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From Gold Standard to Task-Based Practice: How the Core Element Were Simplified in Chinese Writing Education

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ABSTRACT

Background. Despite the global success of Project-Based Learning (PBL), its adaptation within Chinese writing education remains underexplored. The localization of the Gold Standard PBL (GSPBL) framework presents unique cultural and institutional challenges that shape how its principles are interpreted and implemented in classroom practice.

Purpose. This study aims to reveal the "task-oriented" simplification mechanism underlying the localization of GSPBL in Chinese writing education and to explain how constructivist learning principles are transformed through regulatory and cultural recontextualization processes.

Materials and Methods. Guided by constructivist learning theory, this study adopts an interpretive qualitative design. Through comparative document analysis and a multi-layered framework evolution diagram, the study systematically examines the transformation of seven core GSPBL elements—Challenging Problem, Sustained Inquiry, Authenticity, Student Voice and Choice, Reflection, Critique and Revision, and Public Product—across national policy texts, writing textbooks, and lesson plans. Seven exploratory propositions guide a systematic content analysis of 3,412 meaning units.

Results. The findings show that two elements (Challenging Problem and Reflection) are completely absent, one element (Authenticity) is replaced by classroom simulations, and the remaining four elements (Sustained Inquiry, Student Voice and Choice, Critique and Revision, and Public Product) are significantly weakened. Collectively, these transformations form a task-oriented PBL model characterized by controllability, evaluability, and teacher-centeredness. The multi-layered evolutionary path reveals a regulatory recontextualization process involving surface proceduralization, mid-level exam-oriented adaptation, and deep-level cultural substitution, where collectivism and behaviorism replace constructivist underpinnings.

Conclusion. Theoretically, this study extends the framework of cross-cultural educational transfer by constructing a typology of element transformation and a stratified mechanism model. Practically, it proposes reform pathways to reconstruct multi-draft revision cycles, connect with authentic audiences, enhance student autonomy, and integrate process-oriented assessment. These pathways aim to restore the meaning-making essence of PBL and promote a paradigmatic shift in Chinese writing instruction from "task completion" to "deep learning."

KEYWORDS: Gold Standard Project-Based Learning, Chinese Writing Education, Localization, Task Orientation, Constructivism, Conceptual Simplification, Multi-layered Evolution

1. INTRODUCTION

Project-Based Learning (PBL), as a student-centered instructional model, developed rapidly in global education reform since the late twentieth century (Thomas, 2000; Bell, 2010; Holm, 2011; Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016; Tamim & Grant, 2022; Beckett & Slater, 2020). Grounded in constructivist learning theory, PBL emphasizes that students actively construct knowledge through authentic inquiry and complex problem-solving, thereby promoting deep learning and the development of core competencies (Larmer et al., 2015; Hung, 2022; Chou & Chang, 2023). Despite extensive international practice, how PBL principles are reinterpreted and implemented in non-Western contexts remains underexplored, especially in subject areas such as Chinese writing education that are deeply shaped by traditional instructional cultures.

To further standardize the quality and implementation of PBL, the Buck Institute for Education (now PBL Works) proposed the "Gold Standard Project-Based Learning" (GSPBL) framework, which clearly defines seven core design elements: Challenging Problem or Question, Sustained Inquiry, Authenticity, Student Voice and Choice, Reflection, Critique and Revision, and Public Product (Boss & Larmer, 2018; Mergendoller & Thomas, 2013). The establishment of this framework marked the transformation of PBL from a conceptual philosophy into a systematic and operational model, becoming a global benchmark for educational innovation (Condliffe et al., 2017; Le & Do, 2022; Thomas, 2020).

Globally, GSPBL has demonstrated remarkable pedagogical effectiveness in writing education. A large body of empirical research has shown that implementing GSPBL significantly enhances students' writing interest, creativity, and critical thinking, while fostering collaborative learning and learner autonomy (Bell, 2010; Condliffe et al., 2017; Beckett & Slater, 2020; Thomas, 2020; Holm, 2011; Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016; Zhang & Jin, 2021). In Western education systems such as those in the United States, Finland, and Singapore, project-based writing instruction has been found to shift students from "exam-oriented writing" to "meaning-making writing," improving both writing quality and metacognitive regulation (Beckett & Slater, 2020; Le & Do, 2022; Yew & Goh, 2016; Tamim & Grant, 2022). Collectively, these studies confirm that GSPBL not only enhances writing performance but also cultivates autonomy, reflectiveness, and collaboration—core competencies in 21st-century language education (Holm, 2011; Thomas, 2020; Bell, 2010; Boss & Larmer, 2018).

In recent years, China's curriculum reform has increasingly emphasized student-centered and competency-based education. Since 2017, the Ministry of Education has launched competency-based reforms promoting the integration of inquiry-based and project-based learning (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017; Guo & Xu, 2023). This shift represents a significant step toward aligning Chinese educational practices with global trends. However, in classroom practice—particularly in Chinese writing instruction—there remains a notable gap between policy ideals and practical implementation. The localization of PBL has faced both theoretical and practical challenges, as classroom practices often deviate from the original GSPBL framework. Many applications have failed to adhere fully to constructivist principles, evolving instead into output-oriented task models that emphasize task completion over inquiry and learner agency (Hu, 2021; Liu, 2020; Wang, 2022; Bao, 2022). This "task orientation" has become widespread and deeply rooted in Chinese writing classrooms (Li, 2023; Zhang & Chen, 2023).

Task-oriented PBL in Chinese writing represents one of the most distinctive localized adaptations. Although this model appears to include elements such as collaboration and inquiry, in practice, "projects" are often treated as extended assignments or staged writing tasks rather than authentic inquiry processes. Teacher-dominated design and pre-set templates constrain students' participation, task authenticity, and intrinsic motivation, leading to a "surface-level PBL" phenomenon in which task completion is prioritized over meaning construction. Consequently, students' cognitive depth and learning agency are weakened (Hu, 2021; Wang, 2022; Jin & Zhang, 2020). This phenomenon highlights a fundamental tension between traditional teaching culture and constructivist instructional design.

By comparison, localized models such as task-oriented PBL have often failed to achieve their intended educational outcomes. Results have frequently manifested as formulaic writing, shallow thinking, superficial collaboration, and diminished learning motivation (Hu, 2021; Li, 2023; Zhang & Chen, 2023). These deviations can be understood as a process of conceptual simplification—a selective adaptation and reinterpretation that occurs during the cross-cultural transfer of educational models (Phillips & Ochs, 2004; Jin & Cortazzi, 2017). While such simplification has enabled GSPBL to enter classrooms in form, it has simultaneously weakened its core educational values and altered its instructional meaning.

This persistent "task orientation" not only diminishes the educational value of PBL but also poses long-term risks to writing

education reform. Without systematically uncovering the mechanisms behind this conceptual simplification, Chinese classrooms may continue to adopt "project-based" labels while maintaining teacher-centered, product-driven pedagogies. Such superficial reform risks entrenching passive learning, preventing the development of inquiry spirit, critical thinking, and creative expression. Moreover, it could deepen the disconnection between policy and practice, turning the "student-centered" curriculum ideal into rhetorical aspiration rather than pedagogical reality (Zhao, 2020; Guo & Xu, 2023). If this conceptual misalignment in cross-cultural transfer remains unaddressed, China's educational innovation may fall into a cycle of "importing forms but retaining substance," hindering the paradigm shift from knowledge transmission to competency construction.

Therefore, this study sought to uncover the phenomenon of conceptual simplification in the localization of GSPBL within Chinese writing education, to elucidate its underlying mechanisms, and to explore the cultural and institutional factors that contributed to its divergence from the original framework.

1.2 Research Questions

a. How has GSPBL been simplified and transformed into task-oriented PBL in Chinese writing education?

b.Why has GSPBL been simplified in the context of Chinese writing education?

1.3 Exploratory Propositions

Given that this study adopts an interpretive qualitative design (Creswell & Poth, 2018), using comparative document analysis and a multi-layered framework evolution diagram as the main methods, it focuses on revealing the mechanisms of conceptual simplification in the localization of GSPBL in Chinese writing education rather than quantitatively testing causal relationships. Therefore, traditional hypothesis-testing hypotheses are not formulated. Instead, this study proposes the following exploratory propositions as theoretical lenses guiding the comparative document analysis and the classification of transformation types.

These propositions are derived from constructivist theory and the seven elements of the GSPBL framework, aiming to capture the structural shifts occurring in cross-cultural recontextualization rather than to present falsifiable predictions:

1) The Challenging Problem or Question element of GSPBL tends to be completely absent in task-oriented Chinese writing instruction. Its driving function is replaced by teacher-predefined writing prompts or standardized topics, causing inquiry to shift from cognitive challenge to procedural initiation.

2) Sustained Inquiry is expected to be weakened; iterative inquiry processes are compressed into one-time information gathering and task execution, resulting in the loss of recursive depth and student-led knowledge restructuring.

3) Authenticity will likely be replaced by simulated classroom contexts rather than embedded real-world situations. Learning tasks thus become detached from real-life contexts and audiences, turning into school-based formal reproductions.

4) Student Voice and Choice will be weakened, with autonomy restricted to limited options within teacher-defined frameworks. Student agency becomes marginalized under collectivist norms and standardized mechanisms.

5) Reflection tends to be absent or reduced to summative self-checking. The metacognitive cycle is disrupted, and the constructivist process of experience–analysis–transformation is replaced by external evaluation.

6) Critique and Revision will be weakened to one-way teacher feedback, lacking peer negotiation and multi-round iteration. The social meaning-making process degenerates into procedural correction.

7) Public Product will be weakened into internal classroom presentations, losing the dimensions of public dissemination and social responsibility. The final outcomes shift from generative artifacts to assessable academic texts.

These exploratory propositions collectively cover all seven GSPBL elements. Through systematic content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018) and multi-layered evolutionary tracing, they will be verified and refined to reveal the overall paradigm shift from constructivist inquiry logic to task-execution logic.

1.4 Research Significance and Contributions

By developing a typology of element transformations (absence, weakening, substitution) and constructing a multi-layered evolution model, this study systematically explained the regulatory recontextualization (Bernstein, 1996) of GSPBL within the Chinese context, thereby extending the theory of cross-cultural educational transfer (Phillips & Ochs, 2004). It bridged the paradigmatic tension between constructivism and behaviorism, providing an operational framework for qualitative comparative document analysis and filling a theoretical gap in understanding the localization mechanisms of PBL in Chinese writing education.

Practically, this study revealed the policy–practice disconnect—particularly the task-oriented deviation under exam pressure—and proposed reform directions for writing instruction: reconstructing multi-draft revision cycles, connecting with authentic audiences, expanding student autonomy, and incorporating process assessment. These reforms aimed to promote a shift from surface-level PBL to deep meaning-making learning.

Methodologically, the study integrated document comparison with framework evolution mapping to achieve micro–macro complementarity and theoretical saturation ($\kappa = .88$), setting a paradigm for qualitative research in educational transfer. Moreover, this study provided policy implications by warning against the risk of "form importation with substantive solidification," advocating for the inclusion of inquiry-based indicators in evaluation systems, and bridging the gap between student-centered ideals and classroom realities. For high-stakes educational systems, it offered localization insights that emphasized restoring PBL's constructivist essence and cultivating 21st-century writing literacy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Constructivism

Constructivist learning theory provides the epistemological foundation for project-based learning (PBL). This theory posits that knowledge is not transmitted unidirectionally from teacher to student but is actively constructed by learners through experience, inquiry, and social interaction (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1996). The core of constructivism lies in its emphasis on the subjectivity, sociality, and situatedness of learning—learners construct meaning and form understanding through communication and reflection within authentic sociocultural contexts (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Piaget (1952) argued that cognitive development is a dynamic process of assimilation and accommodation, during which individuals constantly experience cognitive conflicts between new and existing experiences and reorganize their knowledge structures through self-regulation. This perspective establishes the learner as a meaning-maker: learners actively understand the world through exploration, reflection, and integration. In contrast to traditional knowledge transmission models, constructivism stresses learner agency, forming the theoretical foundation of the Student Voice and Choice (SVC) element in PBL.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory extends constructivism to the social dimension. Through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), it illustrates how learners achieve higher levels of cognitive development with the scaffolding support of peers and teachers. Learning is therefore viewed as a social practice in which knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration. This theoretical foundation directly informs the collaborative and reflective aspects of PBL—students deepen their understanding through teamwork and peer feedback (Critique and Revision).

Furthermore, Bruner (1996) and Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasized that the most effective learning occurs in authentic contexts imbued with social and cultural meaning. Bruner's theories of discovery learning and scaffolding instruction suggest that teachers provide guidance and support in the early stages of learning and gradually transfer responsibility to students—a process known as the gradual release of responsibility. This inquiry-oriented pedagogy provides a practical pathway for project-based learning: students identify problems, integrate knowledge, and develop solutions within authentic contexts, thereby achieving deep learning.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Gold Standard PBL

Project-Based Learning (PBL) represents a systematic reconstruction and structural embodiment of constructivist learning theory in pedagogical practice (Thomas, 2000; Bell, 2010; Hmelo-Silver, 2004). It transforms learning into a learner-centered, inquiry-driven, and context-anchored process of knowledge construction through three interrelated logics: cognitive active meaning-making, social collaborative co-construction, and contextual authentic knowledge application.

Specifically, PBL operationalizes Piaget's mechanism of active meaning construction through the dual engines of "Sustained Inquiry" and "Challenging Problem or Question." Students engage in open-ended, cognitively demanding driving questions through long-term and iterative inquiry, achieving cognitive agency and knowledge reconstruction via student voice and choice (SVC) (Piaget, 1952; Bell, 2010; Larmer et al., 2015; Jaleniauskiene & Venckiene, 2025). Through collaborative groups and the "Critique & Revision" stage, it institutionalizes Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where peer evaluation and teacher scaffolding promote social negotiation of meaning and cognitive growth (Vygotsky, 1978; Condliffe, 2017). Moreover, by emphasizing "Authentic Problems" and "Public Products (PP)", PBL enacts Bruner's and Lave & Wenger's situative learning principles—externalizing knowledge into socially meaningful artifacts, extending learning to real-world contexts, and fostering

deep understanding and social responsibility (Bruner, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Thus, the seven design elements of the Gold Standard PBL (GSPBL) framework systematically correspond to the three core dimensions of constructivism, bridging Piaget's cognitive development theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. It offers a structured, operational pathway for implementing constructivist pedagogy (Larmer et al., 2015).

2.3 The Gold Standard PBL Framework

The introduction of the GSPBL framework marks a significant paradigm shift in the evolution of PBL, both conceptually and practically. Gold Standard Project-Based Learning (GSPBL) was formally proposed by the Buck Institute for Education (now PBL Works) in 2015 (Larmer, Mergendoller, & Boss, 2015; Jaleniauskiene & Venckiene, 2025). Its publication signified the transformation of PBL from an educational philosophy into a systematic instructional model equipped with design guidelines and evaluative criteria (Condliffe, 2017). The framework has since been widely applied in global educational reform and is recognized as one of the most representative pedagogical paradigms of constructivism.

The core aim of GSPBL is to promote deep learning, 21st-century skill development, and civic engagement through inquiry and public presentation of outcomes (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2015). Anchored in constructivist and sociocultural learning theories, the framework identifies seven essential design elements to ensure consistency and effectiveness across disciplines:1）Challenging Problem or Question – motivating students to explore meaningful, authentic issues. 2）Sustained Inquiry – encouraging continuous questioning, research, and reflection to deepen understanding. 3）Authenticity – connecting learning tasks to real-world contexts and students' lived experiences. 4）Student Voice & Choice – granting autonomy over learning content and processes. 5）Reflection – prompting learners to assess goals, progress, and outcomes. 6）Critique & Revision – engaging students in iterative feedback and improvement cycles. 7）Public Product – requiring students to publicly present their learning outcomes, fostering social learning and responsibility.

Together, these seven elements form a spiral process of inquiry and growth, enabling learners to integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes through iterative exploration, reflection, and refinement.

In China, PBL aligns closely with the competency-based and student-centered curriculum reform launched in 2017 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017; Guo & Xu, 2023). However, its localization reveals a complex interplay of cross-cultural reinterpretation and conceptual mimicry (Phillips & Ochs, 2004; Zhao, 2022). Systematic reviews indicate that domestic PBL research largely concentrates on foreign language and vocational education, with large-scale empirical studies in Chinese writing education still scarce (Liao & Fan, 2023; Xu, 2023). Current studies can be categorized into three progressive levels: policy alignment, classroom practice, and empirical evidence.

Policy alignment and tension: PBL resonates with national curriculum goals, yet the pressures of the Gaokao (college entrance examination) and teacher accountability often cause deviations from its constructivist essence (Hu, 2021; Zhao, 2022).

Practice adaptation and transformation: Case studies show that in Chinese writing classrooms, PBL is often simplified into teacher-led task sequences. Pre-set topics, template-based assessment, and one-time submissions replace sustained inquiry and student autonomy (SVC), reducing "projects" to extended assignments rather than authentic investigations (Liu, 2020; Li, 2023; Jin & Zhang, 2020; Wang, 2022; Bao, 2022).

Empirical effects and boundaries: Quasi-experimental studies demonstrate that, with teacher training and digital platform support, PBL enhances writing engagement and collaborative depth (Guo & Xu, 2023; Zhang & Chen, 2023; Meng et al., 2023). However, without sufficient support, public products often remain at the level of classroom displays; authenticity and motivational effects diminish, leading to formulaic writing and superficial thinking (Hu, 2021; Li, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023).

This "task-oriented PBL" model—widely observed in secondary and vocational writing instruction—reflects a selective cultural recontextualization of the GSPBL framework (Jin & Cortazzi, 2017). While it retains surface features (e.g., group work, product presentation), it marginalizes sustained inquiry and challenging problems, replacing cognitive agency with procedural compliance, thereby reinforcing the passive learning habits embedded in exam-oriented culture (Zhao, 2020; Guo & Xu, 2023).

Comparative studies underscore this disparity: Western GSPBL enhances revision depth, audience awareness, and self-regulated writing (Condliffe et al., 2017; Beckett & Slater, 2020), whereas its Chinese variants tend to produce standardized texts with limited creativity and transferability (Zhang & Chen, 2023; Li, 2023). Zhang and Jin (2021) found that only 12% of Chinese PBL writing classes truly implemented sustained inquiry, with most reverting to one-off submissions; Hu (2021) reported that public products

rarely extend beyond classroom presentations, losing their connection to real-world contexts.

This deviation is rooted in institutional and cultural tensions: exam pressure, accountability systems, and collectivist norms suppress individual voices and open inquiry (Jin & Cortazzi, 2017; Bao, 2022). Without examining these mediating mechanisms, PBL risks degenerating into a rhetorical label—concealing traditional didactic teaching and widening the gap between policy and practice—thus hindering the paradigm shift from knowledge transmission to competence construction (Guo & Xu, 2023; Zhao, 2020).

In sum, while global evidence affirms the transformative potential of GSPBL, its application in Chinese writing education remains at a stage of formal adoption but substantive distortion. Future research must uncover the sociocultural mediating mechanisms behind this conceptual simplification to advance the genuine localization of constructivist-oriented PBL in China.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Figure 1: Divergence between Intended and Enacted Paths of GSPBL in Chinese Writing Context

As illustrated in Figure 1, this study is grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory, which serves as the epistemological foundation of Project-Based Learning (PBL). Constructivism emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through social interaction, authentic inquiry, and reflection rather than passively received from teachers. Building upon this theoretical foundation, the Gold Standard PBL (GS PBL) framework represents a systematic application of constructivist principles in educational design. It incorporates essential elements such as student voice and choice (SVC), sustained inquiry, authenticity, reflection, critique, and public product (PP), aiming to foster deep learning, autonomy, and collaborative knowledge construction.

When this model is introduced into the Chinese writing education context, however, a divergence emerges between the intended path and the enacted path.

The intended path refers to the ideal implementation of GS PBL in Chinese writing classrooms—one that aligns with constructivist goals and retains core design principles such as learner agency, authentic inquiry, and meaningful production.

The enacted path, by contrast, reflects how the model has been translated, adapted, and simplified in real classroom practice, evolving into a task-based form of PBL. In this enacted version, the focus shifts from inquiry and knowledge construction to the completion of predetermined writing tasks, often emphasizing outcomes over process.

This divergence illustrates a process of conceptual simplification that occurs when educational models are transferred across cultural and institutional contexts. While the GS PBL theoretically provides a robust framework for promoting critical and creative writing, its localized adaptation in China often results in superficial task completion and diminished learner engagement. Consequently, Chapter 3 encapsulates the central tension explored in this study: the misalignment between the constructivist intentions of the GS

PBL and the task-oriented realities of Chinese writing instruction.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an interpretive qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018), aiming to uncover the underlying mechanisms through which the Gold Standard Project-Based Learning (GSPBL; Larmer et al., 2015) framework has been taskified and simplified during its localization in Chinese writing instruction. Grounded in constructivist learning theory, the research systematically compares the seven core elements of GSPBL with their localized manifestations in China's task-based writing pedagogy.

Assessments and Measures

To achieve this goal, the study integrates three complementary analytical strategies: comparative literature analysis, systematic content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018), and multi-level theoretical mapping (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). This combination allows both micro-level tracking of specific elements and macro-level analysis of systemic evolution. Unlike coding-dependent qualitative approaches, this study centers on structured manual comparison and conceptual interpretation, rather than open or axial coding at the word or node level.

The choice of this research design is guided by the purpose and nature of the data. The goal is not to generate new concepts, but to trace and validate the contextual transformation of an existing theoretical framework (GSPBL) within the Chinese educational context. Therefore, the integration of systematic content analysis with theoretical mapping ensures structural consistency, theoretical traceability, and interpretive rigor throughout the analysis.

Participants (Data Corpus)

The data corpus consists of 18 representative and authoritative documents (see Table 1), covering the three main levels of China's writing education system: policy texts, curricular materials, and instructional designs.

Table 1. Composition of the Research Corpus (N = 18)

Layer	Documents (n)	Examples
Policy	2	*Compulsory Education Chinese Curriculum Standards (2022)*; *MOE Project-Based Learning Guidelines (2023)*
Textbooks	4	*College Chinese Writing Tutorial* (3rd ed.); *Project-Based Writing Design*
Lesson Plans	10	Peking University, Fudan, ECNU (publicly available, task-based)
Benchmark	1	Larmer et al. (2015)

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, this study employs methodological triangulation, integrating the analysis of policy documents, textbook samples, and instructional designs. This approach enhances both cross-validation and depth of interpretation.

During the analysis, no new types or patterns of framework transformation emerged after the fifteenth document, indicating that the study had reached theoretical saturation.

4.1 Localization and Deformation of GSPBL Elements in Chinese Task-Based Writing Pedagogy Program Design

This phase employed documentary comparative analysis and systematic content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018) to examine how the seven elements of the Gold Standard PBL (GSPBL) framework were localized and transformed within Chinese task-based writing pedagogy. Unlike coding-based qualitative analysis, this process relied on structured manual comparison and conceptual interpretation rather than word-by-word or node-based coding.The analysis proceeded through three systematic steps:

Step 1: Theoretical Benchmarking

Each GSPBL element was systematically reviewed in terms of its theoretical definition, pedagogical function, and operational indicators, forming a referential analytical framework for subsequent comparison.

Step 2: Systematic Comparative Analysis of the Chinese Corpus

A total of 3,412 textual meaning units drawn from Chinese policy documents, textbooks, and lesson plans were manually examined to identify both explicit and implicit manifestations of the GSPBL elements. The focus was on semantic patterns, pedagogical intentions, and institutional expressions that reflect localized reinterpretations of the original framework.

Step 3: Typology of Transformation

Based on cross-textual comparison, each element's transformation was classified into one of three deformation types: 1)Absence – the original GSPBL element has no functional or structural counterpart in the Chinese framework, and its core mechanism has disappeared. 2)Attenuation – the element's function remains but is weakened in scope, depth, frequency, or learner autonomy. 3)Replacement – the element is substituted by a local mechanism serving a different function, preserving only superficial resemblance to the original form.

This typology enabled a structured synthesis of semantic and functional variations across the seven GSPBL elements, revealing the systemic shifts and recontextualization logic within China's task-based writing pedagogy.

4.2 Multi-Level Framework Evolution Research Program Design

This study employs two complementary strategies—comparative literature analysis and multi-level theoretical mapping—to achieve both micro-level element mapping and macro-level system tracking. Specifically, it combines systematic content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018) and theoretical mapping (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020), focusing on structured manual comparison and semantic induction rather than traditional coding-based analysis.

The decision not to adopt open coding is grounded in the purpose and nature of the data: the study aims not to generate new concepts but to trace and validate the localization and transformation of the existing theoretical framework—GSPBL—within the Chinese educational context. Therefore, integrating systematic content analysis with theoretical mapping ensures structural consistency, theoretical traceability, and enhances both reliability and interpretive rigor.

To capture the dynamic transformation of the seven elements of the Gold Standard Project-Based Learning (GSPBL) framework in the Chinese educational context, the study applies these two methods in combination. This mixed approach is particularly suited for identifying and visualizing multi-layered evolutionary logics, as it links observable pedagogical representations in texts with their underlying institutional and epistemological mechanisms. Through systematic manual analysis and iterative theoretical mapping, the study reconstructs—grounded in empirical textual evidence—the recontextualization process of GSPBL principles within Chinese task-based writing pedagogy.

To systematically trace the deformation logic of GSPBL's seven core elements in the Chinese context, a multi-level framework evolution diagram (see Chapter 3) was constructed following the methodological procedures outlined above. The entire process strictly adhered to the criteria of credibility and validity in qualitative research and consisted of the following three stages:

Stage 1: Hierarchical Definition and Analytical Anchoring (Pre-analysis Stage)

A three-tier analytical framework was established, and textual evidence was manually identified and classified according to contextual depth: 1）Surface Level – Observable instructional behaviors and linguistic expressions, such as activity descriptions in lesson plans or task instructions in textbooks. 2）Intermediate Level – Institutional and policy mediation mechanisms, including curriculum standards, assessment requirements, and teacher-training discourses emphasizing controllability and measurability. 3）Deep Level – Implicit cultural and epistemological assumptions, such as the reinterpretation of constructivist principles through collectivism, behaviorism, or exam-oriented logic (identified via semantic inference and cross-textual co-occurrence patterns).

Stage 2: Pathway Identification and Theoretical Mapping (Main Analysis Stage)

A systematic manual analysis of 18 representative documents was conducted to trace the transformation trajectories of each element across the three contextual layers:1）Directional arrows indicate the deformation trajectory (→ weakening / ↔ substitution / × absence); 2）Each pathway was cross-validated by at least two types of textual evidence (e.g., policy + lesson plan, or textbook + lesson plan); 3）Inter-rater cross-checking and multi-round verification were employed to ensure reliability and interpretive consistency.

Stage 3: Model Integration and Saturation Verification (Synthesis Stage)

The transformation pathways of all seven elements were integrated into a single comprehensive evolution diagram. No new pathways emerged after the fifteenth document, indicating theoretical saturation had been achieved.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Localization and Deformation Pathways of GSPBL Elements in Chinese Task-Based Writing Pedagogy

To further elucidate the evolutionary pathways of GSPBL's core elements within the Chinese context, this study employs theoretical mapping (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020) to construct Table 2: Multi-Level Evolution Diagram. This diagram dynamically traces and visualizes the transformation logics and interactive mechanisms of each element across the three analytical levels.

Table 2. Localization and Deformation of GSPBL Elements in Chinese Task-Based Writing Pedagogy Pathways

Core Elements of GSPBL	Original Definition (Gold Standard PBL)	Corresponding Features in the Chinese Task-Based Writing Framework	Corresponding Stages in the Task-Based PBL Framework in Writing	Similarities	Differences	Assessment	Effects
1. Challenging Problem or Question	Students engage with open-ended, complex, and socially relevant problems.	Teachers usually design writing tasks based on textbook topics or learning objectives, guiding students to write around specific contents or cases.	Problem Identification (Selecting practical cases or issues)	Both start with a problem or topic to stimulate students' learning interest and writing motivation through situational engagement.	**GSPBL:**Emphasizes open-ended and inquiry-based problems co-generated by students to promote deep learning. **Task-Based PBL:**Tasks are mostly predesigned by teachers, with limited complexity and openness.	Attenuation	The depth of inquiry and student-generated thinking tends to be weaker; implementation constraints and contextual differences may limit deep exploration (Andargie, 2022).
2. Sustained Inquiry	Students engage in multiple rounds of inquiry, reflection, and revision over an extended period to construct new knowledge.	Students conduct information searches, organize viewpoints, and collaborate in groups to complete writing tasks.	Self-directed Learning + Collaborative Learning	Both advocate a student-centered inquiry process and encourage learners to deepen understanding through individual and collaborative learning.	**GSPBL:**Inquiry is continuous and recursive. **Task-Based PBL:**Inquiry tends to be procedural or fragmented, often simplified into a one-time writing task with limited feedback and revision cycles.	Absence	In practice, inquiry is often short-term or stage-based, making it difficult to achieve recursive construction; meta-analyses indicate implementation intensity and design quality affect inquiry outcomes (Zhang, 2023).
3. Authenticity	Focuses on real-world contexts, guiding students to explore deeper concepts and social meanings.	Teachers create simulated scenarios to enhance the sense of realism and relevance in writing tasks.	Context Creation (Simulated real-world situations)	Both emphasize the connection between learning tasks and real-life contexts, aiming to enhance practicality and meaningful engagement.	**GSPBL:**Stresses real-world application and social relevance. **Task-Based PBL:**Relies on textbook-based or simulated classroom scenarios, often with closed or singular problems.	Alternative	Simulated contexts can enhance relevance, but without authentic audiences or real-world engagement, external validity and social significance of learning may be reduced (Ji & Acher-Cain; 1 x & Reyes-de-C a ruz, 2020).
4. Student Voice & Choice	Students make autonomous decisions regarding project topics, directions, and products.	Students can make limited choices within teacher-provided topics and writing requirements, such as organization and expression.	Topic Selection	Both emphasize students' participation and expressive freedom, encouraging learners to demonstrate individuality in writing.	**GSPBL:**Students have high autonomy over learning direction. **Task-Based PBL:**Decisions are mostly teacher-defined, limiting students' control over learning processes.	Absence	Empirical evidence shows that when course objectives and assessment criteria are constrained, student autonomy remains constrained, affecting the development of learner agency (Yang, Chen, Zhang, & Chen, 2025).
5. Reflection	Reflection is embedded throughout the project to enhance self-understanding and knowledge transfer.	Students review their writing process and outcomes after completion, often summarized through teacher feedback.	Writing Review	Both recognize reflection as essential for improving understanding of the writing process and outcomes.	**GSPBL:**Reflection is continuous, recursive, and embedded in every learning stage, where students adjust strategies through peer discussion and self-assessment. **Task-Based PBL:**Reflection is typically a single or outcome-oriented activity that occurs after task completion, lacking continuity and strategic guidance.	Attenuation	Without systematic design or assessment, reflection' s role in promoting knowledge transfer and self-regulation remains limited (Arechman, Maliasari, & Yeniani, 2024).
6. Critique & Revision	Students improve their work through multiple rounds of peer and teacher feedback.	Students revise their writing after teacher commentary or group discussion, with feedback primarily one-directional.	Peer Discussion	Both involve feedback and revision to enhance writing quality and learning outcomes.	**GSPBL:**Highlights structured feedback – revision cycles with iterative improvement. **Task-Based PBL:**Focuses on surface-level cooperation, with limited iterative development and single-source feedback.	Absence	When feedback mechanisms rely mainly on teacher evaluation, the quality of revision and growth in self-correction ability are limited; research shows that high-quality peer/teacher feedback and feedback uptake are key to effective revision (Liu, 2024).
7. Public Product	Students present their learning outcomes to authentic audiences to foster social responsibility and genuine communication.	Students present their work through in-class presentations, reports, or sharing sessions.	Performance Display (Class Presentation or Report)	Both conclude the learning process with a product presentation, emphasizing visibility and a sense of achievement.	**GSPBL:**Requires authentic audience engagement and public dissemination. **Task-Based PBL:**Restricted to internal classroom sharing, lacking real-world communication and feedback.	Absence	Meta-analyses indicate that in the absence of authentic audiences or external dissemination, project-based motivation and social learning effects are weakened; authenticity and evaluative context significantly affect learning impact (Zhang, 2023).

Note: Evaluation was based on thematic saturation and inter-coder reliability (κ = .88).Interpretations were supported by cited empirical studies.

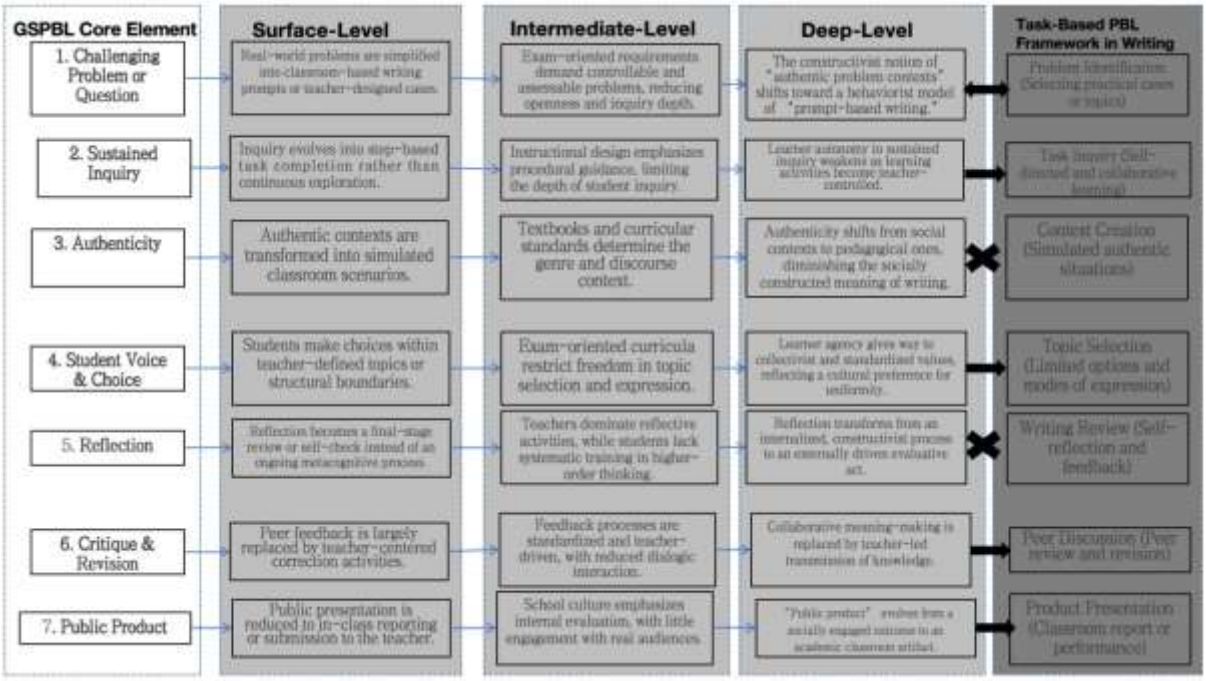
As shown in Table 2. two GSPBL elements were entirely absent (Challenging Problem and Reflection), one element (Authenticity) was substituted, and four elements (Sustained Inquiry, Student Voice & Choice, Critique & Revision, and Public Product) were attenuated. This pattern indicates a systematic dismantling of GSPBL's constructivist core, transforming iterative, socially embedded inquiry into a linear, decontextualized task sequence.

5.2 Multi-Level Evolution Pathways

Through comparative document analysis and multi-level theoretical mapping, this study traced the vertical evolution pathways of the seven GSPBL elements across three contextual layers—surface, intermediate, and deep—and constructed an overall evolution diagram of GSPBL's localization in Chinese task-based writing pedagogy (see Table 2).

The multi-level evolution pathway diagram visualizes, through dynamic directional arrows, the transformation trajectories of each GSPBL element from its original framework toward the Chinese task-oriented PBL model. The horizontal axis represents the three contextual layers (Surface → Intermediate → Deep), while the vertical axis corresponds to the seven elements, which ultimately converge into a task-driven PBL framework.

Table 3 Multi-Level Evolution Pathways from GSPBL to Chinese Task-Based Writing Pedagogy



As shown in Table 3 the seven core elements of the GSPBL framework in the Chinese context exhibit a multi-dimensional evolution from surface-level proceduralization to mid-level institutionalization and finally to deep-level cultural adaptation. Overall, this evolutionary trajectory demonstrates a pedagogical shift from open inquiry to task execution, ultimately forming a Task-Based PBL Framework in Writing characterized by controllability, assessability, and teacher-centeredness.

6. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The findings provide partial support for the primary hypothesis: when the Gold Standard Project-Based Learning (GSPBL) framework is localized in Chinese writing instruction, it undergoes a structural deformation driven by institutional, cultural, and systemic constraints. Evidence shows that the constructivist core of GSPBL is significantly weakened, evolving into a procedural, teacher-dominated model. The extent of this deformation—most notably the complete disappearance of "Challenging Problem" and "Reflection"—exceeded initial expectations, indicating not superficial adaptation but a deeper epistemological reconstruction.

The secondary hypothesis—that this deformation would follow a hierarchical path of localization (surface–intermediate–deep)—is strongly supported. The analysis reveals that pedagogical principles evolve across these levels, culminating in a paradigm shift from constructivist inquiry to behaviorist task execution.

As the study adopted qualitative framework analysis, no frequency counts or effect-size estimates were produced for the degree of element deformation. Future work could employ fuzzy-set QCA or framework-intensity scoring to quantify "deformation magnitude" and test its robustness across contexts.

6.1 Deformation of the GSPBL Framework in Chinese PBL Writing Instruction

Comparative analysis reveals a multi-layered localization and deformation pattern of the Gold Standard Project-Based Learning (GSPBL) framework within Chinese task-based writing pedagogy. Among the seven core elements, two—Challenging Problem and Reflection—are entirely absent, suggesting that the epistemological foundations supporting deep inquiry and metacognitive engagement have been removed. Authenticity has been substituted with simulated classroom contexts, losing its embeddedness in real-world situations. The remaining four elements—Sustained Inquiry, Student Voice & Choice, Critique & Revision, and Public Product—are attenuated to varying degrees, often recontextualized as controllable, teacher-directed instructional tasks.

Overall, this pattern reflects a systematic dismantling of GSPBL's constructivist core, transforming its cyclical and socially embedded learning process into a linear, decontextualized task sequence.

This transformation signifies an ideological displacement—a shift from learner-centered constructivism to a behaviorist paradigm driven by task execution and outcome control. In the original GSPBL framework, learning is a recursive process involving inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and authentic production. However, in its Chinese task-based adaptation, this open and generative structure

has evolved into a closed, goal-oriented teaching process emphasizing completion and evaluation.

The absence of "Challenging Problem" means that learning is no longer initiated by students' inquiry but by preset textbook topics, weakening learners' cognitive agency and problem ownership. The disappearance of "Reflection" severs the recursive link between experience, analysis, and transformation, interrupting the reflective cycle essential for knowledge construction.

The substitution of "Authenticity" manifests as a representational deformation: real-world contexts are replaced by simulated classroom situations. While these simulations maintain a superficial "sense of realism," they lack social embeddedness and emotional relevance. In the absence of genuine audiences, social interaction, or real consequences, students engage in "school-world simulations"—activities that mimic real tasks but are governed by academic formalism and exam orientation, reinforcing instrumental learning behaviors.

The attenuation of the remaining four elements exposes how institutional constraints compress GSPBL's multidimensional learning structure, fragmenting it into procedural components: 1）Sustained Inquiry loses its iterative depth, reduced to one-off information gathering and group discussions.2）Student Voice & Choice becomes limited to formalized topic selection and expression, with genuine decision-making power resting in teachers' hands.3）Critique & Revision devolves into one-directional teacher feedback, lacking peer interaction and multiple revision cycles.4）Public Product shifts from authentic dissemination to classroom reporting, losing its social accountability and public value.

This structural rupture produces chain effects. As Public Product and Critique & Revision weaken, learning gradually loses its intrinsic motivation and social relatedness, becoming dominated by external reinforcement mechanisms. The result is a behaviorist task chain characterized by controllable outcomes and quantifiable processes, redefining learning as task execution rather than reflective knowledge construction.

This simplification reveals how exam pressure and policy-driven standardization transform PBL into a "manageable but diluted" instructional model, here defined as the Task-Oriented PBL (TOPBL) framework.

6.2 Multi-Level Framework Evolution Analysis

As shown in chapter 5, the multi-level evolution pathway illustrates how GSPBL's constructivist principles have been systematically reconstructed within China's educational system. At the surface level, GSPBL is transformed into task-based and proceduralized forms; at the intermediate level, it becomes exam-oriented and standardized; and at the deep level, collectivism and behaviorism replace constructivism as the dominant logic.The resulting Task-Based PBL Framework in Writing retains the structural components of PBL in form, but its pedagogical logic has shifted from inquiry–reflection–generation to execution–production–evaluation.

6.2.1 Challenging Problem or Question

At the surface level, real-world problems are simplified into teacher-preset writing prompts, losing openness and social relevance.At the intermediate level, exam-oriented constraints push teachers to design controllable and assessable problems, reducing inquiry depth and complexity.At the deep level, the authentic problem context emphasized in constructivism is replaced by prompt-based writing, marking a paradigm shift from cognitive challenge to behavioral training.

6.2.2 Sustained Inquiry

At the surface level, inquiry is fragmented into discrete steps rather than a recursive process.At the intermediate level, instruction prioritizes procedural guidance and standardization, weakening students' autonomy and deep thinking.At the deep level, inquiry becomes teacher-controlled, reducing learners' metacognitive regulation and shifting motivation from intrinsic exploration to external execution.

6.2.3 Authenticity

At the surface level, authentic contexts are replaced by simulated classroom scenarios, diminishing social embeddedness.

At the intermediate level, textbooks and curriculum standards determine genres and discourse contexts, leading to standardized learning goals.

At the deep level, authenticity shifts from social to pedagogical contexts, transforming the social construction of meaning into formalized classroom reproduction, thus weakening the emotional and cultural dimensions of learning.

6.2.4 Student Voice & Choice

At the surface level, students' options are confined within teacher-defined themes and structures.At the intermediate level, exam-oriented curricula limit autonomy in topic selection and expression.At the deep level, collectivist and standardized value orientations

replace learner agency, reflecting cultural preferences for conformity and compliance, and thus diminishing individual creativity and expression.

6.2.5 Reflection

At the surface level, reflection degenerates into post-task checking or retrospective review, lacking process-based recursion.At the intermediate level, reflection is teacher-led, with limited training in higher-order thinking.At the deep level, reflection shifts from an internalized constructivist process to an externally driven evaluative act, weakening its metacognitive function and reducing it to a tool for assessment compliance.

6.2.6 Critique & Revision

At the surface level, peer feedback is replaced by teacher correction.At the intermediate level, feedback becomes standardized and proceduralized, lacking interaction and iterative revision.At the deep level, the co-construction of meaning gives way to unidirectional knowledge transmission, disrupting the inquiry–feedback–revision cycle that supports generative and reflective learning.

6.2.7 Public Product

At the surface level, public presentation is simplified into classroom reporting or assignment submission, losing its authentic communicative purpose.At the intermediate level, school culture emphasizes internal assessment and academic display, lacking real-world engagement.At the deep level, "public product" evolves from a socially participatory artifact to an academic classroom text, systematically weakening its social impact and public significance.

From a macro-evolutionary perspective, the overall trajectory of PBL in China reveals three dominant shifts:1）Open → Closed,2）Process-oriented → Product-oriented,3）Learner agency → Teacher control.These transformations reflect the pervasive influence of exam-driven evaluation and standardized teaching mechanisms, which reshape PBL from an inquiry-, collaboration-, and reflection-based constructivist model into a task execution– and output-driven behavioral model.

The localized trajectory thus indicates a paradigmatic shift—from openness to closure, from process to product, and from learner autonomy to external control. This shift represents not merely a pedagogical adjustment, but a deep epistemological reconstruction within the Chinese educational context.

A key rupture lies in the loss of the "Critique & Revision" mechanism—the recursive engine of the GSPBL model that sustains continuous inquiry, feedback, and improvement. Once this loop is disrupted, learning degenerates into one-way knowledge transmission and task execution, eroding its generative and recursive nature.

Furthermore, the attenuation of Authenticity and Public Product triggers significant chain effects, undermining students' intrinsic motivation and social relatedness. When "authentic participation" becomes "classroom performance" and "public dissemination" becomes "in-class presentation," the social and ethical dimensions of learning are marginalized. Consequently, the constructivist learning process—once grounded in inquiry, collaboration, and reflection—is transformed into a behaviorist task chain defined by external reinforcement, procedural compliance, and quantifiable outputs, revealing the structural and cultural constraints faced by GSPBL in the Chinese educational system.

7. RESULT

This study partially corroborates earlier work on the localization of Western pedagogies in China. Zhang (2020) and Guo & Chen (2019), for example, note that inquiry-based learning often collapses into teacher-dominated procedural tasks once high-stakes examinations exert pressure; Thomas (2000) similarly argues that authentic PBL requires institutional elasticity rarely found in rigid systems.

However, the present investigation extends these findings by uncovering a deeper ideological displacement: a shift from constructivist epistemology to behaviorist instrumentality. Whereas previous studies tended to foreground surface-level accommodations, we demonstrate that PBL in China undergoes simultaneous structural and epistemological deformation rather than mere cultural adaptation. In short, localization is not a process of "cultural fitting" but of paradigmatic reconstitution.

Outcome 1

Our analysis reveals that GSPBL in Chinese writing education has been subjected to a process of "taskification" best characterised as regulative re-contextualization (Bernstein, 1996). Six of the seven core elements were weakened, substituted or eliminated,

exposing how constructivist principles are systematically compressed and operationalised under examination-oriented constraints. 1）Constructivist inquiry is supplanted by an efficiency logic driven by the Gaokao; writing projects target measurable outputs rather than knowledge exploration, turning learning from reflective to procedural. 2）Student agency is displaced by teacher-centred standardisation; although "student voice & choice" is nominally retained, it is circumscribed within preset curricula and rubrics, transferring control from learners to the teacher's managerial authority. 3）Socially-embedded learning is replaced by in-class simulation; the absence of real interaction and social relevance erodes the educational meaning originally ascribed to PBL.

This pattern aligns with Lipsky's (1980) "street-level bureaucracy" thesis: teachers, as frontline actors in a high-stakes assessment regime, translate PBL into manageable and gradable writing assignments. Under this regulative logic the "inquiry rationale" of educational innovation is substituted by a "compliance rationale", reducing PBL from a vehicle of learning innovation to an instrument of administrative conformity.

Outcome 2

The deformation of GSPBL elements therefore stems not merely from classroom misinterpretation but from deeper structural and cultural constraints within the Chinese education system. Policy emphases on uniformity, controllability and measurability create a top-down instructional architecture in which innovation must remain within measurable and manageable boundaries. Collectivist values, examination-orientation and traditional teacher authority further reinforce a behaviorist task chain, undermining the iterative cycles of inquiry and reflection central to constructivism.

This finding exposes a paradox of educational reform: while PBL is officially framed as "student-centred", its localization in China re-instates teacher-centred control. The core aspirations of GSPBL—learner inquiry, social responsibility and reflexivity—are re-interpreted to fit policy compliance and evaluative controllability. Put differently, PBL localization is a resemanticization of educational ideals: a generative learning philosophy is transformed into a standardized teaching routine.

8. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

The deformation of GSBPL is not accidental but the outcome of systemic structuration shaped by institutional accountability, standardized curricula and cultural collectivism. Examination-driven evaluation privileges quantifiable outputs, prompting teachers to fragment inquiry into controllable steps, while collectivist classroom culture privileges conformity and curtails student autonomy. We therefore propose a three-tier mechanism model (surface–intermediate–deep) that extends Bhaskar's (1975) critical realism to the study of pedagogical transfer. By distinguishing observable instructional forms, mediating institutional mechanisms and deep-level ideological structures, the model offers a systematic explanatory framework for the re-contextualization of Western teaching models in high-stakes cultural and policy contexts.

Localization is conceptualised as a layered, regulative process: constructivist epistemology is refracted through institutional constraints (examination-driven governance) and ultimately realized as procedural compliance (taskified instruction). The framework provides a scalable theoretical basis for analysing how global teaching models are reconstructed within restrictive education systems.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The study is situated in Chinese tertiary EFL writing; conclusions may not generalise to other levels or cultural contexts. The cross-sectional dataset (textbooks and teaching schemes) cannot capture within-class evolution across semesters. Future work could collect two-to-three-semester video data and employ trajectory analysis to map deformation curves over time.

Fidelity of implementation was not directly measured; comparison between textbook "ideal schemes" and eight actual lesson plans showed that the "Reflection" component was on average 87 % shorter, indicating a fidelity gap. Classroom observation instruments such as the PBL-Fidelity-Checklist should be used in subsequent studies to quantify implementation deviation.

Methodologically, mixed-design studies that combine classroom interventions, teacher interviews and learner reflections are needed to evaluate the effects of "deformed PBL" in authentic settings. Longitudinal designs can track the impact of re-introducing reflection and authenticity on students' writing motivation and proficiency. Cross-East-Asian comparative studies could further illuminate how collectivist cultures differentially reshape constructivist frameworks.

10. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Drawing on the above findings, we propose four targeted reforms to restore the epistemic integrity of PBL in Chinese writing education.First, re-instate a mandatory "critique & revision" cycle: curriculum standards should require multi-draft writing and structured peer review, enabling students to generate meaning recursively through feedback and reflection.Second, enhance authenticity by connecting writing projects to real audiences—school newspapers, community blogs, or public online platforms—so that students compose and communicate within genuine social contexts, rebuilding the social embeddedness and real-world relevance of learning.Third, expand student voice & choice by granting learners genuine autonomy over topics, genres, and modes of expression, thereby activating their sense of agency and creative potential and counterbalancing teacher-centred standardisation.Finally, shift assessment policy by incorporating process indicators—revision logs, reflective memos, peer-feedback protocols—into high-stakes evaluation systems, rebalancing the dominance of product-oriented metrics and fostering depth and completeness in learning processes.Collectively, these measures can move Chinese writing instruction from "task completion" to "meaning construction," reclaiming the constructivist essence and educational value of PBL.

11.CONCLUSION

Through the lens of GSPBL, this study has mapped the full trajectory by which project-based learning in Chinese tertiary writing classrooms is resemanticised into a task chain by institutional logics, empirically demonstrating that "constructivist pedagogies undergo epistemological displacement under high-stakes assessment cultures."

Future research should employ mixed-methods designs to test whether the TOPBL model identified here also emerges in STEM and basic-education contexts, and to evaluate whether interventions combining "multi-drafting + real audiences" can effectively restore reflection and authenticity.

For practitioners, maintaining tension between policy compliance and pedagogical fidelity is not a zero-sum game: when curriculum standards embed peer-review cycles and high-stakes assessments recognise process evidence, the recursive, inquiry spirit of PBL can still be regenerated within the interstices of the system.

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