points.’” (S40)
Monotonous teaching methods or textbook-bound instruction	25 (36.8%)	“Classes simply follow the textbook or slides word for word and are not engaging at all.” (S62)
Boring content or lack of interest	22 (32.4%)	“There is too much content, and the course is boring.” (S76)
Disconnect between theory and practice or lack of practical relevance	29 (42.6%)	“Theory is disconnected from practice.” (S20)
Rigid or outdated content, or disconnection from contemporary life	5 (7.4%)	“The content is disconnected from reality ... making it difficult to establish a connection between literature and contemporary life.” (S77)
Insufficient reading or limited engagement with original texts	14 (20.6%)	“Students have read too few literary works, so when specific content is mentioned in class, everything feels vague and difficult to follow.” (S14)
Difficulty understanding the material or unclear knowledge structure	14 (20.6%)	“The teacher’s explanations are superficial and do not get to the root of the issues; the knowledge points are fragmented.” (S39)



Coding Category	n (%)	Representative Response
Insufficient interaction, participation, or learner autonomy	10 (14.7%)	“There is not much interaction.” (S66)
Heavy course or assignment workload	3 (4.4%)	“There is too much homework—really, far too much!” (S32)
Impact of digital media or artificial intelligence	5 (7.4%)	“Short-form videos have had an impact, making it difficult for students to maintain the patience needed to read complete literary works in depth.” (S29)
Inadequate assessment and feedback mechanisms	6 (8.8%)	“The assessment system is one-dimensional and focused solely on scores, making it difficult to evaluate creative expression and aesthetic competence effectively.” (S46)
Problems with the educational system or training mechanisms	2 (2.9%)	“I think the problem lies with the broader education system as a whole.” (S78)

Note. A single response could be coded into more than one category; therefore, the sum of frequencies and percentages may exceed 68 and 100%, respectively.

The most frequently identified problem was the disconnect between theory and practice or lack of practical relevance (29 participants, 42.6%), followed by monotonous teaching methods or textbook-bound instruction (25, 36.8%) and boring content or lack of interest (22, 32.4%). Other responses referred to insufficient reading, difficulty understanding the material, examination-oriented teaching, limited participation, and inadequate assessment and feedback.

2. Overall Desire for Reform and Specific Reform Suggestions

Q5 showed that 32 participants (41.0%) strongly hoped for teaching reform, 37 (47.4%) generally hoped for teaching reform, 9 (11.5%) indicated that either reform or no reform would be acceptable, and none selected “Do not hope for teaching reform.”



Thus, 69 participants (88.5%) expressed an overall desire for reform, while 9 remained neutral.

In Q6, 13 participants indicated that they were willing to offer suggestions for reform, of whom 11 provided specific suggestions. Compared with the overall level of support for reform, the number of participants who actually articulated specific reform proposals was considerably smaller. The 11 responses were coded into 11 categories of reform suggestions, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Coding Categories, Frequencies, and Representative Responses for Specific Reform Suggestions (n = 11)

Reform Suggestion Category	n (%)	Representative Response
Increase practical activities, learning beyond the classroom, or situated instruction	2 (18.2%)	"I hope students can go beyond the classroom ... when writing, they could go to the actual location." (S32)
Make courses more engaging or adopt innovative teaching methods	4 (36.4%)	"I hope the courses can enable students to genuinely acquire knowledge and truly learn through enjoyment." (S23)
Adjust approaches to interaction and student participation	1 (9.1%)	"Do not rely too heavily on the flipped classroom ... sometimes it puts pressure on students." (S71)
Strengthen in-depth reading or close reading of original texts	1 (9.1%)	"The reading of literary works could be more detailed ... before we have fully understood one poem, we have already moved on to the next." (S32)



Reform Suggestion Category	n (%)	Representative Response
Reduce course, assignment, or examination workload	1 (9.1%)	“Every course requires papers of several thousand words ... assignments could take more varied forms.” (S32)
Encourage multiple interpretations or critical thinking	2 (18.2%)	“Break away from the rigid, assembly-line model and create literature classrooms centered on critical thinking.” (S05)
Connect teaching with contemporary realities and social needs or broaden its audience	3 (27.3%)	“Respond to social needs instead of discussing values in the abstract.” (S33)
Incorporate artificial intelligence or digital media	2 (18.2%)	“AI could be integrated to develop virtual characters ... creating a dialogue between the ancient and the contemporary.” (S71)
Optimize course structure or the knowledge system	1 (9.1%)	“Helping students construct a complete knowledge system is really important.” (S39)
Improve instructional content or teaching quality	2 (18.2%)	“Background information ... should not be limited to the wording of the textbook.” (S39)
Other general expectations for reform	2 (18.2%)	“Keep up with the times.” (S70)

Overall, 69 participants expressed a desire for reform, 9 remained neutral, and none selected “Do not hope for teaching reform”; among them, 11 participants provided specific reform suggestions. These suggestions are presented only to illustrate possible directions for reform and should not be interpreted as representing the shared views of all 78 participants.



Discussion

The problems most frequently mentioned by students in this study were the disconnect between theory and practice, limited teaching methods, and a lack of course appeal. Other responses referred to insufficient reading of literary works, unclear knowledge structures, limited opportunities for participation, and inadequate assessment and feedback. These findings suggest that the problems perceived by students are not confined to a single aspect of teaching but involve multiple dimensions, including course content, classroom organization, the reading process, and assessment and feedback.

Students' descriptions of limited teaching methods echo the problem of monotonous teaching approaches identified by Kao-ien and Imsaran (2023) in Chinese-literature-related courses at several universities in Thailand. Students' concerns about insufficient reading and unclear knowledge structures are also consistent with existing research on the relationship between literary reading and curriculum organization in Chinese literature education. Wang (2017) noted that literary history had come to occupy a relatively large proportion of classical Chinese literature courses, sometimes at the expense of reading literary works. From this perspective, the "insufficient reading" and "unclear knowledge structures" reported in the present study may relate not only to the amount of reading but also to how disciplinary knowledge is connected with the understanding of specific literary works.

An (2023) incorporated participatory activities before, during, and after class in an *Understanding Chinese Literature* course offered to non-Chinese-major students at a university in South Korea. The study reported relatively high levels of course satisfaction, while most students initially experienced some burden from the learner-centered participatory activities. This case suggests that increasing student participation may have value for course design, but the burden associated with such activities also needs to be considered. Because the participants, course context, and stage of implementation in An's study differ from those of the present study, it cannot be assumed that the same participatory teaching approach would produce similar effects in the two classes examined here.

Students' comments concerning textbook-bound instruction, standard answers, and insufficient participation also suggest that the current organization of teaching may



limit opportunities for students to engage in textual interpretation and expression. Nystrand et al. (1997) emphasized that dialogic classrooms create space for students to participate in meaning-making. However, the present study did not directly ask whether students wished to reduce teacher-led instruction or text-based reading. These findings therefore indicate dissatisfaction with aspects of the existing organization of teaching, but they should not be interpreted as evidence that all students support any particular teaching model.

In Q5, 69 participants expressed an overall desire for reform, 9 remained neutral, and none selected “Do not hope for teaching reform,” yet only 11 provided specific reform suggestions. This difference suggests that expressing a desire for reform is not equivalent to being able to formulate specific proposals. Open-ended questions require students to identify problems, propose possible improvements, and articulate their views clearly, making them more demanding than closed-ended items. Students’ prior exposure to different course models, the degree of effort invested in completing the questionnaire, and possible concern about teacher expectations may also have influenced their responses. Because the questionnaire did not include follow-up questions on these issues, these factors can only be treated as possible explanations and should not be used to conclude that the other students had no reform ideas.

This study has several limitations. The sample was drawn from only two third-year classes at a single university, participation was voluntary, all closed-ended items were measured using single-item questions, and no information was collected on age, gender, language background, or the number of relevant courses previously completed. In addition, the open-ended responses were coded independently by the first author, and no inter-coder reliability test was conducted; the resulting categories may therefore have been influenced by researcher judgment. Accordingly, the findings can only be used to understand the circumstances of these two classes. They cannot be generalized to other institutions, nor can they demonstrate that any particular approach to teaching reform has already been effective.



Recommendations

1. Recommendations for Subsequent Course Development

The following recommendations are proposed by the authors on the basis of the survey findings. They do not represent the shared views of all students and have not yet been validated through pilot implementation.

Subsequent course development may prioritize the main problems identified in the survey, including the disconnect between theory and practice, limited teaching methods, and a lack of course appeal. While maintaining disciplinary requirements, the course may strengthen connections between literary works, real-life contexts, and students' own experiences.

The course may also incorporate more discussion, comparison, creative work, and situated activities to provide students with greater opportunities for interpretation and expression. However, the workload should be managed in relation to class size, instructional time, students' prior knowledge, and task difficulty, while retaining necessary teacher explanation and guidance.

Primary-text reading, disciplinary explanation, and assessment and feedback should also be designed in a coordinated manner. Selected works may be accompanied by necessary contextual and reading support, while discussion, short writing tasks, textual analysis, and other forms of learning evidence may be used to assess students' understanding and expression in ways that align with classroom objectives.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

The next stage will involve semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and experts, with focus groups organized where necessary, to further clarify needs related to course content, teaching activities, reading support, and assessment methods, as well as the reasons why some students did not provide specific reform suggestions. After these perspectives have been considered, a course design will be developed and, subject to separate student consent, piloted and evaluated in the same two classes.

If the course is later extended to other institutions, a new needs assessment should first be conducted in light of local program requirements, course conditions, and students' baseline needs. Its applicability and actual effects should then be examined



in the new context rather than directly replicating the course design developed in the present study.

Conclusion

This study investigated students' perceptions of current Chinese literature education in two third-year classes at a public university in Guangxi, China. Most participants reported that the Chinese literature courses they had experienced were primarily teacher-led and that the study of traditional Chinese literature relied mainly on textual reading. Most participants also reported that they found the courses difficult to understand at least some of the time. The substantive responses provided by 68 participants to Q4 showed that the most frequently identified problems were the disconnect between theory and practice, limited teaching methods, and a lack of course appeal. A total of 69 participants expressed an overall desire for reform, 9 remained neutral, and none selected "Do not hope for teaching reform," yet only 11 provided specific suggestions. These findings show a clear difference between the large number of participants who expressed a desire for reform and the small number who articulated specific proposals. Further interviews are therefore needed in the next stage to clarify course needs. The present study cannot determine which particular approach to teaching reform is collectively supported by all 78 students, nor did it test the effectiveness of any teaching intervention. Rather, the findings provide preliminary data to inform subsequent course development for these two classes.

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