

# **On Tao Xingzhi's localization of Dewey's educational thought**

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## **Abstract**

Mr. Tao Xingzhi is one of the outstanding education experts in China in the 20th century, under the influence of Mr. Dewey's life education theory system, combined with the current education situation in China, he constantly carried out educational practice and exploration, creatively changed his educational philosophy, and finally successfully transformed it into an educational theory suitable for China's national conditions, the core of which is "life is education", "society is school" and "teaching is one". In the course of educational reform, from the early 20th century to the present, Tao Xingzhi has contributed a series of innovative theories and practical experiences based on Dewey's educational philosophy, which has become an indelible part of the history of education development.

**Keywords:** Dewey; Tao Xingzhi; life education; Localization

Tao Xingzhi enriches his thoughts in the collision and integration of Chinese and Western cultures, so that he grows into a diversified individual, he is influenced by Western culture while accepting the influence of traditional Chinese culture, as the so-called: "old knowledge and new knowledge both, tradition and modernity coexist."<sup>[1]</sup>The cultural backgrounds of different periods and nationalities directly influenced the formation of his educational thoughts, among which the most influential was Dewey's pragmatism educational thoughts. With the maturity of Tao Xingzhi, he constantly transformed Dewey's educational thought according to China's national conditions, and constantly absorbed and made choices to make it more in line with the reality of Chinese society and Chinese education.

## **Chapter One:Tao Xingzhi's inheritance of Dewey's educational thoughts**

### **1.1 The formation of Dewey's educational thought**

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the United States was in a period of social change after the end of the Civil War, and social transformation also brought new challenges to the field of education. However, at that time, the field of education was still using the outdated textbook versions and traditional teaching methods that were once European, which were far from the social reality, and the mechanical formalism of education was dominant, resulting in a serious disharmony between the education sector and social development.

John Dewey is living in such a stage of rapid social change, he has carried out in-depth thinking on the education problem in the transition period of the United States, and integrated the philosophy of pragmatism into the practice of education, put forward

the theory of pragmatism education, transformed the old education, established a new education system, and applied the pragmatism education ideas to the Chicago experimental school he founded for a long time to explore, and constantly updated, enriched, and finally formed a system, Dewey is also known as "the founder of the modern school of education", It has played an indispensable role in the field of education and society as a whole. Therefore, Dewey's philosophy of education had a certain progressive significance for the development of American society at that time.

As a representative of pragmatist education, Dewey introduced in detail the core propositions of his educational theory in his most famous educational work "Democracy and Education", mainly including "education is life", "education is growth", "learning by doing", "education is the transformation of experience" and other life education theories.

## **1.2The exploration and practice of Tao Xingzhi's educational thoughts**

Tao Xingzhi has shown a strong talent for learning since he was a child, at the age of 17, like many aspiring young people, with the ideal of "medicine to save the country" to enter the medical school, want to study medicine to relieve the pain of the majority of working people, to achieve the ambition of serving the motherland, but only three days after entering the school, he dropped out of school because he did not want foreigners to manipulate his thoughts. Later, he gave up medicine to pursue a career in literature, and while studying liberal arts at Jinling University, he was influenced by the Xinhai Revolution and actively propagated the ideas of democratic revolution and joined the revolutionary movement. In 1914, after graduating, he went to the United States to study, and transferred from the municipal major to education, where he studied education under American educators such as Dewey, Menglu, and Kebewt. In the autumn of 1917, after returning to China, he successively worked in schools and education systems, and began his creative and arduous educational career with the ideal of "education to save the country".

Tao Xingzhi's original name was Wen Rui, in 1934, Tao Xingzhi published the article "Xingzhi Xing", influenced by Wang Yangming's theory of "the unity of knowledge and action", believing that "action is the beginning of knowledge, knowledge is the completion of action", and "knowledge and action" as a pen name, and later changed to "Xingzhi" and has been used, from his pen name can also be seen Tao Xingzhi's absorption of traditional Chinese thought and culture. Although Wang Yangming's doctrine contains elements of subjective idealism, Tao Xingzhi realized the truth of combining study and practice, and used it for the rest of his life. After returning to China, Tao Xingzhi went from advocating nationalist educational thoughts, to accepting Dewey's pragmatist educational thoughts, and finally integrating Chinese and Western educational ideas to establish life education theories, and on the basis of inheriting Western educational thoughts, combined with China's national conditions, he exploratory promoted China's educational reform at that time.

Tao Xingzhi immediately rushed to various places to inspect after taking office, and quickly established civilian schools, vigorously promoted the development of the civilian education movement, and at the same time he issued the "China Education

Improvement Society to transform the national rural education declaration"<sup>[2]</sup> to call on people to pay attention to civilian education and rural education. He also innovated the form of schools, organized the establishment of various life education clubs and new schools, and used education as a means to help improve people's lives, breaking the traditional education model, and since then opening up a new situation in China's modern education practice. After the December 9th Movement, under the influence and help of the Communist Party of China, Tao Xingzhi not only actively propagated anti-Japanese activities, but also called on and led his classmates to participate in the democratic movement. Subsequently, with the continuous evolution of China's social situation, Tao Xingzhi combined education with the fight against Japanese aggression and the cause of national liberation in combination with reality, and devoted himself to education to save the country.

Mr. Tao Xingzhi has been committed to the cause of China's educational reform in the revolutionary era all his life, he combined his own educational ideas with China's national conditions, with the changes of national conditions, creatively enriched his own educational theories, and carried out a large number of educational practices, from advocating nationalist educational thoughts, to accepting Dewey's pragmatist educational thoughts, and finally integrating Chinese and Western life education theories, on the basis of inheriting Western educational ideas combined with China's national conditions, exploratory to promote China's educational reform at that time, truly achieved the unity of knowledge and action.

## **Chapter Two:Tao Xingzhi's localization and innovation of Dewey's educational thoughts**

According to the actual situation of Chinese society, Tao Xingzhi innovatively developed Dewey's educational theory, and creatively put forward a theoretical system of life education suitable for Chinese society, mainly including "life is education", "society is school", "teaching and doing unity" and other theories. His educational ideas have had a profound impact on the education reform of Chinese dynasties, and he has made positive explorations and attempts to cultivate talents with creativity and practical ability.

### **2.1"Life is education"**

In view of the serious disconnection between the old education model and social life, Dewey put forward the view that "education is life", which advocated that education is the process of social life, and schools should simplify social life and turn it into a preliminary state, so that education can become a vivid form of social life. He emphasized that education is inseparable from life, and education exists for life. [i]In his book "Democracy and Education", he clearly pointed out that "growth is the characteristic of life, so education is growth." [3]Therefore, Dewey believed that education is not for children to forcibly accept external knowledge, but to grow in life in order to enhance the innate abilities of human beings.

Education is not only a learning process, but also a life process. Or it can be said

that education is a life in itself, not a means of preparing for future life. Dewey believed that education should not only allow children to receive knowledge, but also let children learn to live. In addition, in order to make education coincide with children's lives, it is necessary to make school life fit with students' own lives, and make school life fit with social life outside school, only in this way can students learn to live in education, adapt to social changes through education, and grow better.

Tao Xingzhi "turned over half a somersault" on the issue of education and life, and proceeded from the actual social situation in China, conducted in-depth thinking on the relationship between education and life, put forward the educational concept of "life is education", and developed Dewey's educational thought. He believes that life itself has educational significance, so it is life that determines education, he said: "The fundamental meaning of education is the change of life, life does not change all the time, that is, life always contains the meaning of education."<sup>[ii]</sup>Life itself is a special kind of education, so it can be said that "life is education", focusing on life and educating students around the things in life. He has always linked education to social life for investigation, believing that "life and education are the same thing" and "education is useless without life, and education is needed to educate with life, to educate with life, and to teach for life".<sup>[4]</sup>Tao Xingzhi also emphasized the importance of life experience for learning, he believes that education should be close to students' daily life, and advocates cultivating students' practical ability and creativity through practice, experience and observation, so that students can apply what they have learned to solve problems in real life.

What Dewey and Tao Xingzhi have in common is that they both agree that there is a close relationship between education and life, and emphasize the importance of life to education, and oppose the complete separation of the two. The difference is that Dewey believed that education is the process of life, that is, life encompasses education; Tao Xingzhi believes that education should be at the core of life, and life is only a way for education to show, and he puts education in a higher position. The former believes that education should be in line with school life and social life, while the latter pays more attention to the importance of life and emphasizes the education of social significance, which is due to the social chaos and social turmoil in which Tao Xingzhi is located, and students cannot receive long-term systematic education in school. Therefore, according to the national conditions, he localized Dewey's educational thought from the perspective of practical life, emphasized the importance of life to education, and put forward an educational concept with Chinese characteristics, that is, "life is education". It can be said that the connection between education and life mentioned by Dewey is actually only to expand children's life experience within the scope of the school, while Tao Xingzhi's "life is education" is "to take all life as the object of education".<sup>[5]</sup>

## **2.2 "Society as School"**

Based on the theory of "education is life", Dewey further developed the educational concept of "school is society", advocating that the school should be consistent with the social environment, and training students to fully adapt to modern society. According to this view, the school represents a unique model of social life,

which amounts to a small, simplified embryonic society. In his book "My Educational Creed", Dewey pointed out that "school is mainly a social organization, and since education is a social process, school is a form of social life."<sup>[6]</sup>In this form of social life, children should learn a variety of crafts (such as cooking, etc.), art or scientific knowledge, and cultivate children's ability to survive in the real society, so as to eventually build "a worthwhile, lovable, and harmonious society". Dewey's educational proposition is child-centered, and he expects school life to become an ideal social model that can be selected and purified, so that the school can become a miniature social model that meets the needs of children's growth. He believes that the school belongs to the social environment, not only imparting knowledge, but also should have a certain social function, linking the learning life in the school with the social life outside the school, so that students can adapt to the society in school and be more conducive to their growth.

"School as society" is a further extension of Dewey's theory of "education as life", which eliminates the barrier between school and society, and reforms the educational method to promote the socialization of school life, so as to realize the integration of school and society.

Tao Xingzhi creatively transformed Dewey's concept of "school as society" and put forward the concept of "society as school", advocating the integration of schools into society, eliminating the clear boundaries between the two, and integrating schools and society into one. He believes that education should not be confined to schools, but also that society is also an important place for education. He advocated the development of social practice activities, encouraged students to go out of the classroom, to the society, directly participate in various practical activities, cultivate students' practical ability and sense of social responsibility, and turn the education of book knowledge into social activity education. At the same time, he was precisely aware that the theory of "school as society" advocated by Dewey was a microcosm of turning the school into a society, but such a school could not be equated with the real social reality. He believes that "school is society, like catching a lively bird from the sky and putting it in a cage." He wants to absorb everything in society in a small school, so it is easy to fake. Society, i.e., the school, is different, he wants to release the caged bird into the sky, so that he can fly freely, and he wants to extend everything in the school to the natural world.<sup>[7]</sup> Therefore, he advocated that the whole society should be regarded as the site of education, and that the school should be placed in the society, so that the education provided by the school could be closely integrated with the needs of the society, and the boundaries between the school and the society should be eliminated, so that the two can be integrated. The idea that "society is the school" was put forward by Tao Xingzhi in accordance with China's national conditions and from the standpoint of the masses of the people, and is closely related to social progress and the cause of national liberation. For example, when engaging in rural education, he emphasized that it is necessary to focus on the actual life of the villages, and increase the practical content of rural primary schools, such as land reclamation, tree planting, and pest control, so as to truly achieve the close integration of schools and society. In Tao Xingzhi's view, school is only a part of social life, and schools must adapt to the needs of the development of

social life, and can only provide effective education through the practice of social life. "Society is school" means that school education should break the barrier, reach out to nature, reach out to society, and integrate with the practice of social life.

Tao Xingzhi and Dewey both advocated the close integration of education and life, school and society, so that students can better adapt to society and grow. However, Tao Xingzhi has a negative attitude towards Dewey's proposal of "education is life" and "school is society" to a certain extent. He believes that Dewey's two theories of education only put some things in social life into the school as an embellishment of education, and did not really integrate practical life into school education. This is because Dewey was in a stable period in the United States, and he had stable social conditions to carry out systematic education, while Tao Xingzhi lived in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and he gradually realized in his exploration and practice that only by taking advantage of social conditions and combining actual conditions could he continue to carry out education that met social needs, which also enabled him to truly achieve the integration of education and life.

### **2.3 "Teaching and doing unity"**

On the issue of curriculum and teaching, Dewey proposed "learning by doing", respecting students' subjectivity and emphasizing the role of direct experience. He introduced activities into teaching, believing that "learning by doing" is to let children participate in social practice more, so that children can integrate into society and feel the actual social life, so as to stimulate their strong interest in learning. Activities are not an end in themselves, but the fundamental purpose is to develop students' intelligence through activities. Dewey's activities here refer to social activities, and the activities in teaching are closely related to social activities, and cultivate students' ability to transform society and adapt to social life through teaching. Dewey was convinced that all true education comes from experience, so students need to "learn by doing", that is, "learn from activities" and "learn from experience", through the activities carefully designed by teachers, children can experience social life first-hand, so as to establish a connection between society and students, coordinate the relationship between the two, and cultivate students' democratic social lifestyle through "learning by doing". "Learning by doing" was proposed by Dewey in response to the passive learning methods of "meditation" and "listening" adopted by traditional schools at that time. Dewey pointed out that "learning by doing" has changed the focus of children's concern from those objective facts and scientific laws to direct material operation and simple application, exercised students' personal hands-on ability, improved their creativity, changed from passive learning to active learning, and truly achieved child-centeredness.

Tao Xingzhi believes that Dewey's "learning by doing" ignores the role of teachers in teaching, and that teaching should not only be student-centered, but also should play a role together with students. Therefore, he called for the combination of teaching and practice, that is, "the unity of teaching and doing", which is not only the teaching idea that Tao Xingzhi has been practicing, but also the teaching method he proposed according to the actual social situation in China.

Tao Xingzhi's concept of "teaching and doing unity" has undergone a process of

gradual improvement. At first, in view of the disconnection between education and learning, he put forward the view that "the method of teaching should be based on the method of learning", that is, "the unity of teaching", emphasizing that teachers should teach students learning methods, stimulate students' active exploration, and abandon passive indoctrination learning. Subsequently, he further developed this concept, putting forward the view that "the method of learning should be based on the method of doing", and completely constructed the theory of "teaching and doing". In this theory, the focus is on "doing", that is, teaching in practice and learning in practice, promoting students' active learning, realizing the unity of knowledge and action, and ensuring that education is closely linked with practice and life, so as to obtain true knowledge.

By comparing the two, it can be found that the basic focus of "teaching and doing" and "learning by doing" is "doing", and the difference lies in "what to do". The "doing" in "teaching and doing" focuses on practical life, Tao Xingzhi aims to let students learn from life, and the "doing" of "learning by doing" refers to the teachers designing various purposeful activities, and students choose activities to do according to their own interests and hobbies. In other words, Tao Xingzhi put the school into the broad society, so that students can obtain learning results in real social practice, while Dewey moved the society into his school, so that students can learn in a social model. Therefore, for Tao Xingzhi, it is "life is education" and "society is school"; For Dewey, "education is life" and "school is society".

Dewey and Tao Xingzhi are both well-known theorists and practitioners in the field of educational reform, and their educational ideas have had a positive impact on the development of world education history. Dewey's educational thought originated in the development period of American capitalist society, at that time, the American society was stable, but the outdated education model still could not keep up with the new needs of capitalist development, therefore, for Dewey at that time, his mission was to break the barriers between education and life, school and society, so he put forward the educational idea of "education is life" and "school is society", improve the level of education, improve the quality of students, and advocate the democratization of education. However, in the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society of China, the warlords were divided, the society was chaotic, and the people's educational activities could not be continued for a long time, so Tao Xingzhi had to explore an educational path suitable for China's national conditions according to the actual situation in China at that time, and at the same time combined with his own personal practice, so he took "education to save the country" as the goal, and carried out localized transformation and innovative development of Dewey's educational concept, emphasizing the important role of daily life and social environment in the educational process. It puts forward educational concepts that are in line with the actual situation of our country, such as "life is education", "society is school", "teaching and doing unity" and so on.

Tao Xingzhi was a student of Dewey during college, so he was inevitably greatly influenced by Dewey in terms of educational thinking, but Tao Xingzhi's localization of Dewey's life education theory system is a development process of critical absorption, analysis, and recreation.

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Figure 1. Co-occurrence Distribution of ESG "Greenwashing" Keywords in China (2021-2024)

### 2.2.2 Keyword Cluster Analysis

Using CiteSpace 6.3.R1 visualization software, a Log-Likelihood Ratio (LLR) cluster analysis was conducted on ESG "greenwashing" keywords in China from 2021 to 2024. The results are shown in Figure 2 and Table 1. The LLR cluster analysis reveals that the Q value for ESG "greenwashing" in China from 2021 to 2024 is 0.8185, significantly higher than the critical value of 0.3, indicating a high degree of association between the derived modules. Additionally, the S value is 0.9524, which is well above 0.7, suggesting that the cluster analysis has a high level of reliability.

The cluster analysis of domestic ESG "greenwashing" research yielded seven clusters: "#0 Greenwashing," "#1 Conceptual Framework," "#2 Agency Conflicts," "#3 Quantitative Indicators," "#4 Digitalization," "#5 Technological Risks," and "#9 Analyst Attention." While some clusters overlap slightly, others are distinct and exhibit a trend of outward expansion. This indicates that the field of ESG "greenwashing" research in China still requires further exploration.



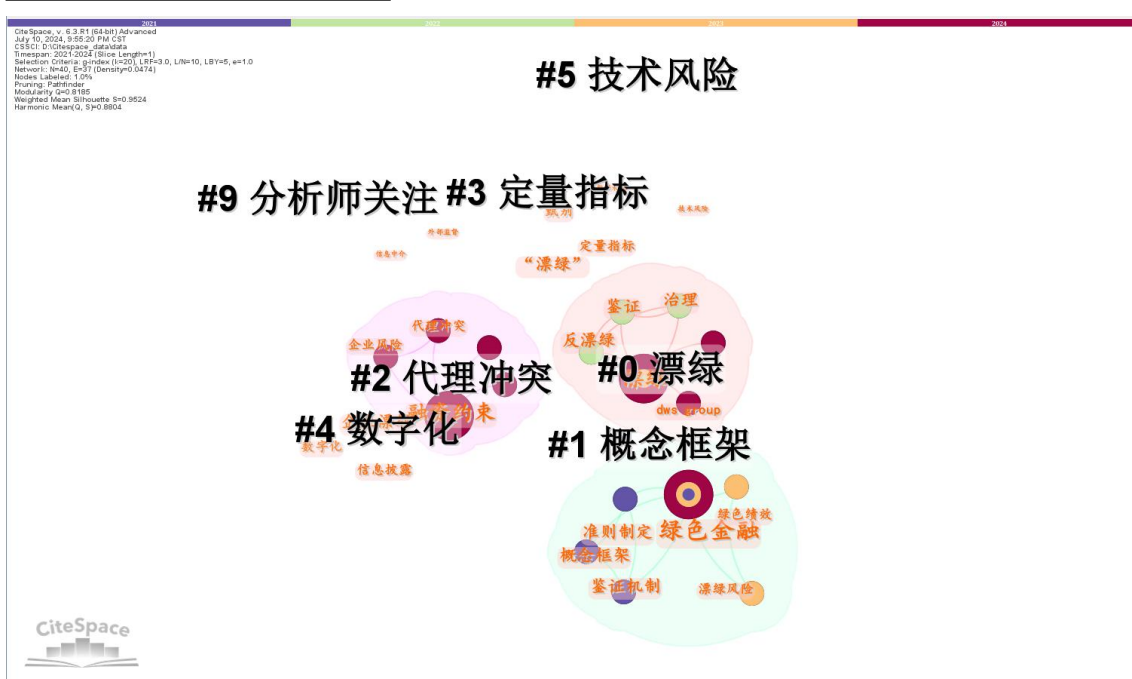


Figure 2. Keyword Cluster Analysis of ESG "Greenwashing" in China (2021-2024)

Table 1. Keyword Cluster Analysis of Domestic ESG-Related Papers

Sequence	Size	Sub-Cluster Silhouette	Year	LLR	Log-Likelihood Ratio	Label
#0	6	0.803	2022			Greenwashing
#1	6	1	2021			Conceptual Framework
#2	5	1	2024			Agency Conflicts
#3	4	1	2023			Quantitative Indicators
#4	3	0.95	2024			Digitalization
#5	2	1	2024			Technological Risks
#9	2	1	2024			Analyst Attention

### 2.2.3 Keyword Timeline Analysis

To understand the evolution of keywords in the field of ESG "greenwashing," CiteSpace 6.3.R1 visualization software was used to create a timeline analysis of keywords from 2021 to 2024, as shown in Figure 3. The keyword timeline analysis for domestic ESG "greenwashing" research reveals that research in 2023-2024 is more concentrated, primarily focusing on topics such as "greenwashing," "financing constraints," "corporate greenwashing," and "digital information disclosure." In contrast, research in 2021-2022 is more dispersed, with a primary focus on "green finance." The analysis indicates that the scope of ESG "greenwashing" research by domestic scholars is not yet broad enough and requires further expansion and study.

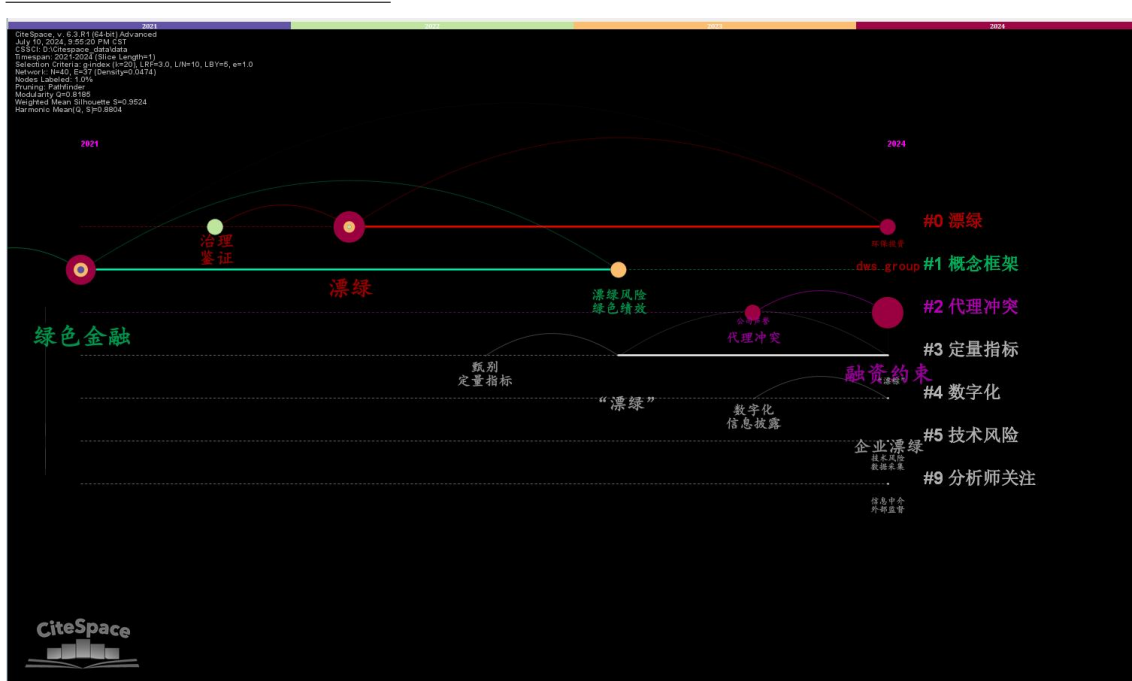


Figure 3. Timeline Analysis of ESG "Greenwashing" Keywords in China (2021-2024)

## 2.3 Overview of Research Hotspots on ESG "Greenwashing" in China

### 2.3.1 Keyword Frequency Analysis

To highlight the most frequently occurring keywords in the field of ESG "greenwashing" research in China, Table 2 presents the distribution of the top five high-frequency keywords from 2021 to 2024. The table shows that the top five high-frequency keywords and their first appearance years are "greenwashing" (2022), "green finance" (2021), "financing constraints" (2024), "corporate greenwashing" (2024), and "greenwashing" (2023). These high-frequency keywords indicate that domestic experts and scholars are exploring ESG "greenwashing" by combining it with green finance and financing constraints, laying a foundation for future in-depth discussions.

Table 2. Keyword Frequency Distribution in Domestic ESG "Greenwashing" Research (2021-2024)

Sequence	Frequency	High-Frequency Keywords	First Appearance Year	Centrality
1	5	Greenwashing	2022	0.08
2	4	Green Finance	2021	0.10
3	4	Financing Constraints	2024	0.05
4	2	Corporate Greenwashing	2024	0.03
5	2	"Greenwashing"	2023	0.01

## Chapter Three: Analysis of ESG "Greenwashing" Abroad

### 3.1 Current Status of ESG "Greenwashing" Abroad

#### 3.1.1 Highly Cited Literature

An analysis of the five most cited papers in the field of ESG "greenwashing" research abroad from 2012 to 2024 reveals the following:

The most cited paper is a 2012 article by Zhihong Wang and Joseph Sarkis, which examines whether companies have successfully implemented corporate social responsibility (CSR) governance to achieve positive CSR outcomes, significantly

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impacting corporate financial performance<sup>[6]</sup>.

The second most cited paper is a 2020 article by Ellen Pei-yi Yu, Bac Van Luu, and Catherine Huirong Chen, which explores mechanisms to reduce corporate ESG "greenwashing" and develops metrics to measure corporate ESG "greenwashing"<sup>[7]</sup>.

The third most cited paper is by Zhihong Wang, Tien-Shih Hsieh, and Joseph Sarkis, which studies the readability of corporate social responsibility reports and evaluates corporate social responsibility performance from environmental and social perspectives using ESG and KLD databases<sup>[8]</sup>.

The fourth most cited paper, published in 2021 by Elizabeth Demers, Jurian Hendrikse, Philip Joos, and Baruch Lev, investigates how ESG did not provide immunity to stocks during the COVID-19 crisis but did offer protection to investments in intangible assets<sup>[9]</sup>.

The fifth most cited paper, published in 2020 by Ali Uyar, Abdullah S. Karaman, and Merve Kilic, uses data from the logistics industry to study whether corporate social responsibility reports serve as a signaling tool or a "greenwashing" tool<sup>[10]</sup>.

### **3.1.2 Highly Productive Authors**

Based on a sample from the WOS database, the most prolific authors in the field of ESG "greenwashing" from 2012 to 2024 were identified. The top author, Zhang Dongyang, published five papers, while 16 other authors each published two papers, tying for second place. Key findings include:

The top two most prolific authors published a total of 37 papers from 2012 to 2024, accounting for 27.4% of the total publications, indicating that there is still significant room for further research in the field of ESG "greenwashing" abroad.

The institution with the most publications is Capital University of Economics and Business, with 18 papers related to ESG "greenwashing." It is followed by City University of Hong Kong with six papers, Rutgers University with six papers, University of Hong Kong with five papers, and Shenzhen University with three papers. These institutions collectively published 28.1% of the total literature, making them key academic centers in this field with substantial influence.

## **3.2 Overview of ESG "Greenwashing" Research Abroad**

### **3.2.1 Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis**

Using CiteSpace 6.3.R1 visualization software, the literature on ESG greenwashing was analyzed and represented as a knowledge map of keywords. This analysis helps in organizing related information, understanding research hotspots, and tracking the evolution of ESG "greenwashing" research. The timeline was set to one year, resulting in 203 network nodes, 501 links, and a network density of 0.0244, as shown in the keyword co-occurrence map of ESG "greenwashing" research abroad. The analysis reveals that the core keyword in international ESG "greenwashing" research is "corporate social responsibility," with secondary keywords including "ESG greenwashing," "performance," "environmental performance," and "disclosure."

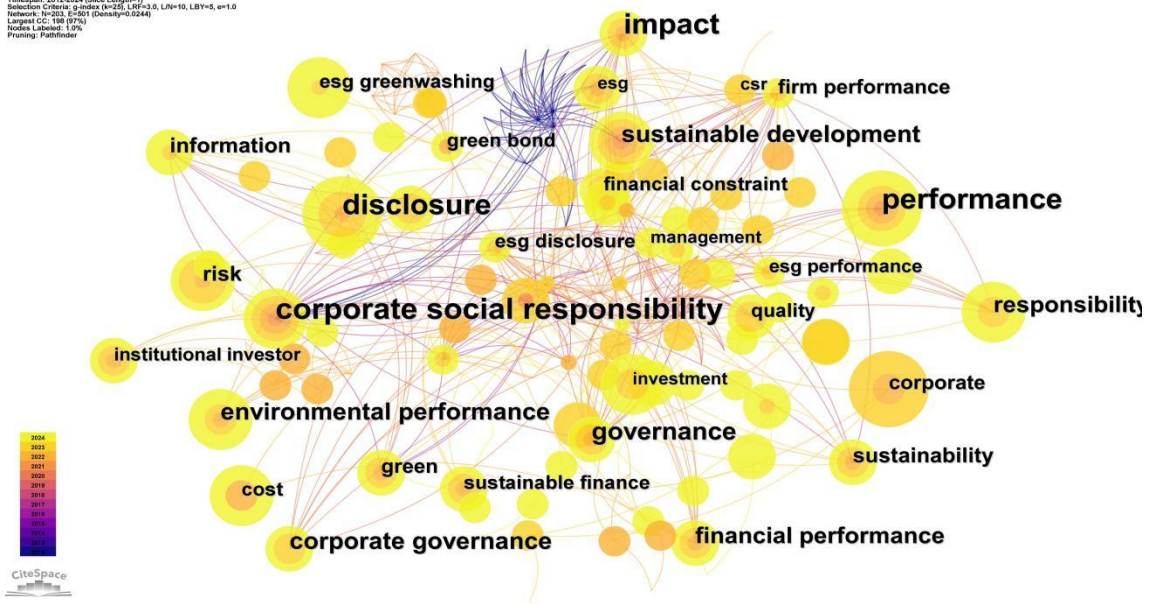


Figure 4. Co-occurrence Distribution of ESG "Greenwashing" Keywords Abroad (2012-2024)

### 3.2.2 Keyword Cluster Analysis

Using CiteSpace 6.3.R1 visualization software, a Log-Likelihood Ratio (LLR) cluster analysis was conducted on ESG "greenwashing" keywords abroad from 2012 to 2024. The results are shown in Figure 5. The LLR cluster analysis reveals that the Q value for ESG "greenwashing" abroad from 2012 to 2024 is 0.7075, significantly higher than the critical value of 0.3, indicating a high degree of association between the derived modules. Additionally, the S value is 0.9167, which is well above 0.7, suggesting that the cluster analysis has a high level of reliability.

The cluster analysis of ESG "greenwashing" research abroad yielded nine clusters: "#0 sustainable investments," "#1 esg disclosure," "#2 exxon-valdez," "#3 social and governance," "#4 mutual funds," "#5 climate change risk," "#6 financial constraints," "#7 green bonds," and "#8 stakeholder." The analysis indicates that there is still significant potential for further exploration and expansion in the field of ESG "greenwashing."

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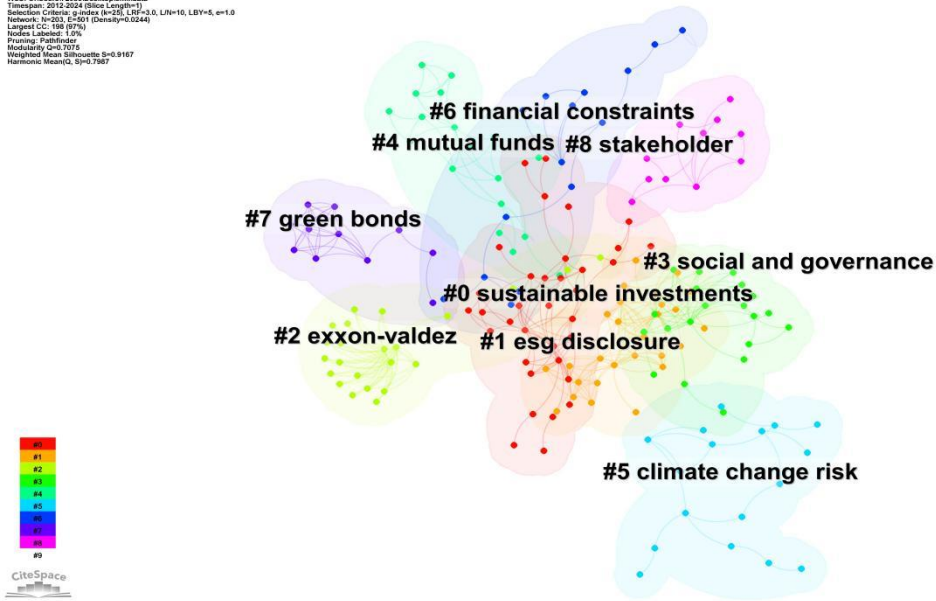
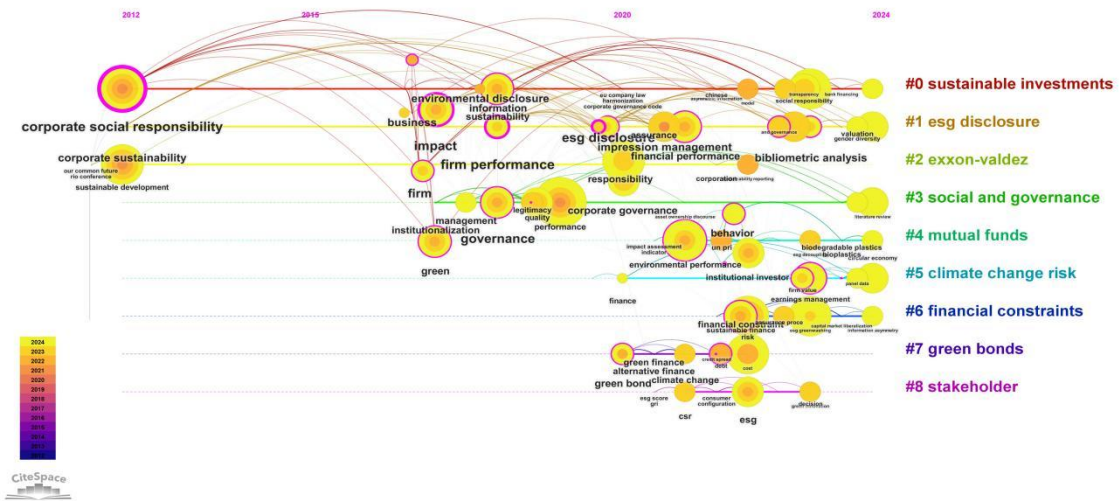


Figure 5. Keyword Cluster Analysis of ESG "Greenwashing" Abroad (2012-2024)

### 3.2.3 Keyword Timeline Analysis

To understand the evolution of keywords in the field of ESG "greenwashing," CiteSpace 6.3.R1 visualization software was used to create a timeline analysis of keywords from 2012 to 2024, as shown in Figure 6. The keyword timeline analysis for ESG "greenwashing" research abroad reveals that research from 2017 to 2024 is more concentrated, with a focus on topics such as "ESG disclosure," "impression management," "firm performance," "governance," and "impact." In contrast, research from 2012 to 2017 was more dispersed, primarily focusing on "corporate social responsibility." The analysis indicates that international scholars have a broad coverage of topics within the field of ESG "greenwashing."



**Figure 6. Timeline Analysis of ESG "Greenwashing" Keywords Abroad (2012-2024)**

### 3.3 Overview of Research Hotspots on ESG "Greenwashing" Abroad

#### 3.3.1 Keyword Frequency Analysis

To highlight the most frequently occurring keywords in the field of ESG "greenwashing" research abroad, Table 3 presents the distribution of the top five high-frequency keywords from 2012 to 2024. The table shows that the top five high-frequency keywords and their first appearance years are "corporate social responsibility" (2012), "disclosure" (2020), "performance" (2019), "impact" (2017), and "governance" (2018). These high-frequency keywords indicate that international experts and scholars are exploring ESG "greenwashing" by combining it with corporate social responsibility and information disclosure, laying a foundation for future in-depth discussions.

**Table 3. Keyword Frequency Distribution in International ESG "Greenwashing" Research (2012-2024)**

Sequence	Frequency	High-Frequency Keywords	First Appearance Year	Centrality
1	31	corporate social responsibility	2012	0.6
2	28	disclosure	2020	0.12
3	26	performance	2019	0.02
4	26	impact	2017	0.19
5	16	governance	2018	0.34

#### 3.3.2 Keyword Burst Analysis

Keyword burst analysis provides a visual representation of the time distribution and sudden emergence of keywords, helping to pinpoint when certain keywords appeared and how they were used over time. Using CiteSpace 6.3.R1 visualization software, a burst analysis of ESG "greenwashing" research keywords from 2012 to 2024 was conducted, as shown in Figure 7.

The keyword burst analysis map highlights keywords that saw a sudden increase in literature within certain years, effectively showcasing the cutting-edge dynamics and development trajectories in the field of ESG "greenwashing." The analysis reveals the emergence of popular keywords related to ESG "greenwashing," such as "corporate sustainability," "perspective," "institutionalization," "industry," and "environmental disclosure." The keyword with the highest burst intensity is "corporate sustainability" (1, 2012-2021).

### Top 25 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

Keywords	Year	Strength	Begin	End	2012 - 2024
corporate sustainability	2012	1	2012	2021	
perspective	2017	1.33	2017	2018	
institutionalization	2017	1.28	2017	2019	
industry	2017	1.14	2017	2022	
environmental disclosure	2018	2	2018	2022	
management	2018	1.17	2018	2019	
board	2019	1.2	2019	2020	
green bond	2020	1.42	2020	2022	
determinant	2020	1.19	2020	2021	
corporate social responsibility	2012	1.66	2021	2022	
csr	2021	1	2021	2024	
corporate	2022	2.05	2022	2024	
cost	2022	1.52	2022	2022	
socially responsible investing	2022	1.07	2022	2022	
internet of thing	2022	1.07	2022	2022	
esg reporting	2022	1.07	2022	2022	
mutual fund	2022	1.07	2022	2022	
un pri	2022	1.07	2022	2022	
sustainability reporting	2022	1.07	2022	2022	
debt	2022	1.07	2022	2022	
model	2022	1.07	2022	2022	
climate change	2021	1.24	2023	2024	
mutual fund performance	2023	1.16	2023	2024	
strategy	2023	1.16	2023	2024	
legitimacy	2019	0.85	2023	2024	

Figure 7. Burst Analysis of ESG "Greenwashing" Keywords Abroad (2012-2024)

### Chapter Four: Conclusion and Outlook

Using the scientific knowledge mapping method and CiteSpace 6.3.R1 software to create knowledge maps, supplemented with charts generated by Excel, this study reflects the basic development trajectory of ESG "greenwashing" research both domestically and internationally. In-depth analysis of related research has also been conducted to explore future directions in the field of ESG "greenwashing."

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## 4.1 Conclusion

By thoroughly examining the core literature on ESG "greenwashing" research from 2012 to 2024 by domestic and international experts and scholars, we have provided a comprehensive overview of the current state and overall development trends in this field. The specific conclusions drawn are as follows:

First, from the analysis of core institutions publishing research on ESG "greenwashing," the top five institutions publishing in domestic journals are the University of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Nankai University, Southwest University of Political Science and Law, Jinan University, and Xiamen University. In contrast, the top five institutions publishing in international journals are Capital University of Economics and Business, City University of Hong Kong, Rutgers University, University of Hong Kong, and Shenzhen University.

Second, from the perspective of research hotspots, domestic scholars mainly focus on keywords such as "greenwashing," "green finance," "financing constraints," and "corporate greenwashing." International scholars, on the other hand, focus on keywords like "corporate sustainability," "perspective," "institutionalization," "industry," and "environmental disclosure." There is a need to further strengthen interdisciplinary research on ESG "greenwashing."

## 4.2 Outlook

Building on the existing research on ESG "greenwashing" both domestically and internationally, future research can be developed in the following three areas:

First, explore mechanisms to reduce the impact of ESG "greenwashing" behaviors from multiple perspectives. Companies, recognizing the benefits of strong ESG performance, may exaggerate their environmentally friendly image in their communications. Future research could focus on identifying specific factors that reduce ESG "greenwashing."

Second, from an external regulatory perspective, there is a need to establish comprehensive ESG information disclosure systems and regulatory frameworks. Government regulatory agencies must oversee and standardize corporate ESG information disclosures. By aligning domestic ESG disclosure practices with international standards, improving transparency and regulatory norms, and encouraging the implementation of enforceable ESG disclosure regulations, companies will be better able to compare their ESG information across sectors, thereby strengthening their competitive edge.

Third, from within the company, there is a need to emphasize improving internal management systems and controlling environmental costs from various aspects, allowing the company to achieve greater benefits. Many companies lack a long-term vision and do not fully understand the implications of environmental costs, focusing only on visible issues related to environmental costs.

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## **Study on the discourse ability of Chinese language learners**

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**Abstract**

This study discusses the performance of international students with different Chinese levels. The results showed that there were significant differences in performance between junior, intermediate and senior learners, and the overall performance improved significantly with the improvement of Chinese proficiency. The study found that Chinese bilingual learners have challenges in accuracy, fluency and logic, which are influenced by language level, cultural differences and subjective factors. In order to improve the reference ability of Chinese language learners, it is suggested to strengthen the basic language knowledge, improve the context understanding ability, master effective reporting strategies, and carry out targeted reference training. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of systematic and phased Chinese teaching, and suggests that future research should explore specific teaching strategies to promote the improvement of learners' reporting ability.

**Keywords:** Discourse report ability international students teaching strategy

## **Chapter One:foreword**

First, understanding the meaning of the original discourse is the basis of paraphrasing. Learners need to obtain information by listening, reading, etc., and conduct a deep understanding and analysis of this information. This not only includes the understanding of vocabulary, grammar and other language knowledge, but also requires an accurate grasp of the discourse structure and logical relations. Only with a clear understanding of the meaning of the original discourse, can learners make the next step of transformation. Secondly, the key is to transform the original discourse into expressions that conform to one's own language ability. In this process, learners need to use their own language knowledge and the understanding of the original discourse to express the information in a natural and fluent way. This step requires learners to have high language use ability, including vocabulary selection, sentence pattern construction, discourse organization and so on. At the same time, learners should also pay attention to maintaining the core meaning of the original discourse in the process of transformation, and avoid the misunderstanding caused by different expressions. Finally, the report also includes the processing and reproduction of the pragmatic information of the discourse. Pragmatic information refers to the meaning of discourse in a specific context, including the speaker's intention, attitude, emotion and so on. When learners paraphrase, they need to understand and process this pragmatic information and reproduce it in their own expressions. This not only reflects the learners' understanding of the original discourse, but also shows their ability in verbal communication. Zhang Daozhen (2005) discusses the development of the pragmatic ability of second language learners, including their reference ability. Li Zongren (2010) analyzed the pragmatic errors of second language learners in cross-cultural communication, including the possible problems when reporting others. Su Xiaoran (2017) discusses how task-based teaching

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method can help improve the oral ability of Chinese as a second language learners, which includes the skills of discourse representation. Cheng Yuqing (2014) discussed how to cultivate learners' discourse understanding and expression ability in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, paying special attention to the cultivation of reference skills.

In academic circles, the research on the pragmatic ability of Chinese two-language learners has attracted some attention. However, although existing studies involve this field, the number of relevant studies is not large, and the research focus mainly focuses on the implication, discourse skills, the selection and processing of information, etc., while the specific ability investigation is relatively insufficient. In view of this, this study aims to fully reveal the ability of two language learners by exploring the three key factors of "content accuracy", "language fluency" and "verbal meaning".

“Content accuracy” is one of the important indicators to evaluate the reporting ability. In the process of learning Chinese, learners need to accurately understand and convey the information of the original text, so as to avoid poor communication due to misunderstanding or deviation. To this end, teachers should pay attention to students' performance in this aspect in teaching, and guide them to check themselves and correct errors by comparing the original text and reporting the content.

“Language fluency” also plays an important role in the process of reporting. Learners should be able to use the appropriate vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure when reporting the discourse, so that the referring content not only conforms to the language norms, but also can clearly express the original meaning. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' basic language skills and improve their language use ability.

“The implication” also called “beyond the actual words” is to whether the learner can understand and convey the implied meaning and attitude in the process of narration. In this regard, teachers should teach students how to capture key words and context in order to better understand the connotation of the original text. At the same time, teachers should also encourage students to give play to their own subjective initiative in the process of reporting, and add or adapt some expressions appropriately, so as to make the report content more personalized and creative.

Through the above three aspects, this study expects to provide more specific and effective guidance for Chinese language teaching and learning. In the future teaching practice, teachers can carry out targeted teaching activities according to the actual situation of students, so as to improve their pragmatic ability and pragmatic ability. In addition, the academic circle should pay more attention to the study of the reference ability of Chinese language learners, so as to contribute to the development of Chinese education in China.

## **Chapter Two : Experimental research on the ability of two-language learners**

### **2.1 Subjects and objectives**

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In this study, 40 bilingual learners with different Chinese levels were selected as experimental objects, divided into primary, intermediate and advanced Chinese groups, (the HSK score: HSK 1-3 is primary, HSK 4-6 is intermediate, 6 is advanced), to explore their performance and ability development in the reference task.

## **2.2 Source of the corpus**

By giving learners a standard corpus, they are asked to report them and record what they report. We selected four short passages with different themes and complexity (including daily life, cultural differences, historical events, and technological development). Material for each topic considers the complexity of the content and the cultural background differences. The materials are all from the extracurricular reading texts of primary and middle school students. The four materials are respectively:

Material 1: Daily life (difficulty coefficient: simple)

Theme: One Day in China

Content: Describe a foreign student's day life in China, including school, eating, shopping and other daily activities.

Cultural elements: Chinese catering culture, the use of public transport.

Material 2: Cultural differences (difficulty coefficient: medium)

Theme: A Comparison of Chinese and Western Festival Culture

Content: Compare the Chinese Spring Festival and the Western Christmas in terms of dates, celebrations, family gatherings and so on.

Cultural elements: the historical significance of the festival, the etiquette habits.

Material 3: Historical events (difficulty factor: more difficult)

Theme: "The History of the Great Wall."

Content: Introduce the historical background, construction reasons, historical influence and modern value of the Great Wall.

Cultural elements: China's historical and cultural heritage, protection awareness.

Material 4: the development of science and technology (difficulty coefficient: difficult)

Theme: "The Development of 5G Technology in China"

Content: Overview of China's progress in 5G technology, global influence and future trends.

Cultural elements: the relationship between science and technology and economic development, and international cooperation.

## **2.3 Experimental implementation**

We ask each learner to read the given materials alone and have 10 minutes to prepare the learners to try to report the read content in Chinese without other auxiliary materials. The transcript process was audio-recorded for subsequent analysis. When analyzing the relayed data, we will focus on whether the learner can accurately understand the implication in the original discourse, and then express it properly in the relayed process. By analyzing the implied expressions of learners, we can reveal the difficulties and aspects that need to be strengthened in the process of reporting.

## 2.4 Experimental evaluation

For each type of material, the following scores are preset according to the learner's Chinese proficiency. The score is set on a 100-point basis, and two graduate students in Chinese international education are invited to score it. The evaluation criteria are based on the accuracy of content, language fluency and communication of implication. First we performed overall score presets according on the learner level.

Learner level	grand average	scope
Junior learners	40	30-50
Intermediate learners	65	55-75
Senior learner	85	75-95

In order to truly evaluate the performance of international students in "content accuracy", "language fluency" and "implication", we designed detailed scoring criteria for each aspect and set the scores of three groups of students (primary, intermediate, advanced) according to these criteria. The full score of each aspect was 33.33, with a total score of 100.

( 1 ) Content accuracy: test whether the students can accurately understand and report the main information and details of the reading materials.

( 2 ) Language fluency: test the fluency of students in using Chinese, including grammatical structure, vocabulary use and pronunciation.

( 3 ) Implications: Evaluate whether students can capture and report the implicit meaning and emotional color of the text.

Based on the results of the test, we directly present the mean score and standard deviation of the learners in the form of tables:

Primary Learner Evaluation Form

Evaluation project	average	specific circumstance
Content accuracy	15	Understanding basic understanding is limited
Language fluency	20	Language expression is basic but often wrong
The implication	5	difficult to understand and express complex or implicit information

Intermediate learner assessment form

Evaluation project	average	specific circumstance
Content accuracy	25	Can better understand the main information, the details of the understanding is biased

Language fluency	25	fluent, with occasional grammar or miswording.
The implication	15	Start able to understand and try to express some implicit information

Advanced learner Assessment Form

Evaluation project	average	specific circumstance
Content accuracy	30	Can accurately understand most of the information and complex details
Language fluency	30	Fluent expression, with few errors
The implication	25	Better to understand and express the implied meaning and emotion

To further illustrate the results of the ability of different levels, we analyzed mobile data by ANOVA to check whether three different levels of learners differ significantly in scores. Because the three levels of international students cannot be fully equally divided, we regard each group as a student of equal magnitude, and the scores of each level are as follows:

Some learner score tables

grade	score
Junior learners	30, 35, 40, 45, 50
Intermediate learners	55, 60, 65, 70, 75
Senior learner	75, 80, 85, 90, 95

After ANOVA, the resulting F statistic was 40.67 with a corresponding P-value of 4.52e-06. This P-value is much less than the regular significance level of 0.05, indicating significant statistical differences in scores between learners at different levels. There were significant differences in performance between junior, intermediate, and advanced learners. This means that with the improvement of Chinese learning level, the overall performance of learners also improves significantly.

## 2.5 Analysis of the experimental results

In Chinese learning, learners' performance varies significantly with the language level. This paper will provide an in-depth analysis of the performance of senior, intermediate and junior learners in terms of content accuracy, verbal fluency and implication comprehension, and explore the issues they face when relayed discourse.

First, advanced learners showed significant advantages in terms of content accuracy. They have achieved such results largely because they have a deeper understanding of the Chinese language and related culture. Compared with intermediate and junior learners, advanced learners can more accurately grasp the meaning of the article, which provides strong support for them in the process of learning Chinese.

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Secondly, in terms of language fluency, with the improvement of Chinese level, the score of learners also showed a significant rising trend. Language proficiency directly affects learners' expression ability, and the advantages of advanced learners in language fluency undoubtedly create conditions for them to better convey their thoughts and emotions.

Moreover, in terms of the implication, senior learners show a higher comprehension ability. They were able to understand and express the implied meaning in the material, thanks to their high pragmatic comprehension skills and cross-cultural communication skills. Compared with intermediate and junior learners, advanced learners have more obvious advantages in this aspect.

However, experiments also reveal the performance of learners of different levels in understanding and paraphrasing materials of different complexity. Junior learners face greater challenges in understanding and expression, while the advanced learners have advantages in content accuracy and language fluency, but even the advanced group faces some challenges, with low average scores.

Further research shows that Chinese language learners have the following problems when referring to the discourse: first, insufficient accuracy, prone to information omission, misunderstanding or distortion; second, insufficient fluency, not natural and fluent expression; third, the logic is not strong, lack of organization and coherence. These problems suggest that in the process of Chinese language teaching, it is necessary to develop targeted teaching strategies for learners at different levels to improve their Chinese language level.

In short, the development of Chinese learners in content accuracy, language fluency and implication comprehension is closely related to their Chinese proficiency. Through in-depth study of the performance of learners of different levels, we can better understand the rules of Chinese learning and provide useful enlightenment for Chinese teaching. At the same time, in view of the problems existing in the discourse, teachers and learners themselves need to work together to improve the Chinese level to achieve higher quality Chinese learning.

### **3. Analysis of influencing factors**

Translation ability is a necessary skill for language learners, and its importance is self-evident. According to a series of experimental studies, we can find that there are many factors affecting the reference ability, mainly including language level, cultural differences, and subjective factors of learners. First, language level is one of the key factors affecting the ability to report. The language level directly affects the accuracy and fluency of learners in the process of reporting. High-level learners are often able to more accurately understand and express the meaning of the original text, making the reference content more appropriate. At the same time, they also have advantages in the fluency of language expression, making the narrative process more coherent and easy to understand. For low-level learners, they may have some difficulties in understanding and expression, which will affect the quality and effect of the transcripts. Secondly, cultural differences are also an important factor affecting the ability to report. There are differences in language usage habits and expression methods in different cultural

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backgrounds, and such differences may have effects in the referral process of learners. For example, some learners may be unconsciously influenced by the native language culture during the referral process, resulting in insufficient accuracy of the use of the target language. Therefore, while learners improve their language level, the influence of cultural differences also needs to be concerned to improve the accuracy of reference. In addition, learners' subjective factors also have an impact on the ability to report. Psychological factors such as learning motivation, learning strategies and self-confidence can all have an impact on the ability to report them. Learners with strong learning motivation will work harder to improve their reporting ability to achieve better results. Reasonable learning strategies can also help learners to effectively improve the ability of reporting. In addition, self-confidence is also important for improving the ability to report. Confident learners are more comfortable with challenges, thus improving the quality and effectiveness of transcripts.

To improve their reporting ability, learners need to pay attention to the influence of language level, cultural differences and learning subjective factors. By constantly improving their language level, understanding and adapting to the language habits under different cultural backgrounds, adjusting their mentality and enhancing self-confidence, learners can better improve their reporting ability. In the actual learning process, teachers should also pay attention to these factors, and provide learners with targeted teaching methods and guidance to help them better improve their reporting ability.

#### **4. Teaching advice**

The research shows that there are many deficiencies in the reporting of discourse, so we need to further strengthen the cultivation of reporting ability. In order to improve the reference ability of Chinese language learners, we can start from the following aspects.

##### **4.1. Learn the basic language knowledge well.**

We should make it clear that the key to improving the reference ability is a solid language foundation. For Chinese two-language learners, this means that they need to have in-depth learning and mastery of the basic knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation of Chinese. This will not only improve their understanding of the language, but also enhance their ability to use the language.

The basic knowledge of language is like the foundation of a house. Only the foundation can be built high. Similarly, only with a solid language foundation, learners can be able to understand and describe the discourse, and avoid misunderstanding and unclear expression caused by poor understanding of language. In addition, the process of learning the basic knowledge of language is actually a process of accumulation. Learners need to accumulate the knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation through continuous learning and practice, so as to flexibly use it in the actual language use and improve the accuracy of the reference.

##### **4.2. Cultivate contextual understanding ability.**



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In the process of learning Chinese as a second language, it is crucial to cultivate contextual understanding ability. Chinese two-language learners should not only master basic language knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, but also learn how to flexibly use these knowledge flexibly in practical communication. To this end, they need to pay attention to the role of context, learn to obtain and understand information from the context, and have insight into the deep meaning and implication of discourse. Learners should understand the concepts and types of context. Context includes many factors such as identity, relationship, purpose, occasion and on of both parties, which jointly affect the expression and understanding of language. Understanding the types of context helps learners to better grasp the rules of language use in different contexts. Secondly, learners need to develop the ability to analyze the context. In practical communication, language expression often has certain ambiguity and ambiguity, which requires learners to accurately capture the true meaning of discourse through the analysis of context. The methods of context analysis include observation, reasoning, induction, etc. Learners can constantly improve their analytical ability by listening more, speaking more, reading more and writing more. In addition, accumulating experience and skills is also the key to improving the contextual comprehension ability. In daily life, learners should pay more attention to and be good at summarizing the rules of language use in various contexts, especially when encountering difficult words, they should carefully analyze and consult others. In this way, they can quickly make correct judgments and responses when they encounter similar contexts. Finally, learners should always maintain attention to context to improve sensitivity and insight into context. Be good at capturing the key information in the discourse, so as to avoid misunderstanding and embarrassment in communication. In addition, learners can also participate in various language practice activities, such as role playing, simulated dialogue, etc., to improve their adaptability in practical communication.

### **4.3.Master the effective reporting strategies.**

In the process of improving the narrative ability, learners need to master a series of effective narrative strategies. Translation is not just simply to repeat the views of others, but also to explain the views of others in their own language on the basis of understanding. In this process, learners can adopt a variety of strategies to improve the effect of the transcripts.

(1)simplify the expression. In the process of reporting, learners can try to express complex concepts and opinions in concise and clear language. This can not only make the reported content easier to understand, but also improve the efficiency of the reporting. For example, when encountering a complex discourse, the learner can reduce it to the core ideas and key information, thus making the paraphrase more clear.

(2)refine the key points. When reporting, learners should pay attention to the core views and important information in the original text, and eliminate irrelevant or secondary content. Through refining the original text, the content of the report can be more refined and help to improve the accuracy and organization of the report. For example, when conducting a literature review, learners can extract key viewpoints and

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research results and make targeted reports.

(3)use auxiliary tools. In the process of learning to report, learners can use some auxiliary tools, such as notes, mind maps, etc., to help themselves to better report. Notes can help learners to record the key contents of the original text for reference; mind map can help learners to organize the logical structure of the original text and make the reference more organized.

(4)strengthen the practice. The improvement of narrative ability requires continuous practice and exercise. Learners can develop the retelling exercises from multiple angles through reading, writing and other ways. In the process of practice, learners can gradually find out their own methods and skills, so as to improve the ability.

(5)reflection and summary. After the completion of each report, learners should reflect and summarize, and analyze their advantages and disadvantages in the report process, so as to do better in the next report. Through constant reflection and summary, learners can gradually improve their ability to report them.

Finally, a targeted narrative training is also essential. Learners can carry out a lot of reference exercises through imitation, retelling, summary and other ways to improve their own reference ability and expression ability. At the same time, teachers should also provide learners with a variety of reference tasks to stimulate their interest and motivation and promote the improvement of their reference ability.

To sum up, improving the reporting ability of Chinese two-language learners requires many efforts and practices. Only by continuously strengthening the learning of basic language knowledge, improving the ability of context understanding, mastering effective reporting strategies and carrying out targeted reference training, can we really improve the reference ability of Chinese language learners and make them better adapt to the needs of Chinese learning and application.

## **5.Conclusion**

The purpose of this experiment is to roughly explore the performance and ability development of international students in the task task. The study shows that the discourse ability of Chinese learners increases significantly with the improvement of their language level. This finding emphasizes the importance of systematic and phased Chinese teaching for improving learners' comprehensive language use ability. Further research can explore specific teaching strategies, such as situational simulation, task-based learning, etc., to promote the ability of learners in these three aspects. This analysis and interpretation provides deep insight into learners' ability and helps to guide the practice of teaching Chinese as a second language.

Future studies can further analyze the ability of learners to express their meaning in the process of reporting. Attention can be paid to their understanding of the implicit information and the devices of speech used in the translation. Through a careful analysis of the expression of the implication, to deeply explore the difficulties and progress of learners in this respect.

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# **Narrative Strategies of Their Eyes Were Watching God**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis uses the narrative strategy of narratology to study the application of narrative structure, narrative language and narrative techniques in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The preface introduces the life, literary achievements and status of Zora Neal Hurston in the history of American literature in detail. The first chapter of the main text mainly analyzes the narrative structure of the novel, that is, the part of story within story is a retelling of the protagonist's experience. Janie narrates her personal experiences to her good friends from a first-person retrospective perspective, which strengthens the credibility of the story. Finally, it discusses the narrative mode of the initiation novel in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The three marriages and spiritual growth of the protagonist Janie in the novel are similar to the growth process of the protagonist in the traditional growth novel, which gives the meaning of the growth novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The second chapter analyzes the narrative language characteristics of the novel. The novel makes extensive use of free indirect speech, black English and black dialects. This can better express the character's discourse consciousness, because it stands in the position of the character in time and position. The third chapter conducts a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the symbolic images used in the novel, such as pear tree, mule and character names. Among them, the most frequently appearing is pear tree, which has almost become the framework of the entire novel. It is the incarnation of Janie and expresses her desire for true love. The conclusion part summarizes Hurston's narrative structure, narrative language characteristics, and symbolic writing techniques in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which is an important reality epitome of modern socialization. At the same time, he elaborated on the contribution of Hurston's rich folklore experience to the creation of his works. With the development of the feminist movement, Hurston has become synonymous with the search for traditional black female writers.

**Key Words:** Narrative language, Narrative technique, Symbol

## **Chapter One: The Narrative Structures**

### **1.1 The frame narrative structure: story-within-story**

There are 20 chapters in the *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The protagonist Janie returns to her home in the first chapter at the beginning of the novel and the last three pages of the twentieth chapter at the end, telling her good friend Pheoby about her life from childhood to 40 life experience. The eighteen chapters in the middle are the

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main part of the novel. They are all stories embedded in the frame of this story (that is, the stories in the story). They are Janie's inner monologues narrated from the third-person omniscience perspective. The eighteen chapters in the middle tell about Janie's three marriages, which is a process of her growth. Readers feel like they have witnessed Janie's entire legendary experience with their own eyes, but Hurston himself is controlling the development of the entire story. The use of this framed narrative structure makes things that happen at different times and spaces synthesize an intricate story. The characters, location, time, and space of the novel are intricately intertwined, but the story is clearly presented to the reader through the omniscience perspective and first-person narrative.

The text makes clear from the very beginning the danger of black women abandoning narratives. Once they give up the opportunity to narrate, they will become the object of other people's narrative, so the people with ulterior motives will ignore the facts. When Janie returns to the town at the beginning of the novel, she doesn't "stop and let people know how she's doing," which means she doesn't talk to people about her experiences, which leads to a lot of wild speculation.

These are the words of the people sitting on the porch of the road, and we readers will have the same question. At this time, Janie's friend Pheoby comes to her house and asks her about the situation. As night fell, Janie began to tell her story, which is the middle 18 chapters of the novel. First, there was her early life with her grandmother, Nanny. The second part is an episode in which Nanny tells of her own tragic experience and her first arranged marriage. The second part is about Jenny's long relationship with her second husband, Joe. The final section focuses on Janie's brief but wonderful life with her third husband, Tea Cake. When Tea Cake dies, she returns to her hometown, a new, independent and confident character who unfolds her story to her friends, and the narrative frame is fully formed.

First of all, let's look at the narrative of Janie in the novel and one of the important purposes of Janie's narrative is to spread her story out there, to make it known to the people who are listening to her, and to comprehend with her.

Within this story within story framework, the novel shows us a very ideal dialogue condition, an ideal dialogue space: under the porch, which was once only a place for men to talk; A narrator who wants to share and a receiver who wants to listen; Their decades-old friendship is a solid foundation for their mutual trust and understanding. Janie wanted Pheoby to tell her story to others, just as she would tell it herself, because her tongue was in her friend's mouth. The main body of the novel is narrated by the third person narrator—Janie. In the narrative frame of the novel, Pheoby belongs to the recipient of the manifestation. For the bulk of the novel, however, she remains invisible, never to be seen again, until the novel returns to Janie's narrative. Because she is a black woman, black female readers tend to have a kind of identity when reading novels. They unconsciously identify themselves with the subject in the novel and think that the narrator is telling the story directly to them, so it is easy to arouse resonance. That kind of resonance is not found in other groups of readers. This is why the main body of the novel is told in the third person, because the narrator's goal is not to Pheoby, but to all

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black women, who she believes need to be awakened.

## **1.2 The Janie's Journey: The meaning of growing up**

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston, the story is founded upon a conversation with the main character Janie, and her friend Pheoby. Janie tells her stories to Pheoby to open an unbiased perspective instead of the unreliable townsfolk. Janie has gone through many events, whether internal or around her, all were mainly based around her three marriages. The novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, depicts the life of Janie, a woman who responds to the changes in her life with the discovery of her inner strength and buried hope, long tamped down by her marriage to Joe Stark and subsequently released by his death.

Janie's second marriage was with a man named Jody Starks who she met by secretly flirting with, during the events of the first corrupt marriage with Logan Killicks until Janie and Jody elope and move back to town. Janie believed that Jody was the exact opposite of Logan. Logan strictly believed that women should be the workhorses of a relationship, while Jody treats his women very nicely but that's where he becomes wrong. Logan treated women like objects to be tools for his own power, but Jody treated women like objects to their own power of display. On top of the negative trait, Jody had a large issue with Janie speaking to anyone. Jody also had plans to increase his power in Eatonville like becoming the biggest landlord, postmaster, mayor, and businessman in Eatonville. These were all things that Janie seemed to care for especially after surviving in such a horrible marriage with Logan. It seems Jody only married Janie too trophy her and use her to get him to the top of business chain, and become mayor of the town. However, Janie is unfulfilled with being suppressed and not given any love as Jody truly doesn't love her and never has. So Janie bursts out, in a store and insults Jody. Much later when Jody is in his deathbed she tells him how she truly felt about the relationship but with Jody not wanting to confront the truth he wants Janie to die, while he is rebuking her he finally dies. The death did not affect Janie much, but the 20-year marriage and its end brought up more internal changes.

Janie learns a lot more about love during this marriage based on her horrendous experience which was her second marriage with Jody Starks. She learns that she should know about her happiness. She was in a dark spot when she was married to Logan and began to with Jody but she probably did not catch on too who he actually was. While this was her longest marriage it was also her most mentally wounding. Jody never loved her and they were together for 20 years, she was suppressed and not allowed to talk too anyone so she was socially cut off even from her husband. Then she was not given any love and started too feel low till she finally spoke up and found her voice in the midst of troubles. Even though she was wounded by her husband she began to grow and to understand that lovers should be treated equally and how each other both feels emotionally. This is one of the most important things she comes to realize as she has been treated horribly by her first two husbands because she is not being treated as equal.

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She is being treated as objects and she is not clearly, she is a human. This can also lead Janie to understand some of the things her grandmother went through as she was a slave and was treated horribly and as an object. All of these things combine help lead her to her true love Tea Cake. While Tea Cake did have a gambling problem he was honest, caring, and wanted Janie to be herself not something that Tea Cake wanted her to be. The only reason the marriage failed was due to Tea Cake getting a sickness from a rabid dog making him go insane. During his madness, he started to believe that Janie was cheating on him and started to shoot at her.

In conclusion, Janie was able to learn how to be happy and too learn that lovers should be equals nothing less and through knowing that she was able to find true love. She also was able to understand that she can find love towards the end of the novel which is the exact opposite of her first marriage so we can see how far she has come internally from all these external events.

Similarly, Janie 's anxiety about losing narrative rights is reflected in her third marriage. After Tea Cake's death, Janie's fear throughout the trial was that the truth would be swept under the rug and she would be misunderstood. So the only thing she wanted to do in court was to tell the truth, and she took it very seriously. What she feared was not death, but misunderstanding, and she would never shoot a dessert out of malice. These misunderstandings are a complete distortion of the truth, a denial of Jenny's love affair with dessert, a denial of Jenny's life and a stain on her personality. So she used her voice in the courtroom to review her real experience and prove that she was innocent. From the above analysis, it can be seen that Jeanie attaches great importance to narration, because if she loses the right of self-narration, her real self will disappear in the narration of others. Only when you have the right to speak and tell your own story in your own language and voice can you show your true self to the outside world, give yourself a correct definition and establish your own identity. Having made clear the importance of narrative structure and behavior in the novel, it will be discussed how Hurston demonstrates to the reader the power of black women's voices, and declares that black women are capable of self-narrating, self-defining, and constructing their own authentic identities.

## **Chapter Two: The Narrative Language**

### **2.1 Free Indirect Speech**

Free indirect speech is a style of third-person narration which uses some of the characteristics of third-person along with the essence of first-person direct speech. Randall Stevenson suggests that the term free indirect discourse is perhaps best reserved for instances where words have actually been spoken aloud and that cases where a character's voice is probably the silent inward one of thought should be described as free indirect style(192).

Zora Neal Hurston uses free indirect speech to describe Janie's growing up in a process of self-actualization and self-affirmation that reflects her inner activity. Usually, exclamatory sentences tend to introduce free indirect speech. An example occurs when Janie begins to emerge and quest about her self-consciousness.

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In fact, it neither paraphrased in a declarative form nor convert to an expression with a new first person referent. It is an obviously free indirect speech introduced by exclamations and exclamatory questions imply that Janie's consciousness but speak not directly through Janie's mouth. Different from direct speech, free indirect speech used psychological activity of Janie who had began to come to love awakening ,longing for the the pear-tree-in-blossom when she lay on her back under the pear tree, watching the bees sink into the blossom . However, this is not exactly the stream-of-consciousness because the narrator's voice is involving with it, too. By the using of free indirect speech here, Hurston successfully avoids suggesting that the actual process of reflection and perception occurs as internal speech by distancing the language, which reproduces it, from verbal communication in omitting both first-and second-person pronouns.

The language of the characters in the novel is intertwined with the voice of the narrator. This language shortens the distance between the reader and the text, allowing readers to deeply experience the thoughts and feelings of the characters. In the direct expression, there are only the voice of the character. In the formal indirect speech, the narrator often suppresses the voice of the character because the narrator adopts his own calm and objective speech. In the free indirect speech, there are two voices of the character and the narrator. The narrative content of free indirect speech not only enables the main consciousness of the characters to be displayed, but also the narrator's own attitude towards things is also presented at the same time through this way of expression of free indirect speech. In this way, the whole expression has the double pressure of semantics, and the text gains infinite richness.

## **2.2 Nonstandard Negro English**

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a variety of American English spoken by many African Americans. It has been called by many other names that are sometimes offensive, including African American English, Black English, Black English vernacular, ebonics, negro dialect, nonstandard negro English, Black talk, Blaccent, or Blackcent. ( Richard, 2019 )

In this chapter, we focus on the use of non-standard black language in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Most negro were born in poverty-stricken areas, they are rarely stimulated by language, and they rarely hear standard languages, so their language skills are very poor. They cannot utter complete sentences, know the names of common objects, form concepts or express logical ideas.

Hurston is very fond of negro English. She believes that the best things black people provide to American culture come from those illiterate black people. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the oral tradition is most fully displayed on the porch of the black villages and towns represented by Eatonville, so this work is also called by Henry Louis Gates " Narrator's text" and it is important because it is the medium through which the oral tradition can be produced, consumed, and disseminated, and it forms the oral style in Hurston's text. Hurston believes that the black art represented by the oral tradition is not a legacy of ignorance, but a cultural testimony of black creativity and



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artistic sensitivity.

These black dialects and their unique expressions faithfully record the living language of black Americans. For example, in standard English, overalls, dat, ole, swingin, lak, gal, and betcha should be overalls, that, old, swinging, like, girl and bet it respectively.

Another important feature of the narrative language of the novel is the spelling, grammar and expression style peculiar to the black people. It is obvious that many spellings in the above dialogue are distinctively existed in Nonstandard negro English which is far from similar with traditional Standard English. For example, in the above dialogue, the English words spelled as: "yo', git, Mah, Bettah, kin, de, Ah, dat, ain't" equal "your, get, my, better, can, the, I, that, aren't" in standard English, besides, while the words "dere, wid, duskin', ketch" equal "there, with, dusking and ketch". When took a close look at the spellings, it can be see that nonstandard is expressed in a much casual and random way. At the reading of these casual words, readers can easily associate the contents of dialogues with ways of black people's speaking, laughing and behaving. However, in the years when *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was published, the racism was popularized and the white writers may be disgusted with spellings of nonstandard negro English, considering them as vulgar, rude and sick expression which were closely associated with the nature of black people.

If Janie in her first marriage was the authority of her private voice, in her second marriage Hurston is showing us the authority of her public voice. Joe himself was a very articulate person, and from the first meeting, he kept telling Janie that he was going to be a big person. Although Janie knew he was not the man she was looking for, Joe had spoken her mind of the distant horizon, so she was willing to go with him. To some extent, Janie was initially overwhelmed by the power of Joe's words. When they arrived in the new town, Joe became the mayor of the town and had the highest decision-making power, and he was a real big person indeed. However, it is such a voice seems to be full of great power of the character, eventually in the war with Janie's words also lost. When Janie rebelled against Joe in public and expressed her voice as a black woman, Joe was overwhelmed, depressed, bedridden and then died. Her retort to Joe was a fatal blow to him, a serious stab to his vanity and a shattering of his authority over his family and the town. Let's go back to Janie's last conversation with Joe. Compared to the previous conversation with Logan, Janie now has the advantage of speech in all aspects.

Dianne Sadoff thought Janie is a dangerous woman because in a sense she used her voice to kill Joe. So the power of Janie's voice is enormous. As for Janie's third marriage, critics generally believe that Janie gained her voice and found her own black woman's voice after she met Tea Cake. Subsequently, let's look at the expression of Tea Cake to Janie after Tea Cake had disappeared for several days:

Tea Cake is a black bachelor with less education whose expressions were quite rough and simple. The letter "I" was always replaced by single quotation mark""", while many spellings of other words are tinted with black feature. Such as "" Twan't, tuh, lak, dat, Lawd, wuzn't, onliest, messin" are equal to "it wasn't, to, like, that, God,

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wasn't, only, missing" respectively.

This shows just how powerful the voice of black women is. Although the voices of black women were inevitably silenced in the social context of the time, it does not mean that they were incapable of resistance. With such powerful voice power, they are fully capable of self-defining and constructing their own true identity with their own voice. This fact was invisible to the oppressed black women at that time, and it was through the power of Janie's voice that they had the ability to tell their own stories and construct their own female identity.

## **Chapter Three: Three Narrative Technique of the Novel**

### **3.1 Sexual consciousness: symbolization of the Pear Tree**

Among them, the pear tree is the most common one, which almost becomes the framework of the whole novel. It is the incarnation of Janie, expressing her desire for true love. Young Janie liked to spend her free time in the spring under a pear tree in bloom in her backyard, and one day she lay on her back under the tree:

The deep sexual consciousness of Janie began to stir, and she longed to be loved by a man as a pear tree receives a bee with pollen. The vivid image of pear flowers makes the reader feel the intoxicating sense of happiness and euphoria that Janie has personally experienced.

But Janie follows her grandmother, Nanny, and marries Logan, a materialist who "looks like a skeleton in a cemetery." This first marriage destroyed Janie's naive fantasies. She thought that marriage would bring love. She thinks Logan Killicks' vision has desecrated pear tree. She thought that women should be respected in addition to love her husband. In the second marriage of Janie and Joe, Hurston continues to play the symbolic role of pear tree. Before leaving with Joe, Janie decided to leave Logan because she wanted to cross the horizon with Joe. Joe can buy everything for Janie and provided her wealthy life but he was envious of the attention she received from other men. During this marriage, Janie hopes that husband and wife should trust each other and give her freedom. It wasn't until she married Tea Cake that her dream of becoming a pear tree came true. Since being with Tea Cake, Janie feels like a real woman.

### **3.2 Women: symbolization of the Mule**

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, mule reflects the significant themes of the novel: Black women are mules. The treatment of the mule in the work alludes to the plight of the black woman.

In fact, there are a lot of similarities between the mules and Janie herself. Janie is a mulatto, her maternal grandfather was white and her maternal grandmother was black.

The reference to black women as mules was also first used by Grandma Nanny,

This is a conclusion Nanny has drawn from her own painful experience. She patiently told Janie about the physical and mental devastation she had suffered in the

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slave-owner's family, and explained the survival status and unfortunate fate of black women. Nanny persuaded Janie to marry Logan, so that she can get basic living security and improve her social status, so as not to be harmed. But after she got married Logan, her life was just like a mule, no happiness at all, and she had to work in the fields with the mule. The image of the mule fully illustrates Jenny's status in the family and her value in the eyes of black men, and points out the fact that women were mules in the agricultural society of the South at that time.

### **3.3 Character: symbolization of the Name**

The main story line of "Their Eyes Were Watching God" is the story of Janie's search for self-identity and national identity in three marriages, and finally her spiritual growth. Janie's three husbands represent three classes and three different lives within the black people. The names of the three husbands also indicate the different roles they play in Janie's life.

Janie's first husband, Logan Killicks, is a representative of black people who are completely alienated by white culture. He believed that the black people's value in life was to work hard, to earn money, and to improve their social status through material accumulation. At the age of 16, Janie is forced to marry Logan, who is now middle-aged. "Logan" means "rock," and refers to a rock in equilibrium that shakes at the slightest touch. Logan lives a simple life, and his character is old-fashioned. He treats Janie as his own property and cheap labor. He even wants to buy a meek mule for Janie to work in the fields and create more material wealth for him. Killicks is an ironic combination of the words "kill" and "lick". Being married to Logan didn't fulfill Janie's basic fantasy of love, and being married to Logan did indeed "kill" Janie's ideas about love and marriage.

If Janie was a mule who could only work in her first marriage, then in the second marriage she would be a submissive pet in the family. Janie's second husband was named Joe Starks. "Joe" is the nickname of "Joseph", and "Joseph" is a typical white name from the Christian prophet John. Joe believed white culture and obeyed white rules. Joe acted like a white man and his new house was painted a shiny white. Joe's lifelong dream was to be a "big voice." His idioms is "I God." "Starks" means "severe", "strength", "power", "severity". Joe, who had achieved economic and social success, imposed strict rules on his wife Janie's behavior. She was not allowed to participate in community activities, to participate in store porch conversations, to show her hair, or to show her disapproval of him in front of others. The black people in the whole community were afraid of Joe because of his whiteness, because of his wealth, his status, his power. Joe provides all of Jenny's material needs, but does not allow Janie to have a real life. Janie's second marriage was completely in line with Grandma Nanny's plan, but the psychological and physical oppression of Jenny's marriage was the most prominent.

Janie is the name of the third husband Vergible Tea Cake Woods. It's a very interesting name, which literally translates as "vigorous, tea, snack, forest." The name is very much in keeping with the character of the Tea Cake.

Tea Cake is more than a decade younger than Janie, and it is full of vigor and

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vitality. Both "tea" and "snack" are associated with physical pleasure. In African culture, trees and forests represent vitality and vigor. He is favor of playing guitar and in spare time he often plays the guitar with Janie. He was a romantic and always Janie laugh with jokes. He represented of black folk culture and brought equality, happiness, happiness and singing to Janie, and he is Janie's favorite person. The Tea Cake gave Janie a sense of life, vitality, of being needed, of being loved, of being free. In love and getting along with Tea Cake, Janie's body and spirit have changed a lot and has a new understanding of the traditional black culture. "Janie's life with Tea Cake, tea is an icon of black culture, her third and final journey closer to the horizon, closer to self-definition." In the process of achieving self-actualization, Janie proved the power of women themselves and became a representative of the awakened black women of her time.

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# Research on the Alienation and Return of the Subject in Digital Games

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## Abstract

In the context of the digital age, the issue of human subjectivity has become increasingly prominent. Digital games, as cultural and entertainment products of the digital era, play a significant role in shaping and evolving human subjectivity. This paper discusses the fundamental concepts and conducts a survey on the alienation of the subject within digital games. It focuses on the main manifestations of cognitive, volitional, and emotional alienation among digital game players. Analyzing from the perspectives of developers, users, and regulators of digital games, the paper identifies the root causes of subject alienation within these games. It proposes paths for reintegration of the subject, incorporating moral factors in game design, enhancing self-management for users, and improving legal frameworks for regulation. These pathways aim to address the challenges posed by digital games to human subjectivity in the digital age.

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**Keywords:** Digital Games; Human Subjectivity; Alienation; Return.

Digital games, as an emerging cultural and entertainment product of the digital age, not only significantly enrich people's spiritual world but also subtly influence human subjectivity. As the core of personal identity recognition and self-realization in the digital age, the evolution of subjectivity is closely related to social development. By explaining the relationship between digital games and human subjectivity and conducting surveys on the alienation of the subject within digital games, this paper analyzes the fundamental causes of subject alienation from the perspectives of game developers, users, and regulators. It proposes corresponding pathways for reintegration from these three perspectives to address the challenges posed by digital games to human subjectivity in the digital era.

## **Chapter One: Definition of Basic Concepts**

As an important product of contemporary cultural entertainment, the impact of digital games on human subjectivity is multidimensional and multifaceted. By defining digital games and their developmental evolution, and elucidating the concept of human subjectivity and its alienation, as well as the interactive relationship between digital games and human subjectivity, we can better understand the role and influence of digital games on human subjectivity. This understanding also aids in further exploring how to reconstruct and strengthen human subjectivity in the design and development of digital games, thereby promoting comprehensive human development.

### **1.1 Digital Games and Their Evolutionary History**

Digital games are interactive experiences provided through electronic computing devices based on digital technology. The essence of digital games is leisure, entertainment, diversion, and relaxation, with flexible and arbitrary topics, primarily a commercial revenue-generating operation aimed at profit-making or earning online advertising fees. They tend to involve realistic three-dimensional complex scenarios and virtual settings. The developmental journey of digital games can be traced back to the late 1950s. Initially, digital games emerged as a byproduct of computer technology, rudimentary and primitive, merely serving to demonstrate computer capabilities, such as the 1950s "Tennis for Two," considered a starting point in the evolutionary history of digital games. This simple electronic game based on an oscilloscope-like device marked the nascent stage of digital games. Subsequently, from the 1970s to the 1980s, with the popularization of personal computers and home gaming consoles, digital games entered a period of rapid development. Classic games like "Space Invaders" and "Pac-Man" became cultural icons. During this period, games evolved from a singular form of leisure to a medium with social functions, enhancing interaction among players. Entering the 21st century, the rapid development of internet technology paved the way for the diversification of digital games. Online multiplayer games became trendy, the gaming world expanded, and both player interactivity and game immersion continuously increased. Massive

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multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), represented by "World of Warcraft," became a cultural phenomenon, providing not only a virtual world for players to explore but also a social platform for interaction, competition, and collaboration among players worldwide. As digital technology, particularly in image processing, advanced, games became richer in graphics and content, with increasingly diverse gameplay. With the widespread availability of smartphones and tablets, the mobile gaming market rapidly emerged. Driven by fierce market competition and technological innovation, digital games transcended simple leisure to offer rich narratives, deep character development, and complex interactive logic, becoming a comprehensive immersive experience, as seen in games like "BioShock" and "Cyberpunk 2077." From 2010 to the present, China's gaming industry has gradually transitioned from licensing imports to independent original creation, with domestic digital games such as "Honor of Kings" and "Naraka: Bladepoint" becoming new leisure options in people's daily lives.

However, digital games are not merely a form of leisure and entertainment; they represent a new mode of interaction between humans and technology, unveiling new pathways for technology to shape human lifestyles and subjectivity. The evolution of digital games is not just a technological leap but also accompanies societal and cultural changes. From the earliest standalone games to later online games, and now to today's social and mobile games, the social attributes of digital games have become increasingly prominent. The development of digital games is not confined to technological advancements and changes in game formats but is also significant in terms of their content and themes, which display diversity and depth. The themes of games have evolved from initial sports competitions and adventure explorations to present-day historical simulations, war strategies, and even deeper themes such as society, psychology, and philosophy, fully showcasing the richness and complexity of digital games as a cultural form. The narrative techniques in digital games have also matured, with many titles weaving intricate plots and character settings, allowing players to experience emotional fluctuations and moral dilemmas similar to those in real life, thereby prompting players to reflect on their own identity and behaviors. The diversification of game platforms, content, and modes of interaction has made digital games a medium connecting different cultures, regions, and even age groups. This mediatory role has led digital games to have a broad social impact globally, not only altering people's leisure and entertainment modes but also, to some extent, redefining people's patterns of social interaction and cultural consumption habits, thereby significantly impacting human subjectivity.

## **1.2 The Subject and Its Alienation Reflection**

The idea of human subjectivity has appeared early in the history of philosophy, but the concept of "human subjectivity" itself first emerged in modern Western philosophy, broadly referring to the attributes of humans as subjects. Descartes, with his assertion "I think, therefore I am" , characterized human subjectivity as self-thinking and doubt, although at this time, subjectivity was still thin due to the lack of experience and substance. Kant expanded on this concept further, emphasizing

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the capacity of individuals to act according to their own reason and moral self-discipline, showcasing the moral dimension of subjectivity. Feuerbach, starting from human sensibility and desires, pointed out that subjectivity is not just the product of reason and thought but also encompasses human emotions and needs. Modern idealism indeed emphasized the agency of the subject, but it only abstractly developed human agency, inevitably leading to extremes. Meanwhile, the old materialism, including natural materialism and humanistic materialism, unilaterally regarded human subjectivity as a sensory and intuitive trait, without considering it from the perspective of the subject or practice. Marx summarized human subjectivity as the characteristics exhibited by real individuals through concrete practical activities, thereby bringing subjectivity from the realm of consciousness back to the realm of practice, and finding its real foundation. It is evident that human subjectivity is not some fixed attribute of individuals, but rather a dynamic expression that continuously updates and sublimates itself through the spiral process of "practice—cognition—re-practice—re-cognition." It is the product of real practical activities involving self-development, self-reflection, and self-transcendence, arising from and inseparable from human cognition and practice. As Professor Guo Zhan from Renmin University of China states in his book "Philosophy of Subjectivity—The Existence of Man and Its Significance," "human subjectivity is the qualitative determination of a person as an active subject, which is developed in interaction with objects and is a characteristic of consciousness, autonomy, agency, and creativity."

The concept of human subjectivity referred to in this article encompasses the characteristics of autonomy, creativity, and sociability of individuals as independent entities. Human subjectivity is not only about an individual's free choice and scientific decision-making regarding their actions but also concerns their position and role within social relationships. The realization of human subjectivity depends on the individual's self-awareness, the fulfillment of self-worth, and their influence on the social environment. Human subjectivity is not static; it changes with different stages of an individual's life and shifts in the social environment. In modern society, the realization of human subjectivity faces various challenges, leading to phenomena of alienation. Marx, in his "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," noted: "Alienated labor takes from the man his object of production, thus also his species-life." "Alienated labor transforms autonomous activity, life itself, into a means merely for existence, thereby turning man's species-life into a means for physical subsistence." He argued that in capitalist society, laborers' labor is alienated into commodities, and people's lives are no longer under their control but dominated by capital. "The alienation of the subject is also manifested in the object's resistance or opposition to the subject. The subject, originally dominating the object, is now dominated by it." This alienation is not only evident in the economic domain but also permeates people's ideologies and social relationships, severely damaging human subjectivity.



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The alienation of the subject is not just a result of economic relations but also a product of social and cultural factors. In modern society, people often neglect the importance of spiritual life in the pursuit of material living. The prevalence of mass media and consumer culture leads to the homogenization of individuality and creativity, turning people into followers of consumer goods. Additionally, the development of technology and the rise of the networked society have also exacerbated the phenomenon of alienation to some extent. In the virtual world of digital games, human interactions become increasingly superficial and virtualized, weakening genuine emotional connections between individuals. People lose self-awareness and the capacity to act, leading to addiction among some players, thus causing the alienation of the subject.

### **1.3 The Interactive Relationship Between Digital Games and Human Subjectivity**

The dual impact of digital games on human subjectivity is mainly manifested in two aspects: On one hand, by providing diverse role-playing and rich situational experiences, digital games promote the development of individual imagination and creativity, enabling individuals to explore self and realize value through digital games, thereby enhancing their sense of self-identity and self-determination. On the other hand, the design characteristics of digital games, such as fixed game rules and preset plot developments, can subtly lead players to develop a dependency. Players may gradually become accustomed to the rules and reward mechanisms within the games, a habit that can transfer to real-life situations, rendering players passive and dependent in real-world decision-making, thus unconsciously eroding their subjectivity.

Furthermore, the virtual nature of digital games and their immediate feedback mechanisms can lead players to develop a psychological escape from reality while in the gaming world. This escape is not merely a simple avoidance of the real world but becomes a psychological coping strategy when individuals face real-life challenges. Prolonged escapism can impact an individual's ability to solve real-life problems and their willingness to face difficulties, thereby affecting the true realization of their subjectivity. Additionally, although the interactive modes and social mechanisms in digital games can provide a platform for socialization, they may also lead to a degradation of individual social skills in the real world, as real-world social interactions are more complex and unpredictable. This discrepancy can make players feel maladapted in real social interactions, leading them to avoid real-life contacts, thus affecting the development of social skills and the realization of subjectivity.

When analyzing the interactive relationship between digital games and human subjectivity, it is also necessary to consider individual differences. Different players have varying degrees of dependency on games and derive different experiences from them, which means that the impact of digital games on individual subjectivity is also diverse. Some players may gain positive motivation and growth from games, while others, due to personal experiences, may be negatively affected. Therefore, research

into the interactive relationship between digital games and human subjectivity needs to adopt a personalized and differentiated perspective, thoroughly analyzing the interactive effects of different types of digital games, individual characteristics, and various socio-cultural backgrounds.

## Chapter two: Survey on Subject Alienation in Digital Games

To gain a deeper understanding of the main manifestations of subject alienation in digital games, we conducted research using both online questionnaires and offline interviews. We meticulously developed a survey, which was administered online anonymously via Questionnaire Star. A total of 2,923 individuals completed the survey effectively, including 1,051 males and 1,872 females. The age distribution was as follows: 62 participants were under 10 years old, 1,542 were aged 11-20, 1,250 were aged 21-30, 21 were aged 31-40, 19 were aged 41-50, 15 were aged 51-60, and 14 were over 61 years old. Participants in the survey were spread across all 31 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions of the country, with 1,937 participants from Liaoning and 986 from other provinces. The online survey data overall has a representative significance. Additionally, five digital game players and regulators participated in offline in-depth interviews. Through both online and offline surveys, we gained a more in-depth understanding of the main manifestations of subject alienation caused by digital games.

The survey data indicated that players invest varying degrees of time and money in digital games, and that the process of subject alienation in digital games is extremely complex. The main manifestations of subject alienation in digital games include cognitive alienation, emotional alienation, and volitional alienation among others.

**Table 1: Survey Statistics on Time and Money Spent in Digital Games by Players**

Question	Option	Percentage of Respondents
How long do you play digital games each day? (Single choice)	Less than 1 hour	42.22%
	1-2 hours	22.20%
	2-3 hours	14.06%
	3-4 hours	6.91%
	4-5 hours	4.93%
	5-6 hours	4.89%
How much money do you spend on digital games in a month at most? (Single choice)	More than 7 hours	4.79%
	Up to 100 RMB	75.41%
	100-200 RMB	8.07%
	200-500 RMB	5.54%

500-1000 RMB	4.34%
1000-2000 RMB	3.49%
More than 2000 RMB	3.15%

## 2.1 Cognitive Alienation of the Subject

In the virtual world of digital games, players often achieve a sense of self-realization through various role-playing and task challenges, which provides an immersive experience that serves as an escape from reality. However, this escapism introduces complex emotional and psychological changes in players' real lives, leading to cognitive alienation of the subject, primarily evidenced by a decline in discernment and judgment in real-life situations.

The survey revealed that 44.75% of players feel a sense of achievement in self-realization within digital games, while 77.66% use gaming as an escape from reality and to pass idle time. When players become engrossed in the digital gaming world, they invest substantial time and energy into it, which gradually blurs their perception of their actual roles in real life, often leading to neglect. This blurring of roles is not limited to the dilution of real-life roles but also includes deviations in players' self-awareness and self-positioning, all indicative of diminished discernment and judgment. For instance, in digital games, a player might become a brave warrior, a wise mage, or a wealthy merchant, but these roles are typically based on the virtual world and rules constructed by game designers. According to the survey, 64.66% of players invest time in building their virtual identities. As players devote more time to constructing and maintaining these virtual identities, their professional, familial, and social roles in the real world tend to be relatively neglected. This shift marks the onset of subject alienation. The survey data shows that 55.76% of digital game players unknowingly immerse themselves in their roles, leading to blurred life goals and unclear motivations and directions in life. In digital games, the identity shift to a game-defined role, while providing a liberating experience, also challenges players' real-world identity recognition, causing a gradual blur in role awareness and social responsibility in the real world. This, in turn, diminishes their discernment and judgment, further exacerbating cognitive alienation of the subject.

**Table 2: Survey Statistics on Individual Experiences and Virtual Identity Construction in**

### Digital Games

Question	Option	Percentage of Respondents
What experiences do digital games bring to you? (Multiple	A sense of achievement in self-realization	44.75%
	Can make friends in the game	38.80%
	Escape reality and pass idle time	77.66%

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	Other	1.88%
Do you invest time	Invest a lot of time in virtual identity	19.02%
in building a virtual	Do not invest time in virtual identity	35.34%
identity in digital	Invest a little time in virtual identity	45.64%
Do you immerse	Often immerse in the game	19.26%
yourself in digital	Do not immerse in the game	44.24%
games while	Occasionally immerse in the game	36.50%

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From a psychological perspective, as Daniel Pink points out in his book "Drive," "Autonomy, a fundamental human quality, is central to self-determination theory," and "the feeling of autonomy can exert a strong influence on an individual's performance level and attitude" . Digital games provide a virtual sense of achievement which can, to some extent, replace the intrinsic motivation found in the real world. When this substitution becomes the norm, players' ability to discern and judge in real life is impaired. Over time, their self-identity in the real world becomes increasingly blurred. In this context, it becomes challenging for an individual's subjectivity to be fully expressed and utilized, and may even lead to cognitive alienation of the subject, resulting in a decline in discernment and judgment abilities in the real society.

## 2.2 Alienation of the Will in Digital Games

The clear goal-setting and immediate feedback mechanisms in digital games have a significant impact on players' cognitive processes. In digital games, player decisions are often based on game rules established by the designers, not independently created or controllable by the players themselves. The rules, narrative constructions, and player interactions in digital games effectively shape and constrain the player's subjectivity. While players may appear to have freedom in their in-game identities, behaviors, and social interactions, they are actually guided by the game designers' preset rules and narrative logic. This guidance limits players' creativity and has a profound impact on their cognitive patterns and value systems. Relying on game rules and feedback systems can diminish players' creative and decision-making abilities in real life. For example, when players complete a game task and receive in-game rewards and points, this immediate positive feedback can condition players to repeat similar behaviors in similar situations. However, real-life problems and decisions are often more complex and variable, lacking immediate and clear feedback to guide actions. If players become too accustomed to the cognitive patterns in games, they may exhibit an over-reliance on these patterns when facing real-life challenges, lacking the ability to be creative and make scientific decisions.

Some domestic researchers studying the addiction to online games among adolescents have found that "in online games, the reward experiences brought about by game-related stimuli and behaviors are real-time, frequent, and direct, thus the

individual's reward experience is continuous and intense, reinforcing the gaming behavior" . Both our survey and in-depth interviews have shown that players' behaviors and decisions in games are driven by strong external incentives, thus overlooking intrinsic values and long-term interests. Survey data indicates that 72.80% of players believe that because the tasks and challenges in digital games often have clear goals and reward mechanisms, playing digital games can lead to varying degrees of addiction and dependency. This over-reliance on immediate gratification and external incentives can influence players' values in real life. During in-depth interviews, a veteran player mentioned, "People who play games frequently often pay insufficient attention to long-term goals and deep value systems in real life, preferring instead to pursue short-term satisfaction and quick achievements." This frequent reinforcement of immediate gratification not only affects the quality of individual decisions but also causes changes in individuals' real-world behavior patterns and psychological traits, leading to alienation of the will, gradually creating a dependency on thought patterns and even addiction, thus gradually eroding their capacity for self-creation and scientific decision-making as subjects. Therefore, recognizing the excessive shaping and potential impacts of digital games on players' cognitive processes, we must acknowledge that an over-dependence on game rules and feedback mechanisms can weaken players' creativity and decision-making abilities in real life, thereby further deepening the alienation of their will.

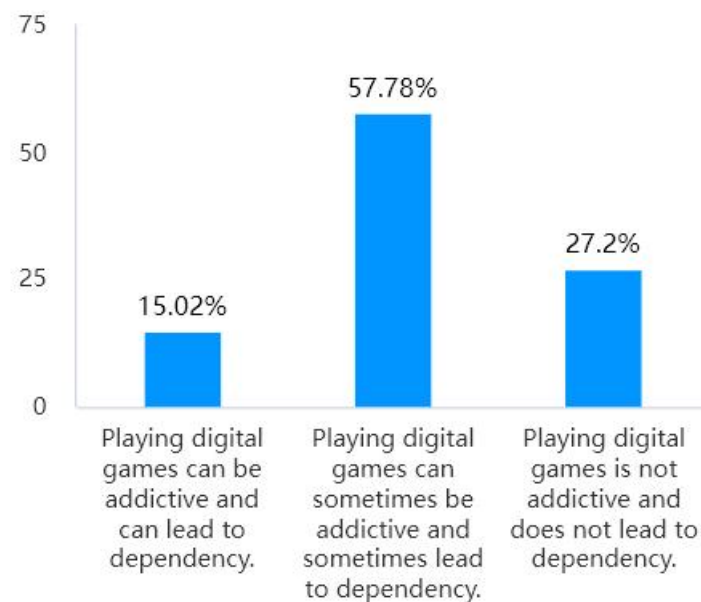


Figure 1: Pie Chart of Survey Results on Players' Addiction and Dependency While Playing Digital Games

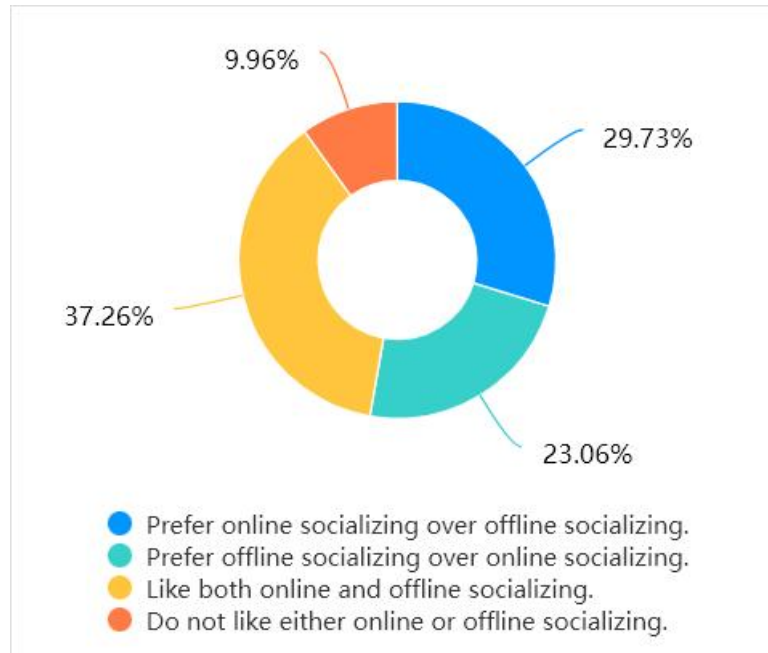
### 2.3 Emotional Alienation of the Subject

Digital games provide players with an immersive social environment where they can

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interact and collaborate with other players from around the world. However, social interactions based on games significantly differ from interpersonal communications in real life. Communications within games are often centered around game objectives and tasks, rather than based on personal emotions or deep social relationships. This task-centered communication model can influence players' real-world social habits. In the social settings of digital games, interactions often occur under anonymity, which alleviates the need for players to take on significant social responsibilities or ethical obligations. Once accustomed to this low-risk social model, the necessity to be accountable for one's words and actions in real-life social activities can seem overwhelmingly stressful and risky, making players more cautious or negative in real-life social behaviors. This, in turn, affects their ability to improve social interaction and communication skills and hinders the establishment of interpersonal relationships in real life.

Survey data shows that when asked about their preferred mode of social interaction, 29.73% of players indicated a preference for online over offline socializing, enjoying the virtual interactions within digital games and preferring to socialize through online platforms without the pressure of face-to-face interactions; 9.96% of players preferred neither online nor offline socializing, indicating a reluctance to engage in real-life social activities. This can lead to a reduction in real-life social interactions, a more pronounced cold and isolated demeanor among individuals, and limited development of players' social and communication skills. Moreover, social interactions in digital games are often instantaneous and convenient, allowing players to communicate with others at any time without considering the real-world constraints of time and space. This mode of communication shapes players' expectations for social activities, making them accustomed to quick social feedback and efficiency-first interaction models. However, real-life social activities often require time and effort and involve navigating complex interpersonal relationships. When players' expectations do not match the social environment in real life, they may feel uncomfortable in real social settings, reluctant to engage in heartfelt, face-to-face communications, and even experience anxiety and withdrawal. Thus, the social models in digital games can significantly impact players' ability to interact and communicate, thereby affecting their real-life social relationships and the manifestation of their subjectivity. This shift in social patterns, leading to weakened real-life social and communication skills, is another manifestation of the emotional alienation of the subject in digital games.



**Figure 2: Donut Chart of Survey Results on Preferred Social Interaction Methods of Digital Game Players**

## **Chapter Three: Analysis of the Causes of Subject Alienation in Digital Games**

The reasons for subject alienation in digital games are multifaceted. Based on survey data, we delve into the fundamental causes of subject alienation in digital games from the perspectives of game developers, users, and regulators.

### **3.1 Factors from Digital Game Developers: Manipulation by Capital**

For digital game developers, the various choices made during the game design process are linked to their economic interests and directly influence players' experiences and behavioral patterns. As reported by the China News Service on December 19, 2023, the "2023 China Game Industry Report" was officially released at the 2023 China Game Industry Annual Conference. The report indicates that as of December 10, 2023, the actual sales revenue of China's domestic game market reached 302.964 billion yuan, an increase of 13.95% year-on-year, surpassing the 300 billion yuan mark for the first time; the user base reached 668 million people, an increase of 0.61% year-on-year, reaching a historical high [Li Jingxuan, Xu Ping. Domestic game market actual sales income surpasses 300 billion yuan for the first time [N]. China News Service, 2023-12-19(003)]. The survey data show that 58.60% of players believe that developers and other stakeholders adopt a series of business models and marketing strategies, including in-game purchases, advertising placements, and the sale of virtual goods and services, to maximize economic returns. These

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business models stimulate players' consumer desires, leading some to exhibit weakened self-control and invest heavily in games. The survey found that 24.59% of players spend over 100 RMB monthly on digital game top-ups, and 6.64% spend over 1000 RMB. Additionally, 61.34% of players consider the manipulative mechanisms in game design as another significant factor affecting player subjectivity. Developers use control mechanisms such as task rewards, achievement systems, and leaderboards to continuously reward players' progress in games, strengthening their gaming behavior and encouraging sustained investment of time and energy in the game world. Survey data show that 57.78% of players play digital games for more than one hour daily, and 14.61% play for more than four hours. Furthermore, the game's feedback loop design, such as instant feedback and delayed gratification, subtly shapes players' behavioral patterns. The alternating use of these two feedback mechanisms not only increases the game's appeal but also leads to reduced agency, as individuals gradually lose control over their behavior in the well-designed game mechanics, investing significant time and money, which diminishes their self-awareness and autonomous decision-making capabilities, leading to subject alienation.

### **3.2 Factors from Digital Game Users: Self-Indulgence**

From the perspective of digital game users, subject alienation is largely related to individuals' weak self-control and psychological dependence. "Games satisfy people's spiritual needs, but once people become addicted to these needs, they can develop a new form of illness, hence games are also called 'electronic opium,'" [Hu Penglin. The origin, operation mechanisms, and business ethics of cloud gaming [J]. *Journal of Tongji University (Social Science Section)*, 2021, 32(03): 65-72]. The survey revealed that players aged 11-20 make up 52.75% of the surveyed gamers. This age group, with relatively weak self-control, easily develops psychological dependence on digital games. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, "the fifth level of human needs, also considered the highest level by Maslow—self-actualization needs, such as the acquisition and satisfaction of competence and achievement, primarily pertain to the realization of one's self-worth" [Hu Wanzhong. Discussion on human value and self-worth from Maslow's theory of needs [J]. *Nanjing Social Sciences*, 2000(06): 25-29]. When digital games become a significant channel for fulfilling these needs, players gradually develop psychological dependence on games. For example, the leveling system, honor titles, and social features in digital games can satisfy players' psychological needs for achievement to some extent; the immediate gratification and ongoing challenges provided by digital games constantly drive players to seek higher achievements and deeper social connections in the game; these settings further intensify players' dependence on digital games. Survey data indicate that 72.80% of players believe they have developed psychological needs and dependencies on digital games, and some players stated in in-depth interviews that when facing real-life pressures and challenges, they often regard digital games as a means to escape reality. This escapism not only fails to resolve real issues but exacerbates individuals' psychological dependence on digital games. Dependence on digital games not only affects individuals' quality of life but also leads to subject alienation.



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### **3.3 Factors from Digital Game Regulators: Lack of Regulation**

The role of digital game regulators is to formulate and implement policies and regulations that standardize the digital game market to protect consumer rights and promote a healthy gaming environment. Zou Fan from the Criminal Law School of Northwest University of Political Science and Law also pointed out in the study "Government Regulation Issues of Online Games" that there are three major issues in China's game industry: "an imperfect legal and regulatory system, unclear regulatory authority, and an inadequate dynamic regulatory mechanism" [Zou Fan. Study on Government Regulation Issues of Online Games [J]. People's Forum, 2019(23): 124-125]. Our survey data show that 67.84% of players believe that government departments should strengthen regulation of the digital game industry. Through in-depth interviews, it was found that regulators often face challenges of an incomplete institutional framework and mechanisms needing improvement during the enforcement process, which may indirectly prevent effective resolution of subject alienation in digital games. For example, regulators may face industry pressure when formulating policies, leading to overly conservative or one-sided policy-making that fails to comprehensively address issues. From the perspective of regulators overseeing developers, regulators guide the behavior of game developers by setting a series of standards and requirements. However, these standards and requirements may not always keep pace with the rapid development of the gaming industry, allowing some new game designs to evade regulation. Moreover, regulators often adopt relatively general regulatory strategies, failing to delve into the details of game design, thus unable to effectively identify and resolve specific issues. For instance, regarding mechanisms in games that lead to addiction, regulators might simply require developers to set health prompts or time limits, without thoroughly researching and addressing the root causes of addiction. From the perspective of regulators overseeing users, regulators promote game literacy education and provide psychological health support to reduce subject alienation. However, due to individual differences and the diversity of social environments, the effectiveness of these measures may vary considerably. For example, players of different ages and backgrounds may respond differently to game literacy education, and regulators are yet unable to formulate differentiated regulatory strategies based on the characteristics of different groups.

## **Chapter Four: Pathways for Reintegrating Subjectivity in Digital Games**

From the analysis above, it is evident that the fundamental causes of subject alienation in digital games are multi-faceted and intertwined. To effectively address this issue, it is necessary to approach from multiple perspectives including game developers, users, and regulators, and to formulate effective implementation strategies. Developers should integrate ethical considerations and assume responsibility for the psychological health and social responsibilities of players. Users should enhance self-awareness, strengthen self-management, and proactively use psychological

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interventions to improve their self-control and social adaptability. Regulators can ensure the content of digital games is monitored through robust legal systems, thus supporting the optimization and upgrade of the digital game industry. These strategies are crucial for the healthy development of the digital game industry and for reconstituting the subjectivity of players.

#### **4.1 Design Pathway Integrating Ethical Factors**

In addressing the dissolution of subjectivity in digital games, it is essential for developers to proactively integrate ethical factors into game design and assume ethical responsibilities. Game developers, while creating engaging game experiences, should also consider players' psychological health and social responsibilities. This requires game designers to actively incorporate positive values and educational significance into the development process, rather than solely pursuing commercial interests. Digital game developers should "combine the entertainment functions of games with the dissemination of scientific knowledge, enhance public welfare, serve the personalized science education needs of the new era, and convey positive, progressive values." [Fang Zhou. Exploration of the high-quality development path of China's science fiction game industry. *Journal of Wuhan University (Philosophy & Social Sciences)*, 2024, 77(02): 21-29.] In the design phase of digital games, developers should consider the long-term impact of the conveyed values and behavioral patterns on players. For instance, designers can convey positive values such as teamwork, responsibility, and moral judgment through game narratives, character development, and task settings. Additionally, challenges and reward mechanisms in games should be carefully designed to prevent inducing excessive player investment or dependence, while encouraging independent thinking and decision-making in gameplay. Developers should also take responsibility for monitoring and guiding during the game release and operation phases, regularly reviewing game content and player feedback, and promptly adjusting and optimizing game mechanisms to ensure the health of digital game products and the protection of player subjectivity. In terms of digital game promotion and marketing, it is important to avoid overstating the positive effects of games and to present game features objectively, reminding players to be mindful of their time and financial expenditures on gaming.

#### **4.2 Usage Pathway Strengthening Self-Management**

While digital games provide entertainment and relaxation, they also influence users' cognitive assessments and value judgments, subtly affecting individual subjectivity. To address this, game users must enhance their own literacy, raise self-awareness of the potential risks associated with digital games, and take active measures to maintain their independence in thinking and decision-making. Individual players need to enhance their self-management and self-control, properly schedule their gaming time, and prevent becoming immersed in virtual worlds at the expense of real-life responsibilities and duties. Strategies such as setting personal gaming schedules and using screen time management tools can be adopted. Moreover, players should enrich

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their real-life experiences through social activities, reading books, and learning new skills to reduce their over-reliance on digital games. These activities not only improve social and life skills but also enhance subjectivity in the real world, promoting comprehensive healthy development. Additionally, players should be mindful of their physical and mental health and seek professional psychological consultation and treatment services when necessary. For example, players can participate in group discussions, workshops, and counseling sessions to experience firsthand the differences between the instant gratification and virtual achievements obtained in digital games and the lasting achievements in real life. With the help of psychological experts, players can establish more rational gaming behavior patterns, thereby enhancing their decision-making abilities and sense of responsibility in real life, and strengthening their subjectivity.

### **4.3 Regulatory Pathway Improving Legal Systems**

In the strategic study of addressing the dissolution of subjectivity in digital games, government departments, as regulators of digital games, should improve related legal systems to ensure the healthy development and upgrading of the digital gaming industry. Given the popularity of digital games and their potential negative impacts on individual subjectivity, government and regulatory bodies must take active steps to build a policy system that can effectively regulate game developers while ensuring that players' subjectivity is preserved. First, digital game content requires stricter scrutiny and monitoring to ensure that it not only complies with laws and regulations but also aligns with societal ethics and value norms. Additionally, mechanisms within games that may lead to player addiction or excessive immersion need to be curtailed, such as by setting online time limits and spending caps, to reduce potential negative impacts on players' lives. Moreover, relevant departments should enhance guidance and support for the digital gaming industry, encouraging developers to improve the quality and cultural content of games from the outset. By implementing a series of incentive policies, such as tax reductions and financial support, the government can support projects that incorporate positive values and promote the development of player subjectivity. Furthermore, the government should collaborate with industry experts and academics to develop a series of standards and tools for assessing the impact of digital games on player subjectivity. This would facilitate regular assessments and categorizations of games on the market, providing clearer guidance for players. In terms of establishing laws and regulations, related laws should clearly define the responsibilities and obligations of digital gaming enterprises, stipulating the codes of conduct they must follow in game design, operation, and advertising. For example, game companies should be required to regularly publish user data and behavior analysis reports to increase transparency, allowing the public and regulatory bodies to stay informed about the actual impacts of digital games on player behavior and psychological states. Additionally, regulations should increase penalties for violations that diminish player subjectivity, ensuring sufficient deterrent effects.

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